

**Sydney Morning Herald:**

<https://www.smh.com.au/national/nsw/don-harwin-steps-down-as-minister-will-not-contest-the-next-election-20211218-p59io9.html>

# Melinda Pavey dropped from cabinet ahead of long-anticipated reshuffle

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Long-serving Nationals MP Melinda Pavey has been dumped as a NSW minister ahead of a widely tipped reshuffle this weekend by Premier Dominic Perrottet.

Mrs Pavey has been the member for Oxley since 2015 and was appointed NSW Minister for Water, Property and Housing in the second Berejiklian ministry in 2019. She was the longest-serving National Party MP in Australia.

Upper House MP Don Harwin – Special Minister of State, and Minister for the Public Service and Employee Relations, Aboriginal Affairs, and the Arts — and Local Government Minister Shelley Hancock also resigned from cabinet on Saturday and said they were not seeking a role in the new ministry.

The [long-anticipated reshuffle](#) will see a handful of ministers dumped from the frontbench in coming days, with Mr Perrottet expected to bring in fresh faces before NSW voters go the polls in 2023.

Mrs Pavey received a call from Deputy Premier and Nationals leader Paul Toole on Saturday afternoon to advise she would not be in the new cabinet.

“While I’m disappointed, I respect the decision made,” she said in a statement.

Mrs Pavey thanked the Menindee community for welcoming her to the Water Ministry during the worst drought on record, and said she hoped work regarding coastal harvestable rights continues.

She made special mention of the final business cases for the Wyangala and Dungowan dams, as well as regional water strategies, which she said she hoped would be carried through to fruition.



Melinda Pavey has been a member of NSW cabinet since 2019 when she was appointed minister for water, property and housing by Gladys Berejiklian. *CREDIT: NCA NEWSWIRE*

Mrs Pavey also said she hopes the incoming Minister for Housing “continues to transform old, tired, social housing estates across the state,” and that she was proud of creating a record amount of public housing. She also said she would continue to fight for Aboriginal land housing tenants.

“I will continue to be a team player working in the best interests of NSW, but I am delighted to spend more time in my electorate of Oxley fighting for my people,” Mrs Pavey said.

Mr Harwin said he had been considering in recent weeks whether he would be able to commit to another eight-year term beyond the election.



Don Harwin will not contest the next election. *CREDIT: LOUISE KENNERLEY*

“I have now decided I will not re-contest my seat and therefore, this is the right time to end my ministerial service,” he said in a statement.

“At this stage, I have no plans to leave the Legislative Council before the end of my term.”

Last year, Mr Harwin resigned as a NSW minister but was [later reinstated](#) when he was cleared of a \$1000 fine for breaching COVID-19 lockdown restrictions when he travelled to his holiday home on the NSW Central Coast.

Powerhouse Museum chief executive Lisa Havilah described Mr Harwin as “a legendary arts minister” whose work in the portfolio during the past five years would have “lasting generational impact”.

“He has really repositioned where arts and culture sits - he believed everyone had the right to access to world-class arts and culture whether living in a regional town or suburban Sydney ... He loved the arts, he knew what to do to get it done. I’m sure whoever picks up the portfolio will continue his legacy.”

Local Government Minister Shelley Hancock also resigned from cabinet on Saturday. She cited family reasons and said the departure of former premier Gladys Berejiklian had been “a significant challenge for me”.

“Gladys’ resignation is a loss for NSW and a personal loss for me, and something that I have found difficult to move past,” Mrs Hancock said in a statement.

Mrs Hancock, who is South Coast MP, said she had wanted to remain in her ministerial role until the local government elections, which were held on December 4 after being twice delayed due to the pandemic.



Local Government Minister Shelley Hancock.*CREDIT: BIANCA DE MARCHI*

She emphasised it was important women were central to Mr Perrottet’s new cabinet.

“It is often difficult being the only woman in the room, or one of a handful. Therefore, it is essential that women make up a larger part of the cabinet to provide our views and perspectives.

She said she would continue to represent the South Coast electorate - which she has held since 2003 - "with all my energy until March 2023".

Mr Perrottet thanked Mr Harwin and Mrs Hancock for their service and said they had been "strong advocates for the people of NSW in their respective roles as ministers throughout their careers in the NSW Parliament".

"Mr Harwin ... as the Arts Minister played an important role in helping enrich the cultural offerings of the state as well as fighting for much-needed support to help the arts community throughout the pandemic.

He said Mrs Hancock, who previously served as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, had been a strong leader in Parliament who "provided valuable service ensuring the continuation of the critical role of local councils during the pandemic and that local government elections proceeded this year".

Labor's spokesman for the arts and heritage Walt Secord said no-one could dispute Mr Harwin's genuine love of the arts.

"While I used to needle him that he was not in the league of former arts ministers Peter Collins, George Souris and Bob Debus - he was," he said.

Mr Perrottet took on the state's top job after Ms Berejiklian resigned in October, triggered by revelations she was being investigated by the Independent Commission Against Corruption.

The corruption watchdog has been examining whether Ms Berejiklian breached the public trust or encouraged corrupt conduct during her relationship with the disgraced former member for Wagga Wagga, Daryl Maguire. She has consistently denied any allegations of wrongdoing.



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