

# WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

HOW AUSTRALIA'S MOST DYNAMIC REGION  
IS SHAPING THE 2023 NSW ELECTION



**CENTRE FOR  
WESTERN SYDNEY**





# ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

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IS SHAPING THE 2023 NSW ELECTION**

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A CENTRE FOR WESTERN SYDNEY  
ISSUES PAPER

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Images by Sally Tsoutas

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**CENTRE FOR  
WESTERN SYDNEY**

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# WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

PROFESSOR ANDY MARKS & TOM NANCE

Produced by the Centre for Western Sydney, this special report shows how Australia's fastest-growing, most diverse, and politically contested region is shaping the 2023 NSW election.

## KEY POINTS

- 1 Just on one-third of the anticipated 4.7 million total votes cast at the 25 March 2023 NSW Election will be lodged in Western Sydney.
- 2 Some of NSW's most marginal electorates are in Sydney's West, namely East Hills, Leppington and Penrith.
- 3 For the first time, the proportion of Western Sydney voters with a university degree exceeds the national average.
- 4 The retirement of experienced Liberal MPs across Western Sydney has left the Coalition vulnerable in previously safe seats.
- 5 Protracted preselection processes for Labor in the South-West have led to a potential independent challenge in the seats of Cabramatta and Fairfield





## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

### KEY POINTS (continued)

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- 6** Soaring costs of living – a key issue at this election – is impacting Western Sydney disproportionately due to lower household income levels.<sup>1</sup>
- 7** Barriers to delivering quality education, including infrastructure lags and high teacher turnover, will compound lower educational attainment levels in the region.<sup>2</sup>
- 8** Large hospital infrastructure spending has not made the desired impact in the region, with health outcomes trailing that of the rest of Sydney.<sup>3</sup>
- 9** Given the significant impact of gambling-related harm on communities in the West, the proposed reforms by both parties are being scrutinised closely by voters.<sup>4</sup>
- 10** There are seven key seats in Western Sydney that will likely decide the outcome of the 2023 NSW election.<sup>5</sup>
- 11** If swings from the Federal Election are applied to these seats, Labor will secure three additional seats from the Coalition, positioning them to form government.

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1. There are nearly 15 per cent more households in the bottom two income quartiles in Western Sydney when compared to the rest of Sydney (map, p 12).

2. Higher education attainment in Western Sydney lags the rest of Sydney by over 14 per cent (map, p 15).

3. Diabetes is significantly more prevalent in Western Sydney than the Rest of Sydney (map, p 17).

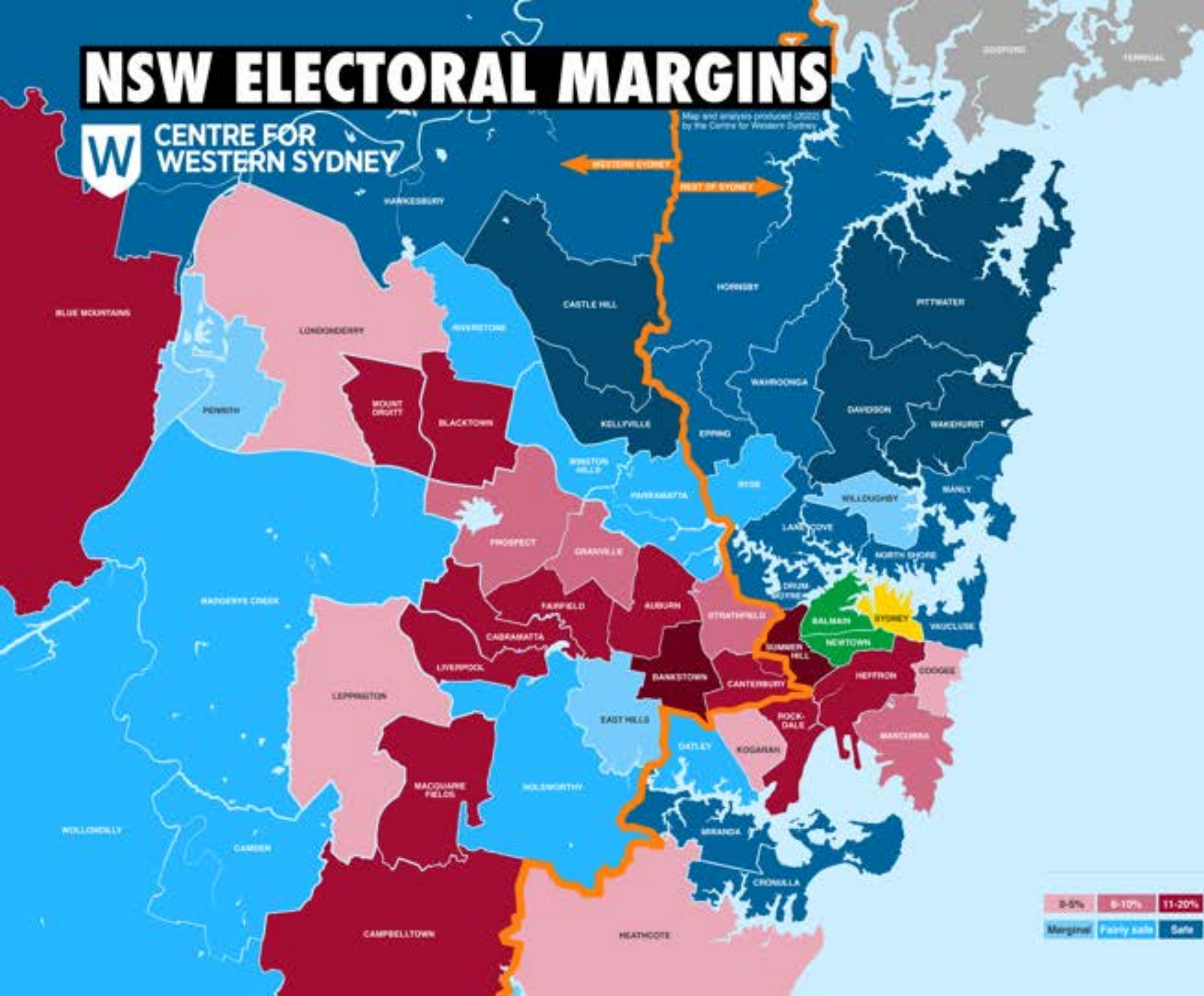
4. Western Sydney incurs 63 per cent of Greater Sydney's total gambling losses (map, p 19).

