

## Barton Deakin Brief: Groom By-Election

**27 November 2020**

### Overview

The Groom by election will be held on Saturday, 28 November. The seat was vacated by retiring member the Hon. Dr John McVeigh, who held the seat from 2016.

The Liberal-National Party holds the seat by a margin of 20.5 per cent.

### Electorate Background

The Division of Groom was created in 1984, but it was largely a recreation of the Division of Darling Downs which had existed since Federation. The electorate covers 5,586 km<sup>2</sup> and includes the rural areas west of Brisbane with Toowoomba at its centre.

Since its creation as the Division of Darling Downs at Federation, the seat has never been won by the Labor Party. In its current iteration, it was first won by Tom McVeigh for the Nationals in 1984, followed by Bill Taylor for the Liberal Party from 1988 and Ian Macfarlane for the Liberal-Nationals from 1998. John McVeigh won the seat for the Liberal-Nationals in 2016, before retiring on 18 September 2020.



### Candidates

There are four candidates in the by-election.

#### Garth Hamilton – Liberal National Party of Queensland

Mr Hamilton studied engineering at the University of Queensland before working on several major projects around the world including major water infrastructure; rail and sporting facilities in Saudi Arabia; Tube stations and an airport terminal in London; and mining projects in Western Australia.

Mr Hamilton has written op-eds that oppose the Queensland State Labor Government's handling of the Coronavirus pandemic and has commented on the Australia-China and US relationships.

#### Chris Meibusch – Australian Labor Party

Mr Meibusch is a local community lawyer and has unsuccessfully contested the election on a number of occasions and ran for Toowoomba Regional Council in March this year.



### Craig Farquharson – Liberal Democrats

Mr Farquharson is the owner of KINGVAPEALOT in Toowoomba and has petitioned for cigarette alternatives. Mr Farquharson faced several charges from Queensland Police and the Department of Health related to nicotine products and vaping products, which were later dropped.

His policy platform is pro-vaping and pro-medicinal marijuana. His party has opposed restrictions on gun ownership, supported increasing uranium mining and exports, and the relaxation of smoking laws.

### Sandra Jephcott – Sustainable Australia

Ms Jephcott is a veterinarian and farmer living on a large property west of Toowoomba. Climate change is central to her policy platform. She has criticised the Federal Government prioritising economic growth over health and wellbeing.

Ms Jephcott has argued for oversight over foreign ownership in Australia, citing concerns about the sustainable management of our natural resources and the need to maintain profits, jobs, and taxes in Australia for the wellbeing of Australians.

### Key Issues

#### New Acland Coal Mine

There are plans to expand the New Acland Coal Mine. The development has been broadly supported by the Liberal Nationals and the Liberal Democrats. The Labor Party candidate referred to it as a state issue under the purview of the State Labor Government in Queensland. Sustainable Australia candidate Sandra Jephcott opposed the plans.

#### Federal Funding

Candidates opposing the Federal Coalition Government are critical that the electorate receives little funding because it is considered a safe seat. Both the ALP's Chris Meibusch and Sustainable Australia's Sandra Jephcott are arguing that the Federal Government has become complacent about the electorate.

### Further Information

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