

**Western
Sydney
Leadership
Dialogue**

2024 Local Government Elections Interim Brief

SEPTEMBER 2024

The Dialogue's GWS local government
elections analysis

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INTRODUCTION

NSW voters went to the polls on Saturday 14th September to decide what their local councils will look like for the next four years. Despite votes across a number of local government areas, and wards, still being counted, some early commentary can (and has) be made about the voting trends, and likely results. This 2024 Local Government Elections Brief has been compiled by the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue using early information that is accurate as of September 17th.

To little surprise, these elections were strongly shaped by the lack of Liberal Party candidates in many council areas, and the issues that are front of mind for the different communities, including cost of living, housing, and the war in Gaza.

The issues surrounding the failure to nominate Liberal candidates in many contests was well publicised in the lead up to this election. At least 14 NSW council wards had no or few Liberal nominations, due to an administration error by the party executive. As seen in our brief, this influenced the outcome of quite a few council elections, including Penrith where a whole ward of Labor councillors was elected unopposed, shifting the council's majority.

Greater Western Sydney (GWS) saw several interesting trends in this election. The Greens are looking likely to have gained more in the West than through their traditional voter base. This includes the likelihood of picking up first-time seats in Blacktown and Cumberland and the potential to gain a second seat for the first time in Campbelltown (and potentially other councils).

The right-aligned minority group, the Libertarians have benefitted from the absence of the Liberals and are looking like they will pick up seats in Penrith, Canterbury-Bankstown and Camden, as well as other NSW Councils. Previously known as the Liberal Democrats, the Libertarians broad council election platform included "getting the woke B.S. out of council" and "smart cities? No way!".

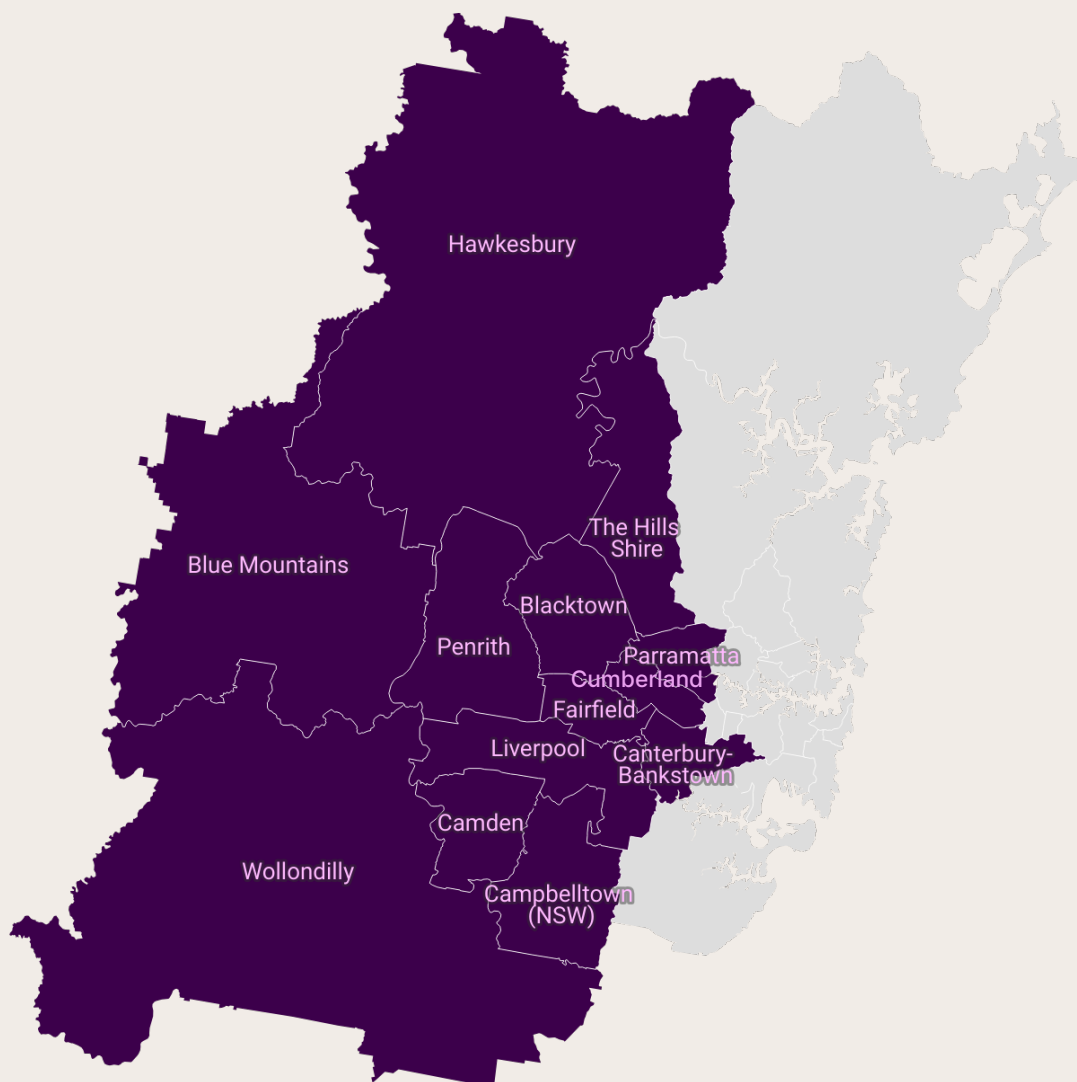
The Labor Party didn't benefit from the reduced Liberal contest as much as might have been expected. Across the region there were examples of Labor holding onto their seats, but often not adding to them. While a Labor majority was gained in Penrith, and potentially in Campbelltown (through a coalition), there has been early evidence of small swings against the party. Additionally, Labor looked to have lost their outright majority in both Canterbury-Bankstown and Cumberland – opening the door to more conservative blocs.