5. The key Western Sydney seats: East Hills, Holsworthy, Leppington, Parramatta, Penrith, Riverstone and Winston Hills.

# NSW ELECTORAL MARGINS

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Map and analysis produced ©2022 by the Centre for Western Sydney



## Marginality compared

NSW two-party preferred margins across Greater Sydney

2019 election results, including adjustments for 2022 boundary redistributions

%		%			
East Hills	9.1	Wendy Lindsay	Manly	12.9	James Griffin
Kogarah	9.1	Chris Minns	Blue Mountains	13.6	Trish Doyle
Penrith	9.6	Sharron Byrne	Drummoyne	13.6	John Gibbi
Leppington	1.5	(New Electorate)	Auburn	13.7	Lynnda Wyatt
Heathcote	1.7	Lee Evans*	Miranda	14.4	Eloni Peleice
Coogee	2.3	Marjorie O'Neill	Lane Cove	14.7	Anthony Roberts
Londonderry	3.8	Prue Car	Macquarie Fields	14.8	Anousack Charthong
Willoughby	3.3	Tim James	Canterbury	15.2	Sophie Cotter
Strathfield	5.2	Jason Yat-Sen Li	Heffron	15.3	Ron Hoang
Winston Hills	6.7	Mark Taylor	Campbelltown	16.0	Greg Warren
Wollondilly	8.0	Nathaniel Smith	Hawkesbury	16.6	Robyn Preston
Holsworthy	8.8	Melanie Gibbons	Blacktown	16.7	Stephen Ball
Riverstone	9.2	Kevin Connolly	Fairfield	16.8	Guy Zangerl
Parramatta	9.5	Geoff Lee	Hornsby	16.9	Matt Kean
Oatley	9.8	Mark Courie	Liverpool	17.4	Paul Lynch
Camden	7.3	Peter Skogrewas	Mount Drutt	18.5	Edmond Abala
Maroubra	6.5	Michael Daley	Wahroonga	19.6	Alister Henderson
Prospect	6.6	Hugh McDermott	Cabramatta	19.3	Nick Latch
Ryde	6.9	Victor Cominello	Vaucluse	19.4	Gabrielle Upton
Granville	6.4	Julia Finn	Cronulla	19.6	Mark Speakman
Badgerys Creek	9.7	Tanya Davies	Bankstown	20.5	Tania Mroczuk
Balmain	10.0	Janis Parker	Summer Hill	21.6	Ji Hayden
Rockdale	10.0	Steve Kemper	Wakehurst	21.8	Brad Hazzard
North Shore	11.1	Felicity Wilson	Castle Hill	22.4	Ray Williams
Epping	11.3	Dominic Perrotta	Pittwater	22.4	Rob Stokes
Newtown	11.4	Jenny Leong	Kellyville	23.1	David Elliott
Sydney	11.8	Alex Greenwich	Davidson	34.8	Jonathan O'Dea

0-5% Marginal  
6-10% Fairly safe  
11-20% Safe  
21%+ Very safe

Liberal  
Green  
Independent

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## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# THE SETTING

**AN ESTIMATED 1.54 MILLION WESTERN SYDNEY RESIDENTS will vote on 25 March at the NSW election. That represents around one-third of the total votes that will be cast across the state. As this Centre of Western Sydney report illustrates, how *Western Sydney Votes* will significantly determine the outcome, and likely signal broader shifts ahead for Australian politics.**

Electoral politics is perhaps the last thing on the minds of many people across Western Sydney. They are contending with the profoundly heightened cost of living pressures. Wages for most workers in Sydney's West are not keeping pace with inflation, and a growing proportion of the region's mortgage holders are struggling to absorb the impact of relentless interest rate increases.

**“Electoral politics is perhaps the last thing on the mind of many people across western Sydney.”**

After 12 years of incumbency, the Liberal-National Coalition is looking for another term. On the back of a sustained asset recycling and infrastructure program, its commitment at the last Budget was to “invest in more than just bricks and steel” and focus on people. Alternatively, the Labor Opposition seeks a “fresh start” for the state, pledging “more teachers... healthcare workers and [hospital] beds” along with “more accessible transport [and] more affordable housing”.

Getting cut through with these messages will be challenging in an economic climate where everyday concerns drown out grand political visions. In this setting, the approach that succeeds will be the one that best speaks to the lived experience of Western Sydney voters.





## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# LIVED EXPERIENCE

**THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF WESTERN SYDNEY RESIDENTS is changing at a pace and in ways not seen elsewhere across the country. Elements of that change have been exceedingly positive, other shifts, less so, with potentially significant electoral implications.**

As the Centre for Western Sydney revealed in its 2022 ‘Untapped Talent’ report, the ranks of the region’s university-qualified people rose by 34.6 per cent over the past decade, faster than the national increase of 28.5 per cent. Just on 27.2 per cent of Western Sydney residents now hold a university degree, compared to 26.3 per cent nationally and 22 per cent across NSW.

**“Toll costs for the region’s commuters are comparatively high, as is car dependency.”**

A plan from either major party to harness this remarkable skills surge will likely align with what is clearly an unmatched, regionally concentrated belief in the importance of education.

Despite gains in university qualification, wider educational inequity persists throughout Sydney’s West compared to the rest of Sydney. Housing unaffordability is entrenched and compounded by growing pockets of mortgage and rental stress. Toll costs for the region’s commuters are comparatively high, as is car dependency. The capacity to choose to work from home is much lower than in the rest of Sydney, as is access to transport and digital participation.



## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# CHANGING OF THE GUARD

**THE CREATION OF A NEW SEAT IN WESTERN SYDNEY PLUS A SLEW OF RETIREMENTS** means that there will be at least 15 new faces in parliament from Greater Sydney.

The curtain falls on the career of Health Minister Brad Hazzard, the longest-serving member of the Legislative Assembly. Joining him are a number of senior figures in the government, including Victor Dominello, Dr Rob Stokes and Minister for Western Sydney, David Elliott.

**“The loss of these key leaders within the party has created an additional challenge for the Liberal Party in the lead-up to the election.”**

On the other side of the aisle, the retirement of Paul Lynch, Nick Lulich and Guy Zangari mean Labor will be fielding a new-look team in its traditional stronghold of South-Western Sydney.

To replace some of these losses, both parties have resorted to a tried and tested method – raiding local government for talent.

Popular Labor councillors from Liverpool, Nathan Hagerty and Charishma Kaliyanda will contest the seats of Leppington and Liverpool. Similarly, Labor will be represented in the seats of Parramatta and Winston Hills by Donna Davis and Sameer Pandey, respectively the Lord Mayor and Deputy Lord Mayor of Parramatta. Meanwhile, the Liberals have drafted Camden Mayor Therese Fedeli to contest Leppington, while former Liverpool councillor Tina Ayyad will run in Holsworthy.



# CHANGING OF THE GUARD

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Map and analysis produced 2020 by the Centre for Western Sydney

Mapping and analysis by the Centre for Western Sydney  
www.westernsydney.edu.au/cws

## Personnel Changes

Retirements and new electorates across Greater Sydney

2019 election results, including adjustments for 2022 boundary redistributions

- Leppington **1.8** New electorate
- Holsworthy **6.6** Melanie Gibbons retiring (served since 2011)
- Riverstone **6.2** Kevin Connolly retiring (served since 2011)
- Parramatta **6.2** The Hon. Geoff Lee retiring (served since 2011)
- Ryde **5.5** The Hon. Victor Dominello retiring (served since 2008)
- Balmain **19.0** Jamie Parker retiring (served since 2011)
- Drummoyle **13.6** John Sidoti retiring (served since 2011)
- Fairfield **16.6** Guy Zangari retiring (served since 2011)
- Liverpool **17.4** Paul Lynch retiring (served since 1995)
- Cabramatta **19.3** Nick Latch retiring (served since 2008)
- Vaucluse **19.4** The Hon. Gabrielle Upton retiring (served since 2011)
- Pittwater **20.8** The Hon. Rob Stokes retiring (served since 2007)
- Wakehurst **21.9** The Hon. Brad Hazzard retiring (served since 1991)
- Kellyville **23.1** The Hon. David Elliott retiring (served since 2011)
- Davidson **24.8** The Hon. Jonathan O'Dea retiring (served since 2007)



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## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# PRESELECTION GAMES

**AT THE 2022 FEDERAL ELECTION, it was clear that candidates who were preselected earlier were able to mount more effective campaigns for their prospective seats.**

Rather than learning this lesson from their federal colleagues, high-profile preselection battles between factions in several seats were an unnecessary distraction for both parties.

