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Minns to be next NSW premier after voters savage Liberals

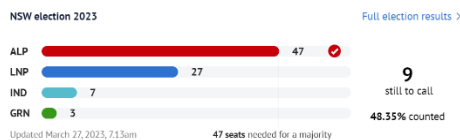


By [Alexandra Smith](#)

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NSW election 2023



Chris Minns will be the next premier of NSW after voters savaged the Liberal Party in seats across Sydney, paving the way for Labor to govern in its own right for the first time in 12 years.

In the most high-profile upset, former trade minister Stuart Ayres lost his marginal seat of Penrith, while the Liberals also surrendered Parramatta, East Hills, Riverstone, Heathcote, Ryde and Camden.



Labor leader and Premier-elect Chris Minns with his wife Anna at a reception at the Novotel in Brighton-Le-Sands on Saturday evening. *CREDIT: AAP*

Labor also had a strong showing in the regions, snaring Monaro and South Coast as well as Terrigal on the Central Coast, bringing the total claimed seats to a higher-than-expected 10.

The Liberals also lost the northern beaches seat of Wakehurst, which retiring health minister Brad Hazzard held for 30 years, to a campaign mounted by popular local independent mayor Michael Regan.

Gladys Berejiklian's former seat of Willoughby remained on a knife edge with Liberal Tim James facing a strong challenge from independent Larissa Penn, who nearly beat him in a byelection in 2022.

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The Liberals were also under threat in Wollondilly, on Sydney's southern fringe, where Climate 200-backed independent Judy Hannan was performing strongly in the count late on Saturday night.


The Nationals lost Monaro, once held by former deputy premier John Barilaro, and failed to pick up Murray, held by former Shooters, Fishers and Farmers-turned-independent MP Helen Dalton.

Labor gained a 7.1 per cent statewide swing, with almost half of all votes counted as of 10.30pm.

The new premier arrived at the Novotel at Brighton-Le-Sands on Saturday night to address elated Labor supporters and was introduced by Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

Minns said Labor's victory provided a mandate to remove the Coalition's "unfair" public sector wages cap and change the state's constitution to prevent any possible future sale of Sydney Water. Both issues were central to Labor's election campaign.

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Dominic Perrottet started election day saying "we're gonna smash it", but as sausages sizzled and the ballots rolled in it became a smash and grab for Chris Minns and Labor.

"We will not let the people of this state down," Minns said.

"We will govern for everyone in NSW. We know that the challenges are huge, we know that the responsibilities are awesome, but NSW Labor is back and ready to govern in this great state."

Minns also thanked outgoing premier Dominic Perrottet for his service to the state.

"It's undeniably the case that this election campaign was, perhaps uniquely, a model of respect and civility. Neither party took the low road, neither political party took the low blow," Minns said.

"It can be a model for the way democracy is done right across this country."



Premier Dominic Perrottet concedes defeat at the Liberal Party's NSW Election event at the Hilton in Sydney. *CREDIT: JAMES BRICKWOOD*

About 9pm Perrottet called Minns to concede defeat before arriving at the Liberal Party's campaign function at the Hilton hotel in Sydney's CBD just before 10pm. Joined by wife Helen, Perrottet praised Minns for his "decency and integrity" before confirming that he would stand down as Liberal leader.

"Elections can get ugly, but I believe this election was truly a race to the top. A genuine battle of ideas, and that's when politics is at its best," Perrottet said. "In many ways that is due to Chris Minns and the way he has carried himself throughout this campaign. I have no doubt he will make a fine 47th premier of NSW."

Perrottet praised his predecessors, including Barry O'Farrell, Mike Baird and Berejiklian. "I stand on the shoulders of those who come before me," Perrottet said.

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Former prime minister and Liberal elder John Howard attended the campaign function but said now was not the time to make pronouncements about the party's future direction.

He said he admired Perrottet "enormously", particularly his determination to do something about the "social evil" of poker machines.

"He took over in incredibly difficult circumstances, and he campaigned in a heroic fashion. He put forward ideas, he was bold," Howard said.

"I pay tribute to the civil way in which the campaign was conducted."

Earlier in the night, Treasurer Matt Kean said the 12-year age of the government, retirement of sitting MPs and ministers, and recent scandals, were to blame for the loss.

"Internal challenges have ensured the momentum we needed wasn't there," Kean told the ABC.

"There were things that chewed up time that we didn't really have in getting our message out there. We were defending ourselves instead of being on the attack."

Labor was also ahead in Kiama. Asked about the collapse of the Liberal vote in the south coast seat, Baird said the party had to stop parachuting outside candidates into seats.

"You can't take your community for granted by putting in a candidate days or weeks before an election. How can you get a community's respect?" Baird said, in reference to the last-minute preselection of former Liberal Holsworthy MP Melanie Gibbons.

Asked whether the Liberal Party was "stuffed" at an organisational level, Baird replied: "I think that's a brutal but fair assessment."

"We've spent more time talking about Manhattan in New York rather than Mulgoa," Baird said, in reference to last year's damaging Barilaro trade appointment scandal.

"There are some incredible women who have not been given opportunities they should have."

One of the first seats called on Saturday night was Kogarah, held by Minns, which he struggled to hold in 2019 and became the most marginal electorate in the country.

Despite early expectations that either side could achieve minority government, a senior Liberal said Labor had managed to gain more momentum in the final week of the campaign, which was critical to win over a large number of undecided voters.

The source said Labor made up ground after Perrottet was distracted by revelations that he had called Hazzard, the outgoing health minister, for medical advice about his wife, Helen.

An ambulance was then called for her by NSW Ambulance Commissioner Dominic Morgan, who was in a meeting with Hazzard at the time.

Perrottet's campaign messaging was temporarily thrown off course, and he then underperformed in the final televised leaders' debate. While he did not fumble, the premier did not have the stand-out performance required at that stage of the campaign, the senior Liberal said.

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