

The Daily Telegraph

Gladys and her bumble squad

Another day, another debacle for the NSW government of Premier Gladys Berejiklian. In just the past week or so, the government has endured controversies over the Sydney Football Stadium's demolition and construction, the Ritz-Carlton hotel rejection and an abortion bill in parliament.

Now the government has been forced to re-open a critical tender process to build the \$344 million Art Gallery of NSW expansion.

At issue is the expected cost of the gallery expansion. Lendlease has re-tendered for the build in the new process, after previous cost disputes.

It is all becoming very messy for the government. In fact, "messy" might be an ongoing government theme.

Labor landed very few hits on the Coalition during the election campaign, and previous leader Michael Daley proved no match at all for Gladys Berejiklian in their leadership debate.

He was all over the shop during that particular encounter.

But the government has now created a sequence of mini-disasters all of its own. No wonder, then, that Labor is finally scoring some points.

"There is a cloak of secrecy around the Sydney Modern project," Opposition Arts spokesman Walt Secord said yesterday, referring to the Art Gallery of NSW expansion.

"There are major concerns in the arts community about the lack of transparency surrounding the actual cost of the Sydney Modern Project."

Outside of the arts community, similar concerns are held. After all, every NSW taxpayer has a stake in this laudable gallery improvement.

At the moment, despite a powerful election triumph and a complete absence of leadership tensions, the Berejiklian government appears to be stumbling and bumbling as the federal government was during the final few weeks of Malcolm Turnbull's prime ministership.

The outcome is highly unlikely to be anything as dramatic as it was for Turnbull, yet there must now be at least some pressure on Berejiklian and her team to deliver a controversy-free few days.

Once a government or a political party or even an individual politician is perceived by the public in a negative way, it is usually extremely difficult to reverse that perception.

Over to you, Coalition.