**“As a result, party preselection processes have dragged on long after the starter’s pistol was fired for the state election.”**

Five weeks out from the election, there were still 11 seats in Western Sydney that did not have a Liberal candidate finalised. Additionally, Craig Chung was endorsed less than 30 days prior to the election to run against the Leader of the Opposition, Chris Minns, in the most marginal seat in the state, Kogarah.

Labor has had its own challenges, with prolonged preselection battles in Fairfield and Cabramatta adding to uncertainty in the South-West. In the context of Dai Le’s thumping win in the Federal election in the seat of Fowler and a potential late run by high profile independent and Mayor of Fairfield, Frank Carbone, it remains to be seen whether this will prove a costly misstep for Labor.

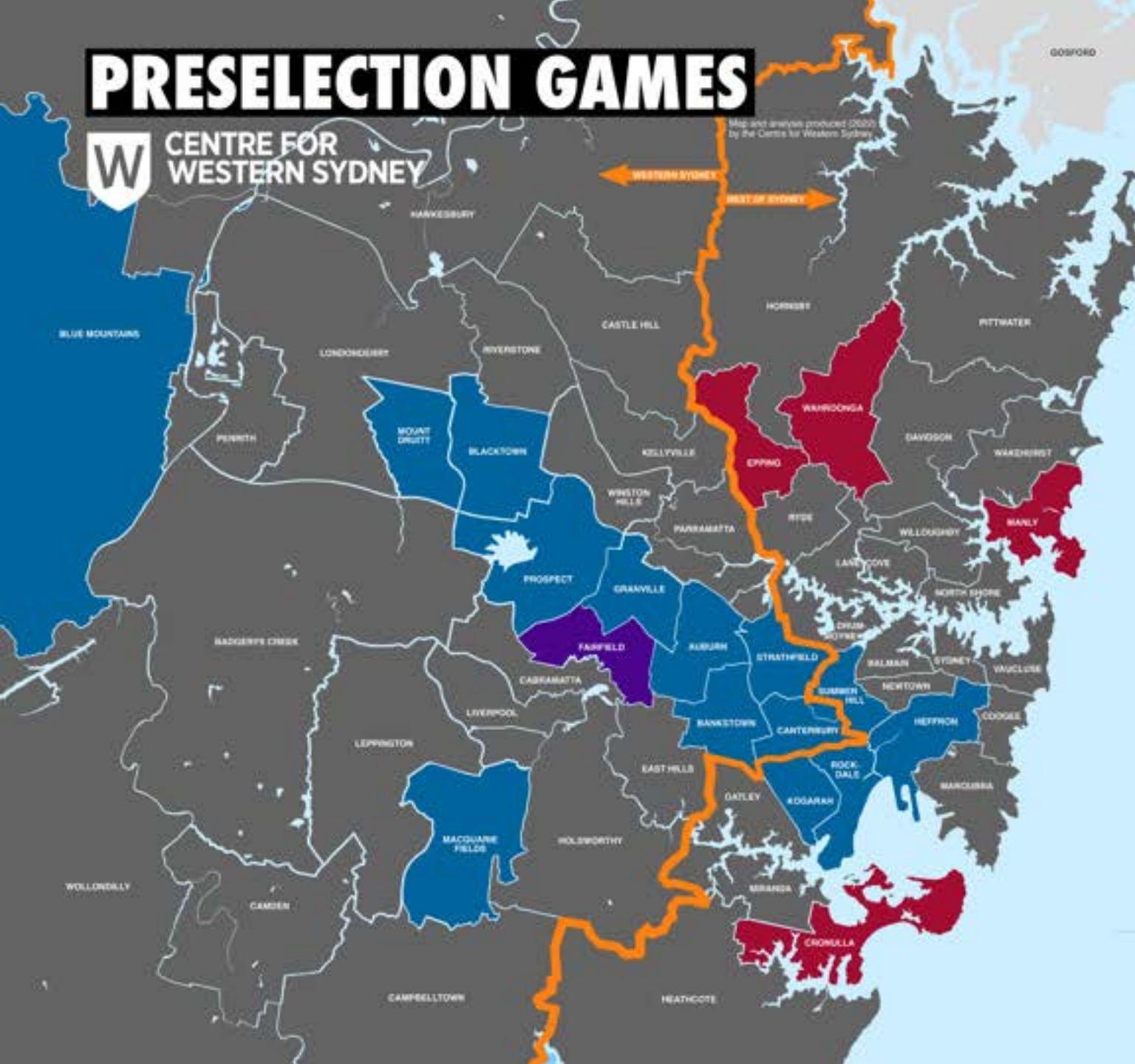
Perceptions of factionalism and insider politics dominating the selection of candidates in Western Sydney will likely heighten cynicism among voters who feel community interests are running second to party politics.



# PRESELECTION GAMES

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Map and analysis produced (2020) by the Centre for Western Sydney



Mapping and analysis by the Centre for Western Sydney  
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## Seats without a candidate

5 weeks prior to election

### Liberal Party

Kogarah	8.1	Held by Chris Minns	Canterbury	15.2	Held by Sophie Cobie
Strathfield	5.5	Held by Jason Yat-Sen Li	Heffron	15.3	Held by Ron Hoerig
Prospect	8.8	Held by Hugh McDermott	Blacktown	16.7	Held by Stephen Ball
Granville	8.5	Held by Julia Finn	Fairfield	16.8	Held by Guy Zangari, who is retiring
Rockdale	10.0	Held by Steve Kamper	Mount Druitt	18.6	Held by Edmond Ajalla
Blue Mountains	13.6	Held by Trish Doyle	Bankstown	20.5	Held by Tania Mihaluk, who has resigned
Auburn	13.7	Held by Lynda Voltz	Summer Hill	21.4	Held by Jo Hayden
Macquarie Fields	14.9	Held by Anoujack Charthivong			

### Labor Party

Epping	11.3	Held by Dominic Perrotti
Manly	13.1	Held by James Griffin
Fairfield	16.8	Held by Guy Zangari, who is retiring
Wahroonga	19.0	Held by Alister Henkens
Cronulla	19.6	Held by Mark Speakman





## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# COST OF LIVING

**Soaring costs of living combined with rapidly rising mortgage and rental costs are dominating dinner table conversations across Australia. It will likely also heavily influence voting behaviours across Western Sydney.**

There are additional costs that come with living in Western Sydney. Tolls for travel to and from the city from the West can cost as much as \$220 a week, while the region's car dependency means that residents often pay more at the bowser. Away from transport, higher temperatures in summer and cooler temperatures in winter result in higher electricity bills for households.

**“Both parties have proposed a suite of policy measures to alleviate cost of living pressures, however neither has landed a knockout punch.”**

The Coalition announced its Toll Rebate Scheme during the last Budget, where drivers can receive a 40 per cent rebate for tolls incurred up to \$750 per annum. Labor has promised to match this, as well as bring in a \$60 weekly toll cap.

In addition to its NSW Energy Bill Saver program which offers households \$250 for comparing their current energy deal, the Coalition has committed to a \$1.5 billion Clean Energy Superpower Fund. By contrast, Labor would allocate \$1 billion to a new state-run energy body if elected, designed to drive prices down over the long term. Interestingly, both parties have now ruled out further privatisation of public assets to fund their election promises.



# HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Mapping and analysis by the Centre for Western Sydney  
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## Household Income

Proportion of households in lowest two income quartiles at the 2021 Census



63.3	Fairfield	46.0	Blacktown	36.3	Drummoyne
63.0	Bankstown	45.9	Prospect	35.9	Balmain
58.4	Cabramatta	45.9	Strathfield	35.8	Wakehurst
57.5	Granville	44.9	Maroubra	35.4	Hornsby
57.3	Liverpool	43.7	Hawkesbury	35.4	Sydney
56.1	Canterbury	43.5	Ryde	34.1	Coogee
55.9	Auburn	42.9	Parramatta	33.0	Castle Hill
54.5	Mount Drutt	42.3	Holsworthy	32.5	Camden
52.4	Campbelltown	42.2	Heffron	32.4	Badgerys Creek
50.1	Blue Mountains	42.2	Summer Hill	32.2	Lane Cove
49.1	Penrith	40.7	Winston Hills	31.5	Willoughby
48.9	Macquarie Fields	39.3	Miranda	30.2	Manly
48.7	East Hills	38.9	Newtown	29.7	Wahroonga
48.2	Kogarah	37.9	Heathcote	28.6	Vaucluse
48.0	Londonderry	37.5	Epping	28.4	Davidson
48.4	Oatley	37.1	Cronulla	27.8	Riverstone
48.3	Wollondilly	37.0	Leppington	26.9	North Shore
46.0	Rockdale	36.7	Pittwater	22.9	Kellyville





# COMMUTE BY CAR



Mapping and analysis by the Centre for Western Sydney  
[www.westernsydney.edu.au/ins](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/ins)



## Commute by car

Proportion of people who travelled to work by car as a driver or passenger at the 2021 Census

57.3	Wollondilly	41.6	Prospect	32.0	Drummoyne
54.9	Mount Druitt	41.6	Blue Mountains	31.8	Epping
52.9	Cabramatta	41.4	Granville	31.1	Ryde
51.7	Liverpool	40.8	Auburn	31.1	Strathfield
51.7	Hawkesbury	40.8	Miranda	30.2	Parramatta
51.6	Fairfield	40.2	Pittwater	29.9	Lane Cove
51.5	Badgerys Creek	39.4	Wakehurst	28.8	Davidson
51.5	Camden	39.2	East Hills	28.4	Manly
50.5	Londonderry	39.0	Maroubra	25.3	Wahroonga
50.4	Campbelltown	37.5	Winston Hills	24.7	Heffron
50.3	Penrith	36.7	Kellyville	24.4	Summer Hill
47.7	Leppington	36.4	Rockdale	23.1	Vaucluse
47.7	Blacktown	35.6	Riverstone	22.8	Coogee
46.0	Bankstown	35.4	Castle Hill	21.8	Willoughby
45.9	Macquarie Fields	34.8	Canterbury	19.1	Balmain
43.4	Holsworthy	34.7	Hornsby	18.1	North Shore
42.9	Cronulla	34.1	Oatley	15.9	Newtown
42.2	Heathcote	33.7	Kogarah	11.5	Sydney







## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES PASS OR FAIL?

**QUALITY EDUCATION SHAPES LIVES, with research demonstrating that access to education is one of the biggest determinants of economic participation, and subsequently, social mobility.**

As the region lags in educational attainment figures, particularly in South-West Sydney, there is a sense of urgency from voters regarding tangible improvements to the education system. There is particular concern from many parents, about to cast their vote, about a perceived decrease in education standards and how this will impact opportunities for their children. These anxieties were compounded during COVID lockdown periods, where areas of Western Sydney endured limited or no access to digitally enabled remoted education.

**“The sea of demountable classrooms across the region shows that schools in the region are struggling to keep up with demand.”**

Growth areas in the North and South-West are still waiting on the upgrade or construction of schools, with independent schools the only local option for parents to send their children to in areas like Marsden Park and Gledswood Hills.

With a reported one-in-nine teachers leaving the profession within their first five years, there are serious concerns about attracting and retaining primary and secondary school teachers. Both parties have articulated a suite of policy responses to address these teacher shortages. Regarding teacher pay, the Coalition is maintaining wage caps across the public sector, seeking productivity gains, while Labor wants to open a dialogue with teachers, as occurs in most other states.

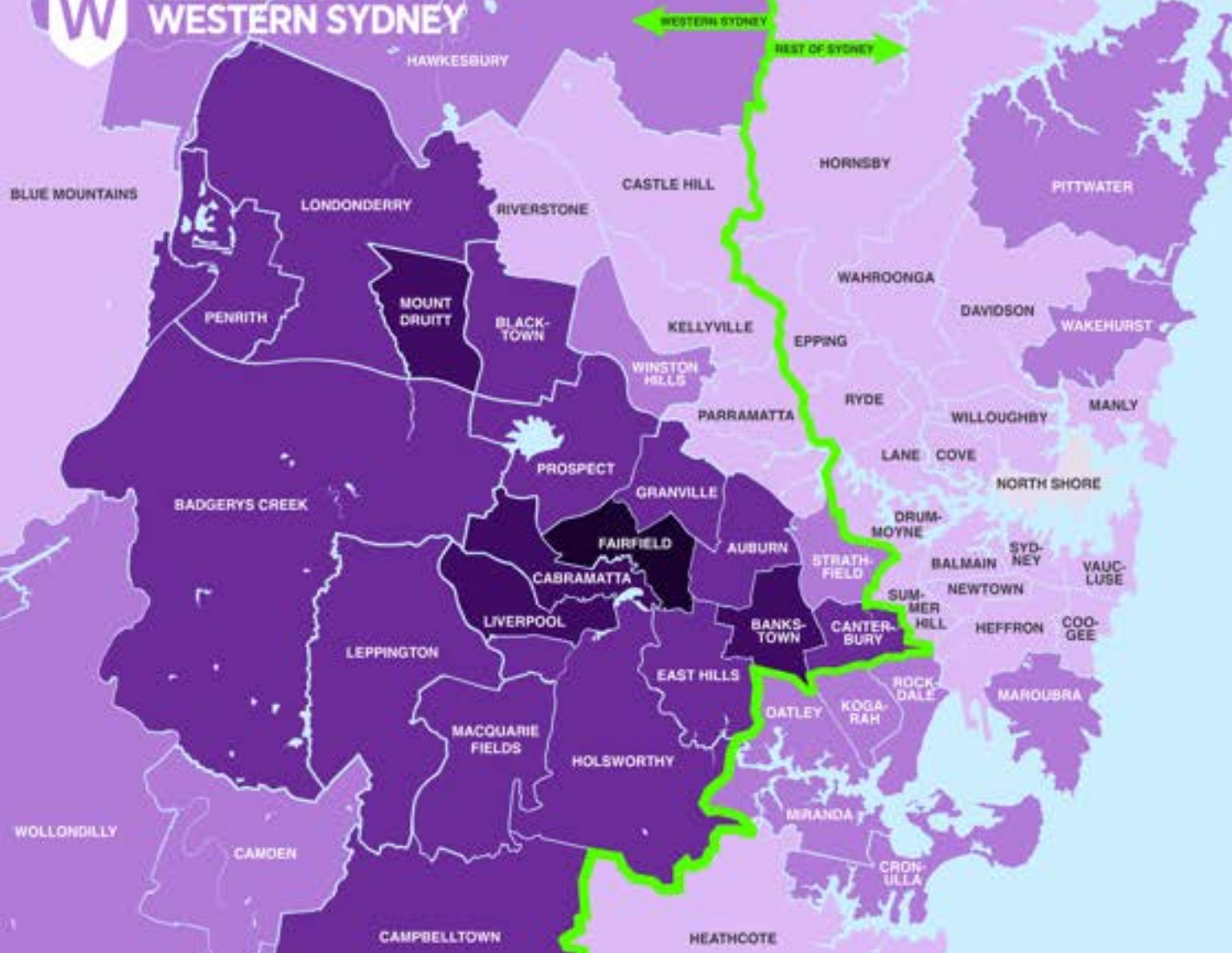
# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



