

FAMILIES FEUD FOR M.P.'s SEAT

A family feud has erupted in a key State seat of a sitting government MP, Melanie Gibbons, challenged from within her own party by a former ally's wife. The MP for Holsworthy (but a local Shire resident) was "deeply shocked" when Liverpool's Deputy Mayor Tina Ayyad nominated for her State seat, according to Nine News political reporter Chris O'Keefe.

Ms Ayyad is the wife of a former colleague of Ms Gibbons -- Ned Mannoun of the party's moderate faction, a controversial Liverpool Mayor and a federal candidate in 2016 for Werriwa (Liverpool).

Ironically, roles were reversed when Ms Gibbons' partner Kent Johns challenged the more conservative Liberal Craig Kelly, the local federal MP for Hughes, before pre-selection last year. Cr Johns is the NSW Liberal Party president, a moderate and also on Sutherland Shire Council. But the threat was short-lived and MP Kelly triumphed.

If MP Gibbons faced losing to Cr Tina Ayyad for pre-selection in the West, she might look to the adjacent State seat of Heathcote, held in the Shire by her Liberal colleague Lee Evans who is nearing retirement age. He might choose to step aside if he had a better offer.

MP Gibbons held the former Menai State seat before it was abolished and split, which forced her to choose between the Shire-based Heathcote and Holsworthy, nearer Liverpool.

Spectacular political dramas have unrolled recently within the party, over electorates which straddle both Sutherland and Liverpool council areas, both State and Federal. These included death threats to Ms Gibbons at a meeting two years ago, as a factional battle was fought in the branches between Mayor Mannoun and Cr Peter Ristevsky, a conservative.

Verbal pot-shots were exchanged for many months, with ICAC raids on political offices and allegations in Parliament, later dismissed as unfounded.

FACTIONS WITHIN FACTIONS

The family feuding in the State seat is reported to have stemmed from a bitter local dispute. Ms Ayyad had a meteoric rise to deputy-mayor after winning pre-selection on Liverpool council a year ago, after her husband Mayor Mannoun left politics, along with right-winger Cr Peter Ristevski following their very public conflict (see article below).

The Liberal Party holds Holsworthy by a 6 percent margin and Ms Gibbons may not have the support to win preselection, Nine News reported.

Elsewhere, three other MPs are also reportedly being challenged: in Oatley, Terrigal and Riverstone. Liberal sources are said to be furious with the challengers, claiming that party convention has been that a sitting MP is not challenged in preselection. But this is not always observed.

Opposition Leader Luke Foley was quick to attack both the sitting MP and her party, after the challenge was aired. He called it "a reflection of the discontent in the local Liberal Party branches."

Mr Foley told Nine News, "This comes as no surprise. Melanie Gibbons is an ineffective local member." The Liberal Party would not comment openly on internal party issues.

www.woronoravalley.com 11 Dec 2017

<https://www.9news.com.au/national/2017/11/28/19/32/four-nsw-government-mps-face-bitter-internal-challenge>

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Archive, 4 October 2016

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POLITICS OF THE WILD WEST

The ALP has taken the powerful mayor's job at Liverpool Council, unlike nearby Sutherland Shire. Both councils are finely balanced, after years of political brawling within Liberal ranks cost them dearly at recent elections.... -- 4 Oct 2016

At Liverpool, there were allegations of death threats over years, police were called to council meetings, ICAC raids on Mayor Ned Mannoun's home and office, and allegations in Parliament of real-estate gifts for high-rise approvals. [No proof was found on investigation.]

Suspicious fires at Council buildings and Liberal nepotism were suggested by NSW MLC Robert Borsak (Shooters and Fishers Party) a year ago under parliamentary privilege -- and much more, all denied by Mayor Mannoun.

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/robert-borsak-uses-parliament-to-air-allegations-against-liverpool-mayor-ned-mannoun-20150910-gjjmj9.html>

A former Sutherland Shire Liberal was among many party faithful given jobs on Liverpool Council.

Constant battles were waged between Mayor Mannoun and his former deputy, Peter Ristevski, until the recent council elections. Both fell on their swords beforehand.

Mayor Mannoun left politics after ICAC raided his home and office months ago. His nemesis Cr Ristevski did not stand again, but his Facebook page gave his home address as Whale Beach in the northern suburbs, a long drive from his origins near Liverpool. There were counter-allegations that Cr Ristevski was linked with a convicted criminal, with photographs on Facebook.

DEATH THREAT FOR M.P.

Local resident and State MP Melanie Gibbons (Holsworthy, Liberal) is a factional ally of Mayor Mannoun, and was drawn in along with her close Shire colleague, Cr Kent Johns, a former Liberal candidate for the nearby Federal seat of Werriwa. She allegedly received a death threat at a party meeting in faction fighting in the branches.

Another Shire MP Scott Morrison, now Treasurer, was also drawn into the faction brawl after being photographed at a party fundraiser with a convicted drug dealer who was a donor. The MP for Cook denied any involvement in organising the function or the photographs.

Factions in the Shire are split along similar party lines.

Liberal support waned among voters after the warfare from 2012 on, but Labor recovered by 2016 to match it evenly, with two independents gaining the balance of power. One has past ALP links.

In Sutherland Shire, that key vote is held by a newly-independent councillor, Steve Simpson, who split from the Liberals just before the September election (*see separate article, WVRA website*).

COLORFUL NEW MAYOR

Labor's Wendy Waller became Liverpool mayor by popular election in September 2016, giving the ALP the slight edge this time. In Sutherland Shire, a tight result went the other way, with a lucky-dip draw between two candidates restoring a Liberal as mayor, Carmelo Pesce.

Voting was tied 7-7 in the Shire, due to the crucial absence overseas of a new ALP councillor from the crucial mayoral-election meeting. Liverpool mayors are elected directly by the people, in the Shire by councillors.

Mayor Waller has a long history on Liverpool Council, and was Deputy Mayor when it was sacked in 2004 by the State Government over real-estate issues. She was famously known as mayor in 2009 for threatening castration for another Labor councillor, over the leaking of details of a controversial contract.

WARNING WITH EXPLETIVES DELETED

"I'm ringing you because the Sunday papers are chasing the ALP caucus members ... someone has talked to them," she warned via a recorded message on a telephone answering machine.

"Now, I'm ringing everybody and I'm saying the same thing: if I find out it's you, I will have your b**** on a f***** plate, is that clear?"

<http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/testy-mayors-castration-threat/story-e6frewt0-1225772233976>

Former Mayor Mannoun and fellow Liberals won narrowly at the next election in 2012, overturning the ALP widely in its former heartland of Western Sydney.

Before quitting politics, the Liberal mayor anointed his deputy Tony Hadchiti to succeed him, but he lost to Labor's Wendy Waller.

Despite former Mayor Mannoun leaving to spend more time with the family, his wife then stood for Council and won as a Liberal under her own name, Tina Ayyad.

PORK AS A POLITICAL ISSUE

Cr Ristevski was relentlessly in the headlines. After pork was dropped from a Council function, he attacked Mayor Mannoun for pushing a pro- Muslim and pro-halal agenda, at the expense of pork-loving people of Balkan and other origins. He was photographed for the news media (*right*), grilling pork in protest on the BBQ in a Liverpool park.

Cr Ristevski attacked the Muslim mayor for wanting "complete Islamification of Liverpool, one halal sausage at a time".

<http://www.smh.com.au/nsw/liverpool-councils-ned-mannoun-and-peter-ristevski-trade-accusations-over-chief-executive-20160227-gn5bfg.html>