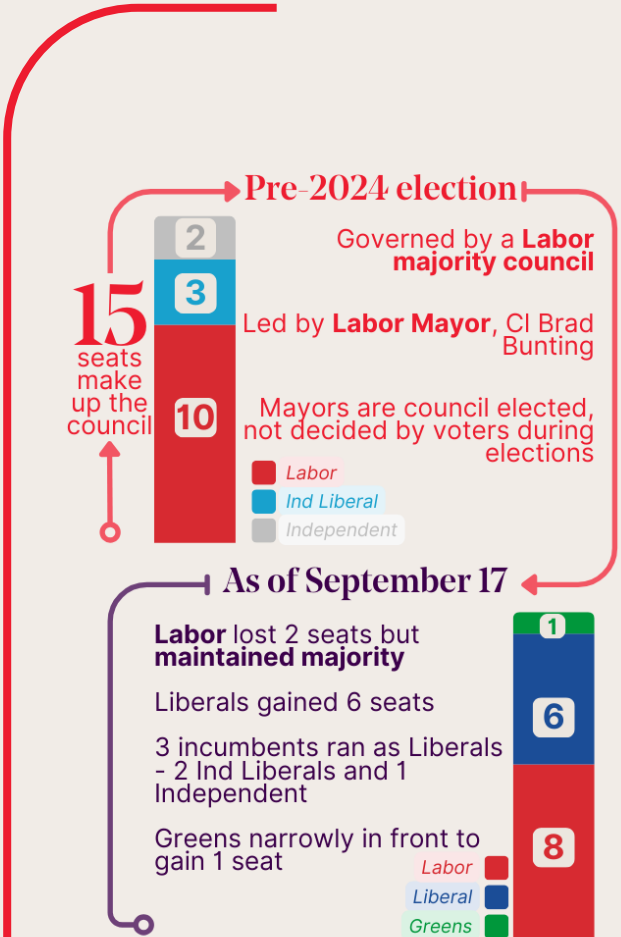
Parramatta is one of the few Councils where the dynamics will change due to the makeup of the opposition (and not the majority). The Labor-Greens-Independent majority seems likely to be maintained. The difference is that all 4 of the Our Local Community incumbents have lost their seats. So, even though the Liberals have gained enough seats to match Labor's seat numbers, they now lack conservative allies within the council makeup.