Mapping and analysis by the Centre for Western Sydney  
[www.westernsydney.edu.au/cwsc](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/cwsc)

## Educational Attainment

Proportion of population who report holding a Certificate III or higher qualification at the 2021 Census



29.3	Fairfield	51.3	Wollondilly	62.5	Drummoyne
30.9	Cabramatta	52.0	Hawkesbury	62.6	Kellyville
35.7	Liverpool	52.8	Camden	63.1	Parramatta
38.0	Mount Drutt	53.1	Oatley	63.3	Hornsby
39.7	Bankstown	53.4	Kogarah	63.7	Epping
40.9	Auburn	54.3	Rockdale	64.4	Heffron
42.6	Granville	54.9	Winston Hills	64.5	Ryde
43.1	Campbelltown	55.4	Maroubra	66.3	Davidson
45.8	East Hills	56.3	Miranda	66.6	Lane Cove
46.1	Canterbury	57.2	Strathfield	66.6	Manly
46.5	Penrith	58.0	Wakehurst	67.0	Coogee
47.0	Leppington	59.0	Cronulla	67.3	Wahroonga
47.3	Londonderry	59.4	Pittwater	67.4	Vaucluse
47.9	Holsworthy	60.1	Heathcote	67.7	Newtown
48.7	Prospect	61.0	Riverstone	68.5	Willoughby
48.9	Macquarie Fields	61.2	Summer Hill	68.6	Balmain
49.3	Badgerys Creek	61.2	Blue Mountains	68.9	Sydney
49.6	Blacktown	61.3	Castle Hill	72.8	North Shore







## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# BURSTING AT THE SEAMS

**THE PUBLIC HEALTH SYSTEM IS STRUGGLING** to keep up with the demand generated by high levels of growth in the region, and critical decisions await whichever party forms government regarding some of Western Sydney's ageing hospitals and health infrastructure.

Health has featured prominently in pre-election discussions, with the Government and the Opposition promising heavy spending on health infrastructure. Staffing of the public health system has come into sharp focus post-pandemic, with pressure on both parties to articulate how they will ensure safe staffing levels in the context of workforce shortages.

**“As a result, voters are looking to both the Government and**

**Opposition to see how they will deliver timely, high-quality healthcare.”**

Large hospital infrastructure spending has not created the desired impact in the region. Community engagement in preventative and healthy lifestyle strategies is not making significant traction. The disproportionate prevalence of diabetes in Western Sydney highlights not only the complexity of improving the region's health, but the stark disparity in outcomes compared to the rest of Sydney.

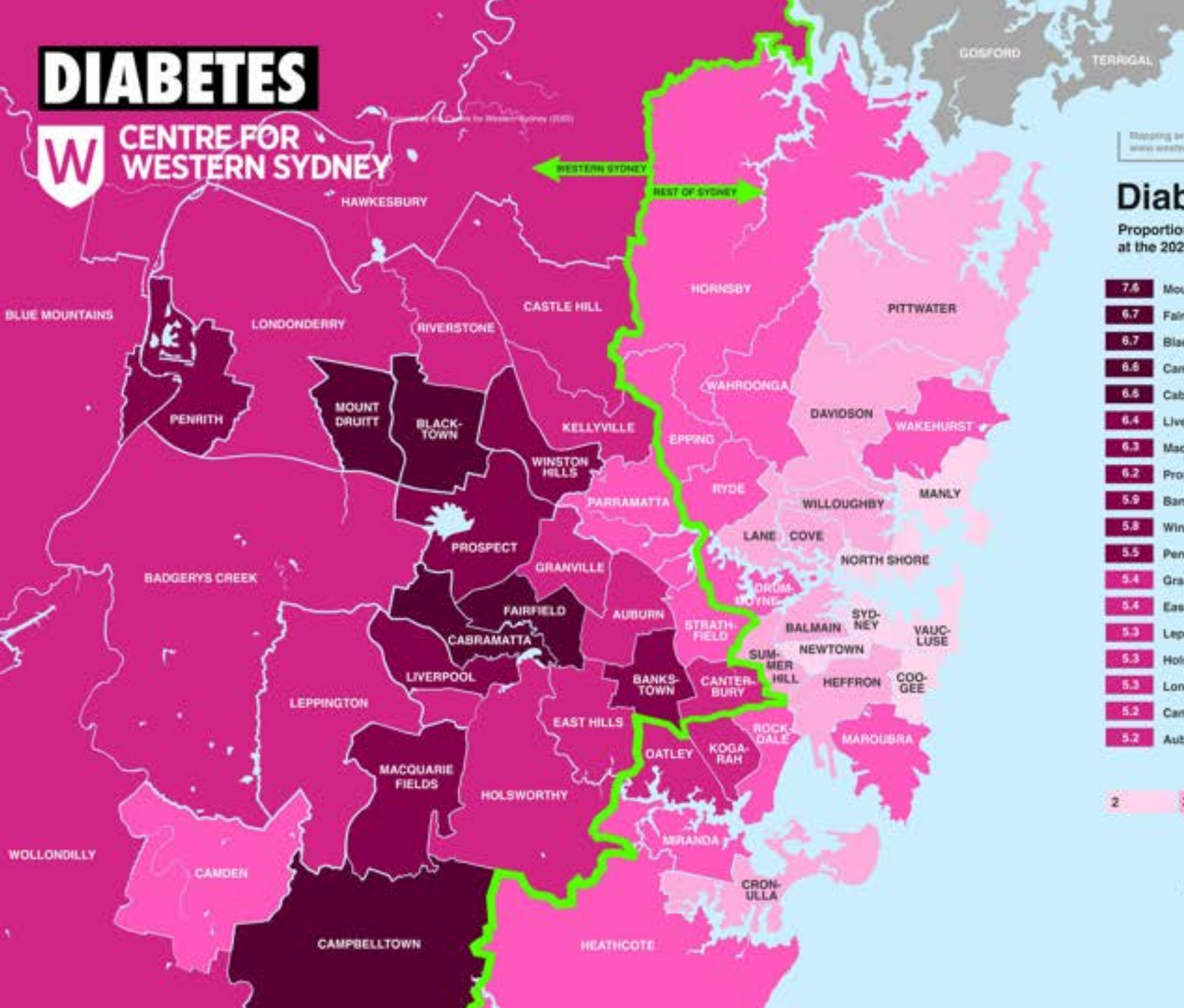
There is a range of contributing factors to the high rates of diabetes in the region, including poor walkability, sprawling fresh food deserts, food affordability challenges and a lack of education regarding healthy eating choices. Solutions to these challenges are well understood but sit outside the purview of the Department of Health. This reinforces the need for targeted, multi-departmental approaches to challenges in Western Sydney related to health and wellbeing.



