

# Local MP Kelly in political limbo

by Don Pagé

Local MP Craig Kelly is in political limbo, denying that he will quit the Liberal Party before his term is over, as he faces defeat in a factional war before next year's Federal election.

But unsourced reports claimed later that he will run on his own, if he gets rolled by the party.

<https://www.theleader.com.au/story/5784343/craig-kelly-preparing-for-preselection-loss-to-kent-johns/?cs=1507>

Rumours of a challenge against him have been constantly in headlines, exposing deep divisions within the minority government of Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

The main rival for our conservative MP is Kent Johns, a centrist councillor in Sutherland Shire and an ambitious candidate for higher office. Hughes is normally a 'safe' Liberal seat.

"I certainly won't be defecting from the Liberal party," MP Kelly said on Thursday in response to reports that he had threatened to sit as an independent MP in the last weeks before the poll, if denied pre-selection.

He dodged whispers that he had been urged to quit now, by some within the party.

"People give you a lot of advice," he replied, expecting to get Liberal pre-selection although it is months away, as factional brawls continue behind closed doors.

MP Kelly chose his words carefully about his future, assuring that he would remain with the Liberal Government – at least until the election is called by April.

He laughed off a question of whether he would stand for election as an Independent in Parliament, if he lost pre-selection as a Liberal.

"I haven't considered that. The other options are to coach the Wallabies ... or become a Tibetan monk," joked the former rugby star.

"I haven't worked through those. I am concentrating on my job up to the next election."



MP Kelly, Tony Abbott, and a Menzies T-shirt

MP Kelly predicted "a very close contest" for the next Federal poll, as the national mood moves away from the political Right:

- His party's internal turmoil hit the national stage with the defection of a Liberal MP, Julia Banks in Victoria, only days ago. She delivered a scathing rebuke to party conservatives when she moved to the crossbench as an Independent MP in Parliament. She described as "brutal" the coup against the moderate Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, by a "reactionary and regressive right-wing" – among other biting criticisms.
- Another seismic shock was the by-election win of an Independent Kerryn Phelps, last month in the former safe seat of the ousted PM Turnbull.
- A huge swing in the Victorian election to the ALP Government also devastated Liberals a week ago.

*Symbols abound in a photo above of Craig Kelly, pictured in a T-shirt with the ghostly image of a party icon Sir Robert Menzies, a former PM Tony Abbott, as the Queen looks on (Fairfax News).*

<https://www.9news.com.au/2018/11/27/12/20/julia-banks-quits-liberal-party-to-sit-on-crossbench>

<https://www.news.com.au/national/politics/craig-kelly-is-planning-to-quit-the-liberal-party-and-run-as-an-independent/news-story/e3445393a099bb2144bff77b40268444>