In Fairfield, the Carbone-Dai Le alliance continues to dominate. Carbone was re-elected as Mayor on a margin of almost 80%. Between the two parties, they hold 10 (including the Mayor) of Fairfield Council's 13 seats.

Other Councils with directly elected Mayors have maintained support for well-known leaders, with the Hills Shire backing in former (2016-21) Liberal Mayor Michelle Byrne and Liverpool showing strong support for the incumbent Mayor Ned Mannoun (Liberal).

MAP: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF GREATER WESTERN SYDNEY





BLACKTOWN CITY COUNCIL

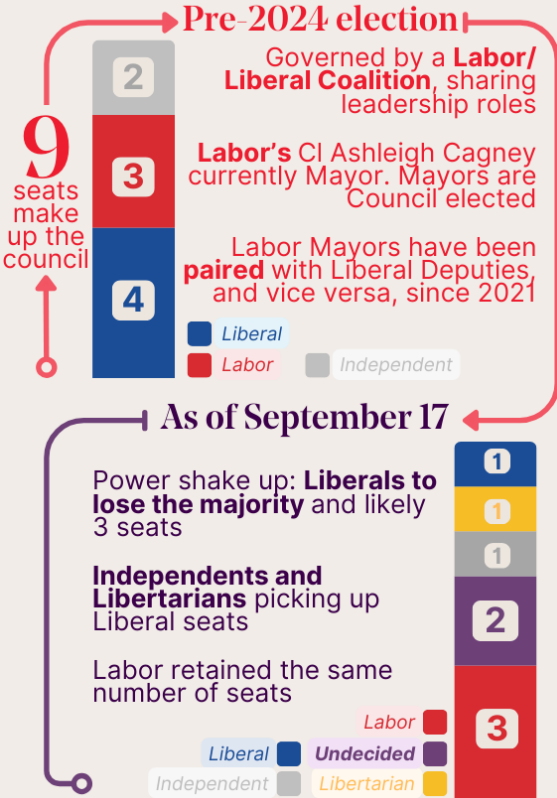
Blacktown has been a Labor majority council, led by a Labor Mayor since 2014. It seems likely to lose 2 seats but maintain the majority, however in a less strong position. It is looking like 8 Labor seats, 6 Liberal and potentially 1 Greens at this point in time¹.

Blacktown had plenty of Liberal nominations for this council, despite the issues seen in other councils. The Greens might see success for the first time in Blacktown, with most recent counts showing that they're narrowly in front to pick up a seat where they haven't managed to before.

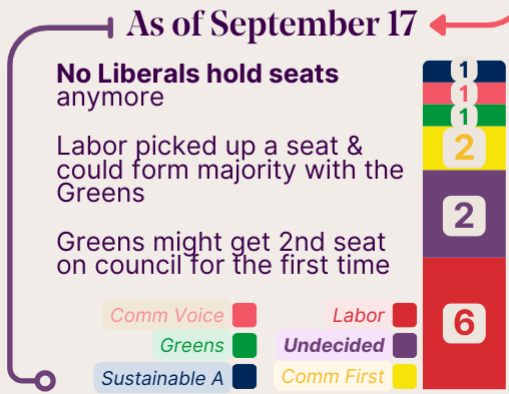
CAMDEN COUNCIL

This council had been governed by a Liberal-Labor coalition, with both parties sharing leadership roles for several years. This balance will see a serious shakeup, strongly influenced by the lack of Liberal Party nominations. Currently we're looking at a result of 3 Labor seats, 1 Independent, 1 Libertarian, 1 Liberal and 2 still undecided².