# DIABETES



CENTRE FOR WESTERN SYDNEY



Mapping and analysis by the Centre for Western Sydney  
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## Diabetes

Proportion of population who report having diabetes at the 2021 Census

7.6	Mount Druitt	5.0	Badgerys Creek	3.9	Drummoyne
6.7	Fairfield	4.9	Oatley	3.8	Heathcote
6.7	Blacktown	4.8	Wollondilly	3.7	Parramatta
6.6	Campbelltown	4.8	Hawkesbury	3.6	Wakehurst
6.5	Cabramatta	4.8	Castle Hill	3.5	Wahroonga
6.4	Liverpool	4.8	Blue Mountains	3.2	Davidson
6.3	Macquarie Fields	4.8	Kogarah	3.2	Cronulla
6.2	Prospect	4.5	Riverstone	3.0	Lane Cove
5.9	Bankstown	4.4	Rockdale	2.9	Heffron
5.8	Winston Hills	4.4	Strathfield	2.9	Willoughby
5.5	Penrith	4.3	Epping	2.8	Pittwater
5.4	Granville	4.3	Summer Hill	2.5	Balmain
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5.3	Holsworthy	4.2	Camden	2.4	Vaucluse
5.3	Londonderry	4.2	Maroubra	2.1	Manly
5.2	Canterbury	4.2	Hornsby	2.1	Coogee
5.2	Auburn	4.2	Ryde	2.1	Sydney







## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# A CASINO ON EVERY CORNER

**GAMBLING-RELATED HARM HAS EMERGED AS A KEY ISSUE** in the lead-up to the 2023 State Election, with the public monitoring the policy positions of both sides of politics.

Western Sydney is hit disproportionately hard by gambling-related harm. The fractures that this has created across the region are evident. Gambling-related harm has a profound impact on individuals, families and communities

**“Despite only containing 52% of Greater Sydney’s population, Western Sydney incurs 63% of its electronic gaming machine losses.”**

The impact is significantly higher in the inner ring of Western Sydney. Fairfield, Canterbury-Bankstown and Cumberland account for a third of Sydney’s losses, partly driven by the extreme oversaturation of electronic gaming machines in some parts of Western Sydney.

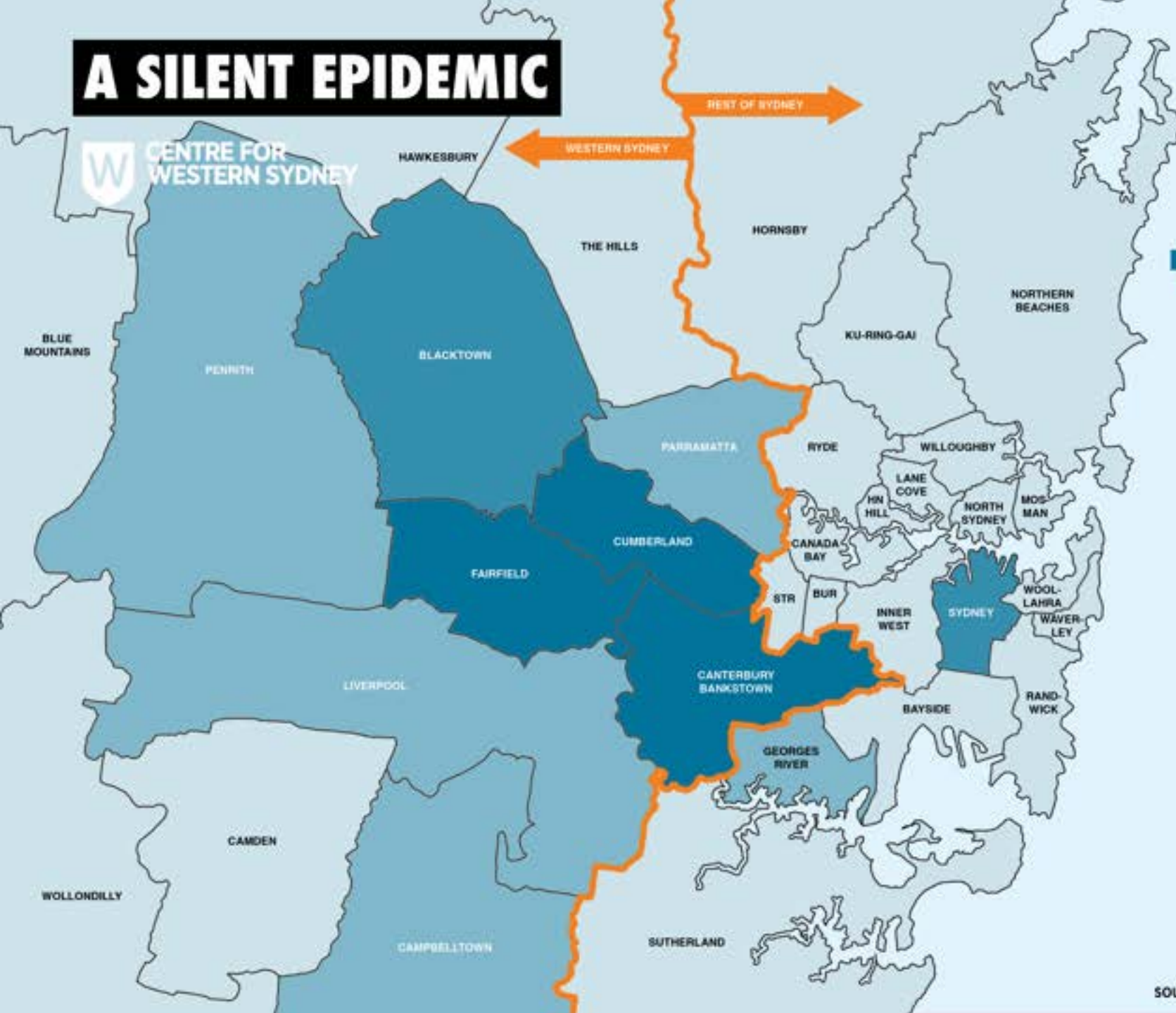
While there is bipartisanship around some measures to curb gambling-related harm, including banning political donations from hotels and clubs and deploying strategies to decrease the number of electronic gaming machines, both parties have adopted significantly different positions on cashless gaming cards.

If re-elected, the premier has committed to all electronic gaming machines in NSW becoming cashless by 2028, in a move that has been praised by gambling-harm advocates. By contrast, Labor has only committed to a trial of cashless technology across 500 machines for 12 months.



# A SILENT EPIDEMIC

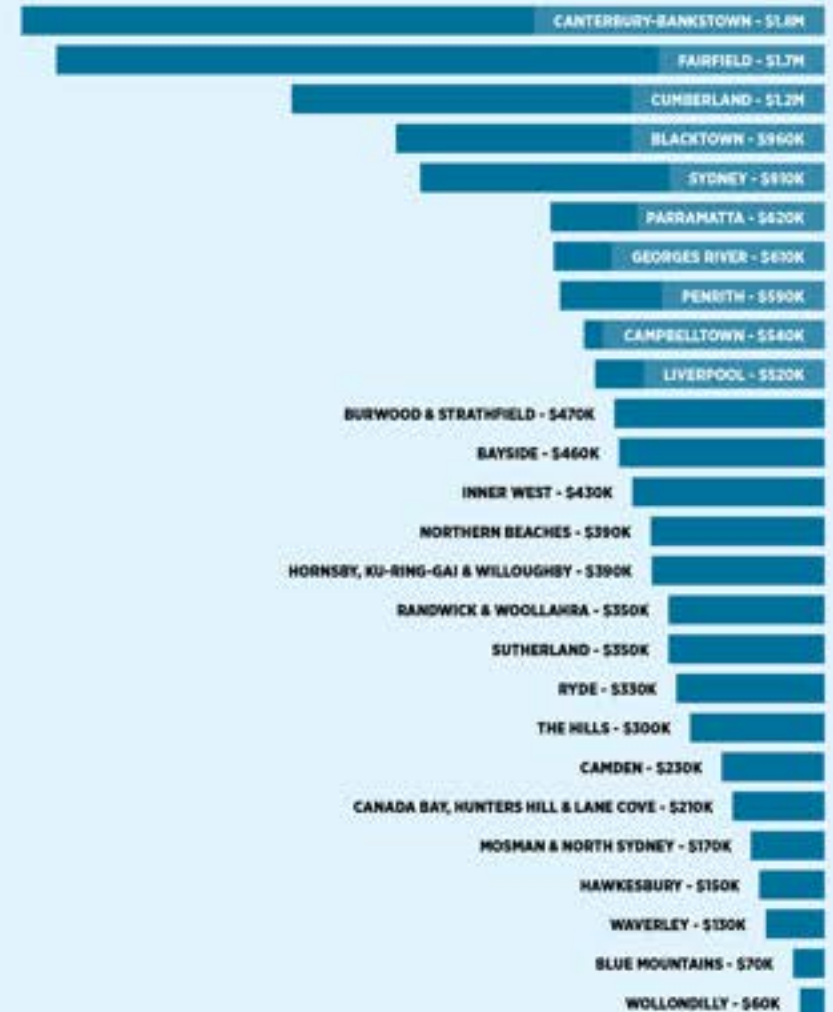
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Mapping and analysis by the Centre for Western Sydney  
[www.westernsydney.edu.au/cws](http://www.westernsydney.edu.au/cws)

