

TJRyan Foundation Research Associate Dr Paul Williams speculated in an interview by Matthew Killoran in the *Courier-Mail* (22.7.14) on future for LNP following losses at Stafford and Redcliffe by-elections

GOVERNMENTS thrashed in by-elections less than a year before polling day face an electoral bloodbath, history shows.

At a federal and state level, the huge swings close to a general election tend to be repeated on polling day, but not to the same extent.

Griffith University political scientist Dr Paul Williams said a big swing at a by-election less than a year from the main event was a clear sign of voters getting out the baseball bats. In the by-election for the federal seat of Bass in June 1975, Labor's Lance Barnard was trounced with a 13.8 per cent swing to Liberal candidate Kevin Newman – Campbell Newman's father. The conservatives went on to topple the Whitlam government in December, after the controversial double dissolution.

"There's a bit of dramatic irony there," he said. "No one expected Labor to go down, but then after the by-election everyone knew (the Liberals) had the election in the bag."

In March 2010 in the NSW state by-election for Penrith, there was a 25 per cent swing against the Labor government, which was followed by a 13 per cent swing at the general election eight months later.

"Those were some of the biggest swings we've seen in living memory," he said. "Anything above 15 per cent is a harbinger of doom."

When there was a by-election in Sir Joh Bjelke Petersen's seat of Barambah in 1988, there was a swing of 34 per cent against the Nationals and Trevor Perrett of the Citizens Electoral Council was elected. While later that year Mr Perrett joined the National Party, Labor headed by Wayne Goss easily won the general election in December 1989.

There was an 18.6 per cent swing against the Government at the Stafford by-election on the weekend, which was won by Labor's Anthony Lynham, and a 17.1 per cent swing at Redcliffe in February.

Dr Williams said it showed voters had already made up their minds to punish the Newman Government and had stopped listening to what it was saying.

"I can't recall ever by-election swings of 17 and 18 per cent for a first-term government," he said. "They're the numbers you see in a dying, fourth-term government."

Dr Williams said the LNP would sneak over the line, but Premier Campbell Newman would lose Ashgrove, leaving the top job up for grabs.

"In greater Brisbane there will be a swing of greater than 10 per cent," he said.

"They risk minority government if they lose Brisbane."