The Liberals were always going to lose their one seat advantage (4v3) over Labor, as only three Liberal candidates were put up to run in this election. Now it seems likely that the Liberals will only hold onto 1 of their seats; with Libertarians and Independents grappling over the others.



¹ Raue, B, 17 September 2024, [NSW councils – post count](#), Tallyroom
² Ibid.



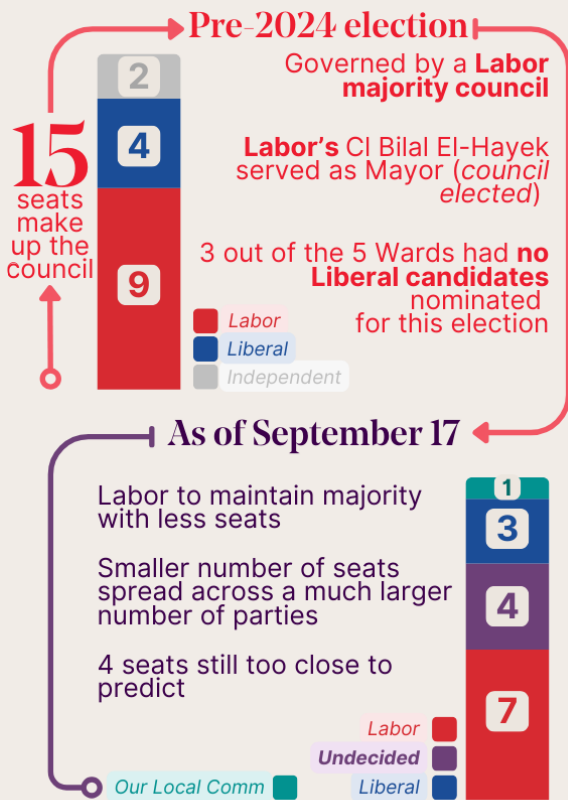
CAMPBELLTOWN CITY COUNCIL

Campbelltown Council had been governing with a loose Liberal and Independent majority alliance. This won't continue, however, as the complete lack of Liberal contest in this election has seen them lose every seat. The 4 incumbent Liberal seats, including the mayor's, were up for grabs before the ballots even opened.

The result is currently looking like: 6 Labor, 2 Community First Totally Independent, 1 Community Voice, 1 Greens, 1 Sustainable Australia and 4 are still undecided³.

There is a left and right swing in these results that will be interesting to look at in more detail when the booth level votes are confirmed. The Greens look like they could pick up 2 seats which is something they've not managed to come close to before. Labor will pick up 1 extra seat, however, potentially could nab 2 but that could be affected by a small swing against them. Anti-migration group Sustainable Australia picked up 1 seat and is in contention for a second. While right-wing Independent Adam Zahra looks like he could win a seat as well.

³ Raue, B, 17 September 2024, [NSW councils – post count](#), Tallyroom



CITY OF CANTERBURY-BANKSTOWN COUNCIL

The 2024 results are looking as though 7 seats will go to Labor, 3 to the Liberals, 1 to Our Local Community, with 4 still undecided⁴.

Labor came into this election with a strong majority in Canterbury-Bankstown, but it looks as though they'll be coming out of it at least 2 seats shorter. This includes losing a seat to the Liberals in the Revesby ward, which is only 1 of 2 wards where the Liberals ran a full ticket (or any candidates at all).

There were no Liberals running in 2 out of 5 wards, they subsequently lost their Bass Hill seat, and another in Roselands, where they only ran a partial ticket. Their 2 retained seats plus the 1 gained in Revesby will leave them with 3 councillors.

The Greens had a good run in Sydney's suburbs, which could include winning back a seat from an Independent in the Canterbury ward. Our Local Community have also gained their first seat in Canterbury-Bankstown and look as though they might pick up a 2nd. The Libertarians are also front runners to pick up a seat in Bass Hill ward.