## Daily Pokies Losses

Daily Electronic Gaming Machine profit reported by Hotels and Clubs in first half of 2022



SOURCE: LIQUOR AND GAMING NSW EGM DATA, CENTRE FOR WESTERN SYDNEY, JANUARY 2023





## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# ALL PATHS LEAD WEST

**WHILE THERE ARE A LARGE NUMBER OF SAFE SEATS IN WESTERN SYDNEY, seven electorates of strategic importance have emerged in the lead-up to the election.**

As opinion polling tightens approaching election day, the tempo has risen considerably, with announcements taking place across these seats in Western Sydney, including a new hospital for East Hills. Despite this fanfare, it is unclear if this will influence voting in these seats in a meaningful way.

**“What is clear, is that the path to forming government for both the Coalition and Labor is through Western Sydney.”**

East Hills and Penrith are the Coalition's most marginal seats in NSW, at 0.1% and 0.6%, respectively. The contests in these electorates will be street-by-street affairs, with intensely local issues likely counting more than large-scale infrastructure investments, policy measures or economic reforms.

In the outer South-West, the newly established electorate of Leppington will also be hotly contested. Labor has an estimated margin of 1.5% in this seat; however the rapidly changing population demographics in this growth area since the last election will affect the final vote. Elsewhere in the South-West, the Coalition will be hoping to increase its margin in the Holsworthy electorate, having already benefitted from the seat's redistribution.

Riverstone is likely a target for Labor and, if the swings of the Federal Election are replicated, they will secure this seat comfortably. In the Central-West corridor, they will be hoping for strong results from locally based candidates in Parramatta and Winston Hills to get them over the line.









## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# PARRAMATTA: HIGH RISE AND HIGH ASPIRATIONS

The seat of Parramatta has been held by the government of the day since 1995. Securing the electorate of Parramatta will give either party a significant boost, particularly given its growth and prominence in the state as a highly educated subregion and emerging 'global' city.

The retirement of Dr Geoff Lee has loosened the grip of the Liberal party on Parramatta, and Labor will try to capitalise on the late announcement of his successor.

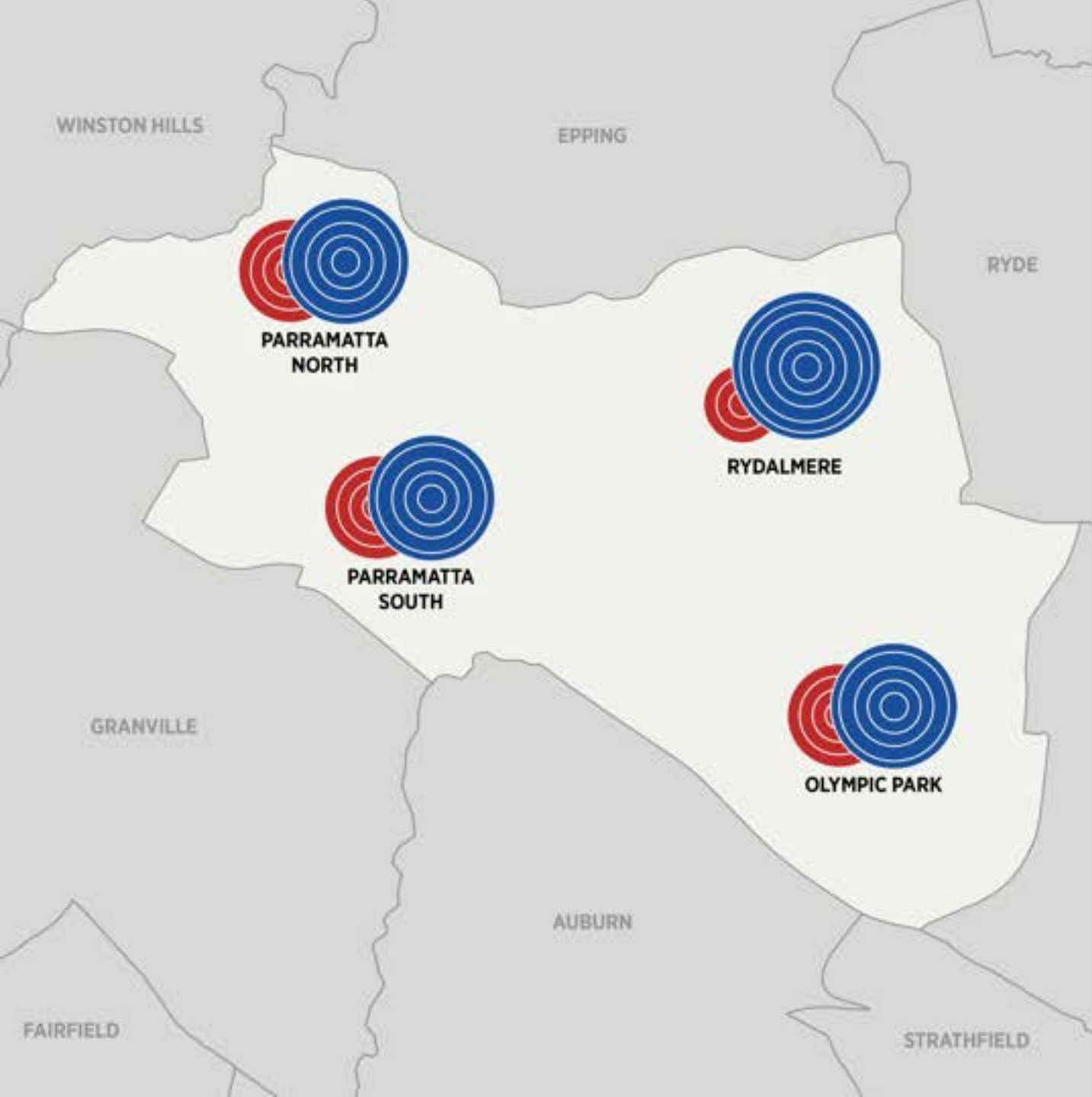
**“Two very different candidates have been put forward.”**

Donna Davis was announced as Labor’s candidate in January. As the Lord Mayor of Parramatta, she is a known quantity for voters and will draw upon her connections to the community to try to deliver the 6.5% swing required to secure this rapidly transforming seat.

