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COUNT CONTINUES

ALP behind in key seats as hopes of majority fade

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The Minns government's hopes of forming a majority have faded as NSW Labor fell behind in the count for several crucial seats, reinforcing the role a historically large crossbench will play in parliament.

Labor was ahead in 46 seats late yesterday, including the electorate of Ryde where it has a slender lead, but the newly elected government is trailing in a handful of electorates that it will need if it is to pass legislation without the support of the crossbench. A total of 47 seats is needed for a majority.

As the count walked back Saturday's early calls of a majority Labor government after 12 years in the political wilderness, Premier Chris Minns said he was still confident of landing 46 or 47 seats, insisting no deals had been made with the incoming crossbench.

"We have had fruitful discussions with the crossbench, consistent with the principle that we took to the election that we wouldn't be horse-trading on policy deals," he said. "There hasn't been and that's consistent with my promise at the election."

The northern beaches seat of Pittwater was called for the Liberals' Rory Amon late yesterday, taking out teal contender Jacqui Scruby. None of the four teal candidates running in north shore Sydney seats were successful.

The race in Goulburn remains neck-and-neck between the major parties, with the Liberals ahead by 368 votes. About three-quarters of the votes in the electorate have been counted. Meanwhile, in the south-west Sydney seat of Holsworthy Liberal candidate Tina Ayyad has extended her lead to 526 votes, up from 340 late on Monday.

Liberal-turned-independent

Gareth Ward pulled ahead of Labor's Katelin McInerney in the electorate of Kiama during the vote count, leading by 615 votes.

Ward has a strong chance of winning the South Coast seat, despite facing historical sexual assault charges to which he pleaded not guilty in court yesterday. However, Minns said he was hopeful McInerney would be elected.

Despite initial big swings to Labor in the electorates of Terrigal and Miranda, Liberal incumbents Adam Crouch and Eleni Petinos have since gained the lead.

Petinos, a former minister dumped over bullying allegations she denies, led in Miranda by 532 on a two-candidate preferred basis, putting her on track for re-election. In Terrigal, Crouch was ahead by just 240 votes. However, in Ryde the Liberals remain behind, with Labor leading by 234 votes.

Shortly before noon, the *Herald* called the southern Sydney seat of Oatley for the Liberals, with incumbent Liberal MP Mark Coure taking a winning lead over Labor candidate Ash Ambihapahar.

Labor fiercely targeted the seat with extensive campaign resources and high-profile visits, but Coure said the community had spoken in favour of Liberal representation for the electorate.

“Labor threw everything at this campaign. We had Anthony Albanese twice in the electorate, his partner [Jodie Haydon] twice. Labor’s campaign bus started in my electorate and Labor and the unions were everywhere,” the outgoing minister said.

“But hard work pays off. We attained, we bucked the trend and got an extremely good result.”

While Labor may fall short of the required 47 seats for a majority, influential independent MPs Alex Greenwich, Greg Piper and Joe McGirr on Monday said they would guarantee confidence and supply if needed.

The new all-female NSW Greens said they were not beaten to the punch by the trio of independents, saying they had strong grounds to continue pursuing their agenda on rental reforms, cashless gaming and climate action.

“It’s not a winner takes all in this parliament. What we’re looking at here is a historically large crossbench,” said re-elected member for Newtown Jenny Leong.

She said any change in numbers over the next four years could result in a “considerable mix up in the power balance”.

About two-thirds of the statewide vote has now been counted following Saturday’s poll, which delivered a thumping loss to the Liberal Party and triggered the resignation of Dominic Perrottet as leader and Matt Kean as deputy.

The Coalition has gone from holding 46 seats to 31, with five still too close to call late yesterday.

Former attorney-general Mark Speakman, ex-planning minister Anthony Roberts and former Sports Minister Alister Henskens remain the most likely contenders to be opposition leader.

Badgerys Creek MP Tanya Davies has put her hand up for the deputy leadership of the party.