⁴ Raue, B, 17 September 2024, [NSW councils – post count](#), Tallyroom



CUMBERLAND COUNCIL

The council is divided into 5 wards - Granville, Greystanes, Regents Park, South Granville and Wentworthville - with each ward represented by three councillors.

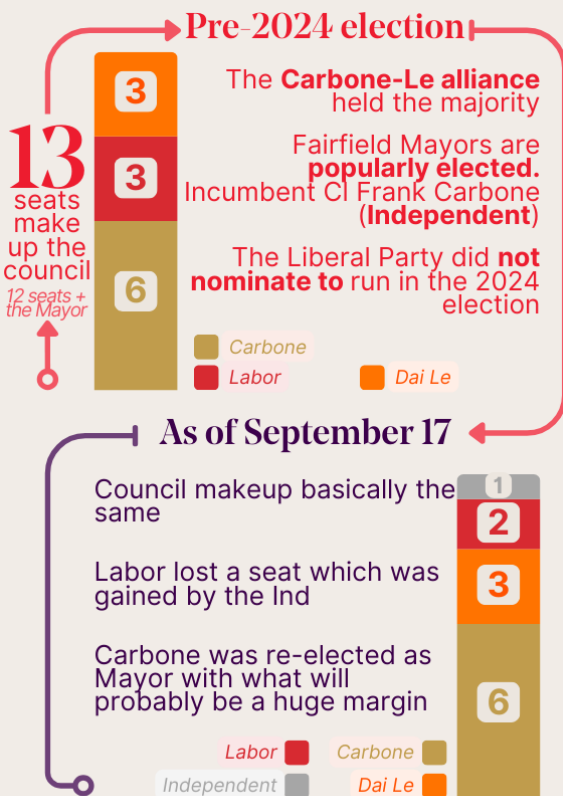
Cumberland was a Labor majority council since its first election after amalgamation in 2017. It is also one of the few councils where the main political opposition has been a minor, localised party (Our Local Community). This looks like it will now change, with Labor probably losing their council majority. Big swings against the party will see them lose at least 2 seats, and potentially a 3rd.

There are still 5 seats not clear enough to call, but at the moment Labor has 4 seats, 3 are going to the Liberals, 2 to Our Local Community, and 1 to an Independent. The Greens are strongly contesting for 1 seat and look like they will nab it off Labor to gain their first for this Council⁵.

With the collapse of the Labor vote, the door is open for a council majority to be made up of a conservative Liberal, Independent and Our Local Community bloc.

The Liberals ran 15 candidates in this election seeking to rectify not holding a single seat on council, after not contesting the 2021 election. They successfully added 3 seats with a possible fourth still to be decided in Regents Park.

⁵ Raue, B, 17 September 2024, [NSW councils – post count](#), Tallyroom



FAIRFIELD COUNCIL

The council consists of 2 wards, Parks and Fairfield/Cabravale, with each ward represented by 6 councillors. Fairfield is the only council in GWS that has been led by a coalition involving no major parties. This trend has continued with Frank Carbone's (incumbent Mayor) party and the Dai Le Party, picking up most votes in both wards. Labor appears set to retain only 2 seats, losing the third to a non-aligned Independent.

Fairfield is 1 of 4 GWS local governments where the Mayor is popularly elected. Cr Frank Carbone became Mayor in 2021 and will retain his position after a landslide win where Carbone picked up almost 80% of votes against Basim Shamaon. The Liberal party did not run any candidates in this election.

At present it is looking like the council party make up will be basically the same as it was pre-election. Carbone will have their 6 retained seats, plus the Mayoral position. Dai Le Party will also retain their 3. Labor will end up with 2 seats, with the Independent picking up 1 off them⁶.

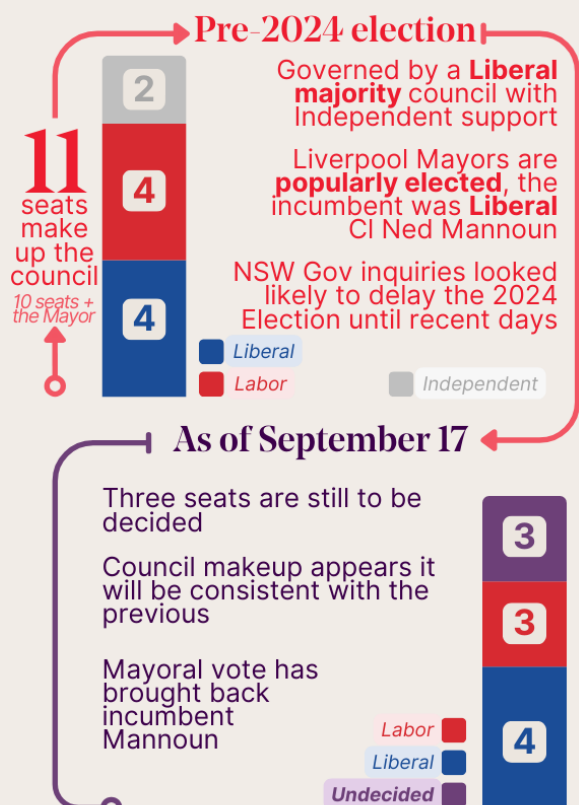
LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL

It was looking like Liverpool Council wasn't going to be allowed to conduct an election, due to an ongoing NSW Government inquiry into council conduct. The green light was given by government at the eleventh hour, just over a week prior to the voting date.

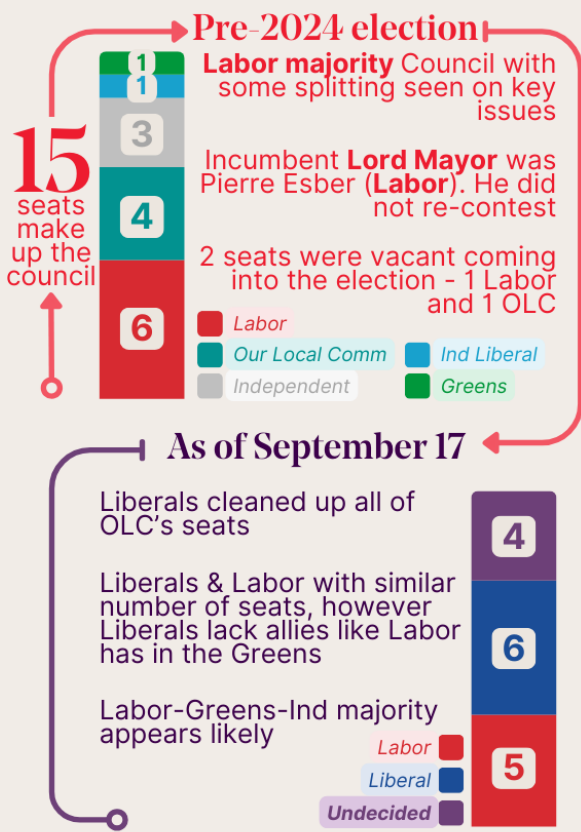
This council has been run by a Liberal-Independent coalition, headed by popularly elected Liberal Mayor, Ned Mannoun. The council is 1 of 2 in Greater Sydney that chose not to use the Australian Electoral Commission to run its election.

Mannoun won the Mayoralty, securing over 40% of the vote. Liberals claimed 4 seats and Labor has retained at least 3. Some seats are still in contention, with 1 looking likely to be claimed by Labor, and the other 2 still too close to be called⁷.

The NSW Government is yet to indicate when it will commence its public inquiry into the previous administration of Liverpool City Council, and it is unclear how this may impact the newly formed council.



⁶ Raue, B, 17 September 2024, [NSW councils – post count](#), Tallyroom
⁷ Ibid.



CITY OF PARRAMATTA COUNCIL

The council has been run by a Labor, Greens and Independent alliance; however, votes had frequently split over key issues. Despite having a Lord Mayor (the only other Sydney council with one is the City of Sydney), the City of Parramatta does not popularly elect its civic leader. The Dialogue has been advocating for this to change for several years.

With 4 seats still undecided, Labor currently has 5 confirmed seats but will likely end up with 6. The Liberals are also likely to pick up 6 seats after not holding any on the previous council. 4 of these seats were swept from the Our Local Community party (leaving none on council). Of the undecided seats, 1 looks likely go to Kellie Darley's Community Champions and the Greens are favourites for the remaining 2⁸.

The Labor-Greens-Independent majority seems likely to be maintained, however the power dynamics within the council will shift now that Our Local Community is out of the picture. While the Liberals match Labor's seat numbers, they lack conservative allies within the council makeup.

PENRITH CITY COUNCIL

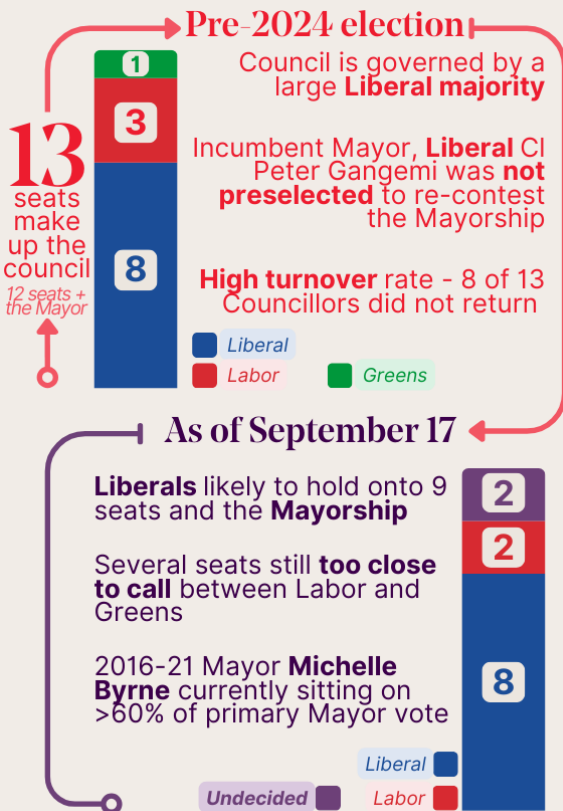
The council consists of 3 wards - North, South, and East - and each ward is made up of 5 councillors. The council came into this election with Liberal and Labor Councillors with 6 and 4 seats each, and had been functioning as an alliance since 2016, with Cr Todd Carney (Labor) serving as Mayor from 2022.

One of three Penrith wards had Labor candidates running for 5 seats completely unopposed. This was the result of the apparent mishandling of the Liberal nominations. As such (and as expected), Labor will now hold the council majority with at least 8 seats. Liberals will likely end up with 2 seats (down from 6), and 1 will go to a Libertarian⁹.

There are 4 seats that are still too close to call and will decide whether Labor picks up a larger majority, so this is still one to watch.



⁸ Raue, B, 17 September 2024, [NSW councils – post count](#), Tallyroom
⁹ Ibid.



THE HILLS SHIRE COUNCIL

The council consists of 12 Councillors, with 4 wards represented by 3 councillors each, plus a popularly elected Mayor.

The Hills is a Liberal stronghold at all three levels of government, despite seeing noticeable swings away from the party in recent elections, including the 2021 council elections which saw the Greens pick up a seat.

The council saw unusually high attrition rates coming into this election, with eight of the 13 Councillors not returning to contest their seat. This includes former Mayor Peter Gangemi, who lost preselection for this election to former Mayor, Michelle Byrne. Despite the turnover, the Liberals were still expected to come out of this election with the majority, and this will be the case.

The result is currently looking like the Liberals will hold onto 9 seats and the Mayorship (10 total). There is still some jostling occurring between the Greens and Labor, with Labor in contention for 2-4 seats, and the Greens for 0-2 seats¹⁰.

Michelle Byrne has regained the Mayoral position, currently sitting on over 60% of the primary vote. This installation of a more centrist Mayor plus the Councillor churn may signal a move to more moderate politics for the Hills.

¹⁰ Raue, B, 17 September 2024, [NSW councils – post count](#), Tallyroom

Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue


The Dialogue is a not-for-profit, community initiative leading a national conversation about Greater Western Sydney.


The Dialogue facilitates interaction between key opinion leaders, across industry, government, academia and the community, to inform public policy debate and to advance a Western Sydney regional agenda through research, analysis, advocacy & events.

If you would like to know about partnering with the Dialogue, please email info@westernsydney.org.au requesting our company credentials or an event sponsorship prospectus.

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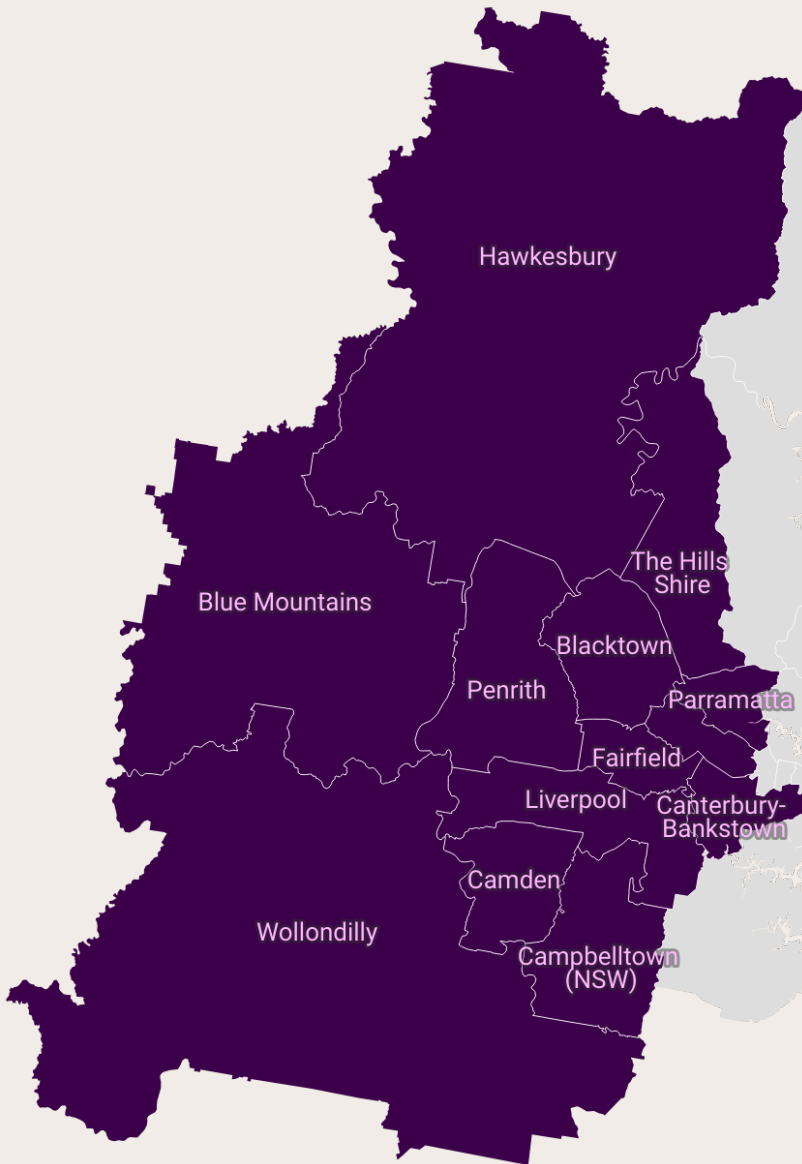
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