By contrast, the Liberal candidate, Katie Mullens, is a new entrant to politics. She has worked as a lawyer locally for 15 years and will be hoping that her experience helping residents and families in Parramatta will translate to electoral success.

Labor will look to mirror swings it achieved at a federal level in the Olympic Park precinct (Reid) by tapping into the growing frustration from residents regarding the lack of access to essential infrastructure, including schools and public transport. The Coalition’s hopes of retaining the seat largely rest in the hands of voters from the Parramatta North and Parramatta South clusters, where they will be able to point to the unprecedented growth and investment they oversaw while in government and transport projects like the light rail and promised metro.





# PARRAMATTA BOOTH CLUSTER ANALYSIS



## PARRAMATTA OVERALL



## OLYMPIC PARK CLUSTER



## PARRAMATTA NORTH CLUSTER



## PARRAMATTA SOUTH CLUSTER



## RYDALMERE CLUSTER





## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# PENRITH: OLD AND NEW POLITICS

**AS ONE OF THE WEST'S MOST MARGINAL SEATS, Penrith is critical. Its loss would be disastrous for the Liberals, as would the departure of sitting MP and senior party figure, Stuart Ayres.**

Penrith is one of the epicentres of Western Sydney's cost-of-living crisis. High rates of car dependency compound the issue, as do rising interest rates, coupled with the seat's comparatively high proportion of households in the lowest two income quartiles.

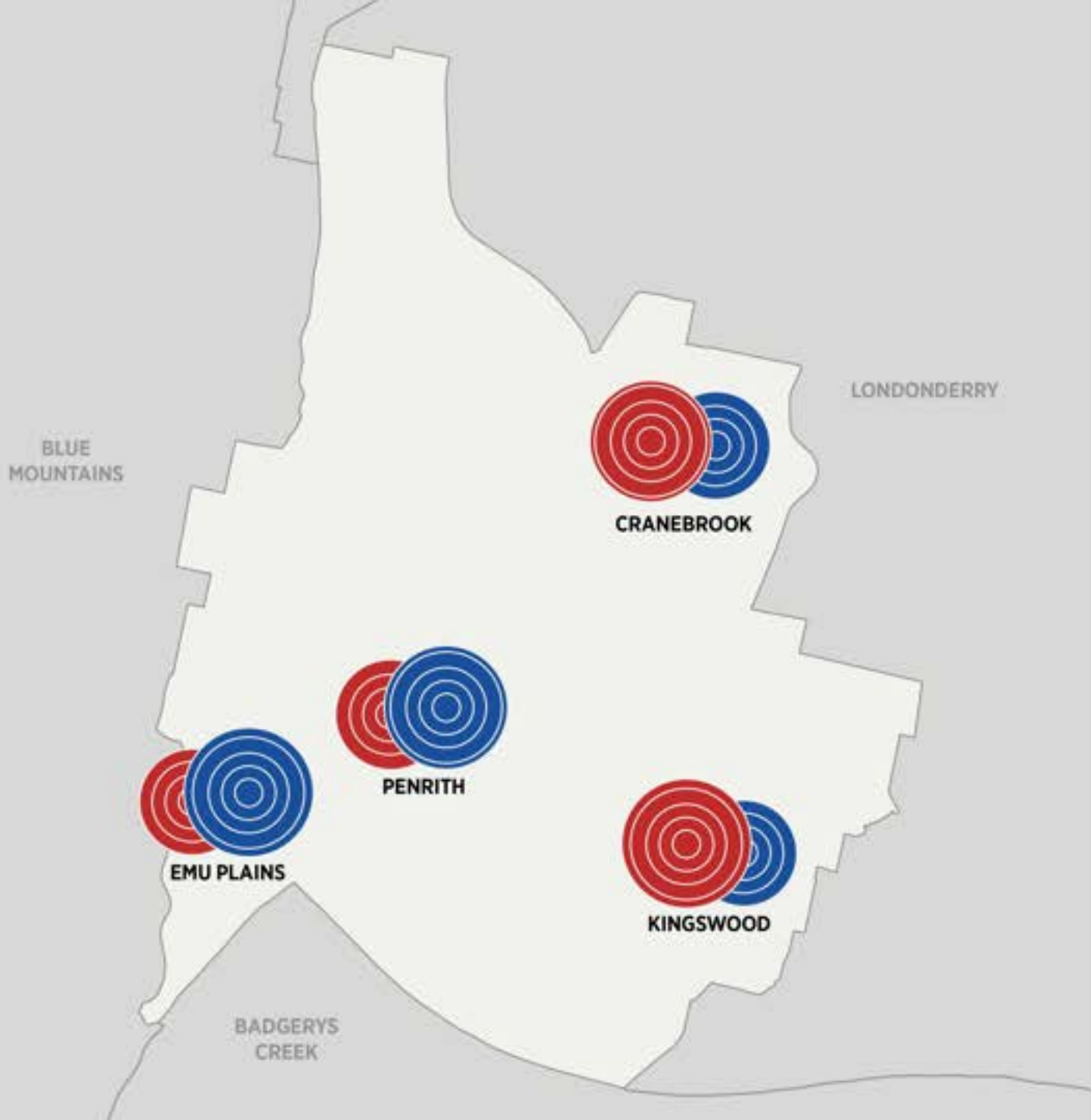
**“As one of the hottest parts of Sydney, constituents will likely be smarting from their electricity bill when they cast their vote.”**

Even before the retirement of several key figures in the lead-up to the election, Ayres was the face of the Liberal Party in the region as former Minister for Western Sydney. It remains to be seen if his demotion from Cabinet will have a significant impact on voting patterns, given his local prominence and fierce campaigning for Penrith since first winning the seat in 2011.

Karen McKeown is also well known. A councillor since 2004, she has served as Mayor of Penrith on several occasions, most recently in 2020-2021. She is very locally focused and has been vocal regarding health and transport issues, infrastructure gaps, and how they impact people at the neighbourhood level across the electorate. This will be a hyper-local contest.

Ayres will be hoping to replicate Melissa McIntosh's strong performance at a federal level, which saw swings towards the Liberal party against voting trends. McKeown will be looking to reverse her fortunes from the previous state election, where she lost to Ayres. Again, local issues will be key.

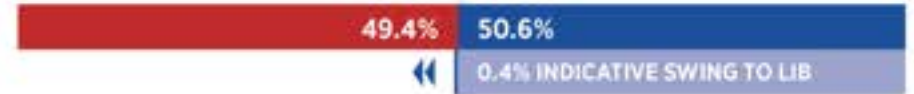




## PENRITH BOOTH CLUSTER ANALYSIS



### PENRITH OVERALL



### CRANEBROOK CLUSTER



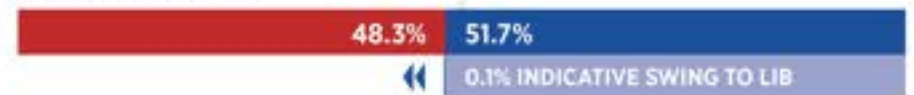
### EMU PLAINS CLUSTER



### KINGSWOOD CLUSTER



### PENRITH CLUSTER





## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# EAST HILLS: CLOSING MARGINS AND CLOSE CONTESTS

**IF THE CONTEST FOR EAST HILLS TURNS OUT AS CLOSE AS EXPECTED, it is unlikely we will know the fate of the seat, and potentially who can form government, on election night.**

In 2019, the victor for this seat was decided by 429 votes. With the redistribution of seat boundaries, this margin has decreased even further, making this a critical seat for the Coalition and Labor.

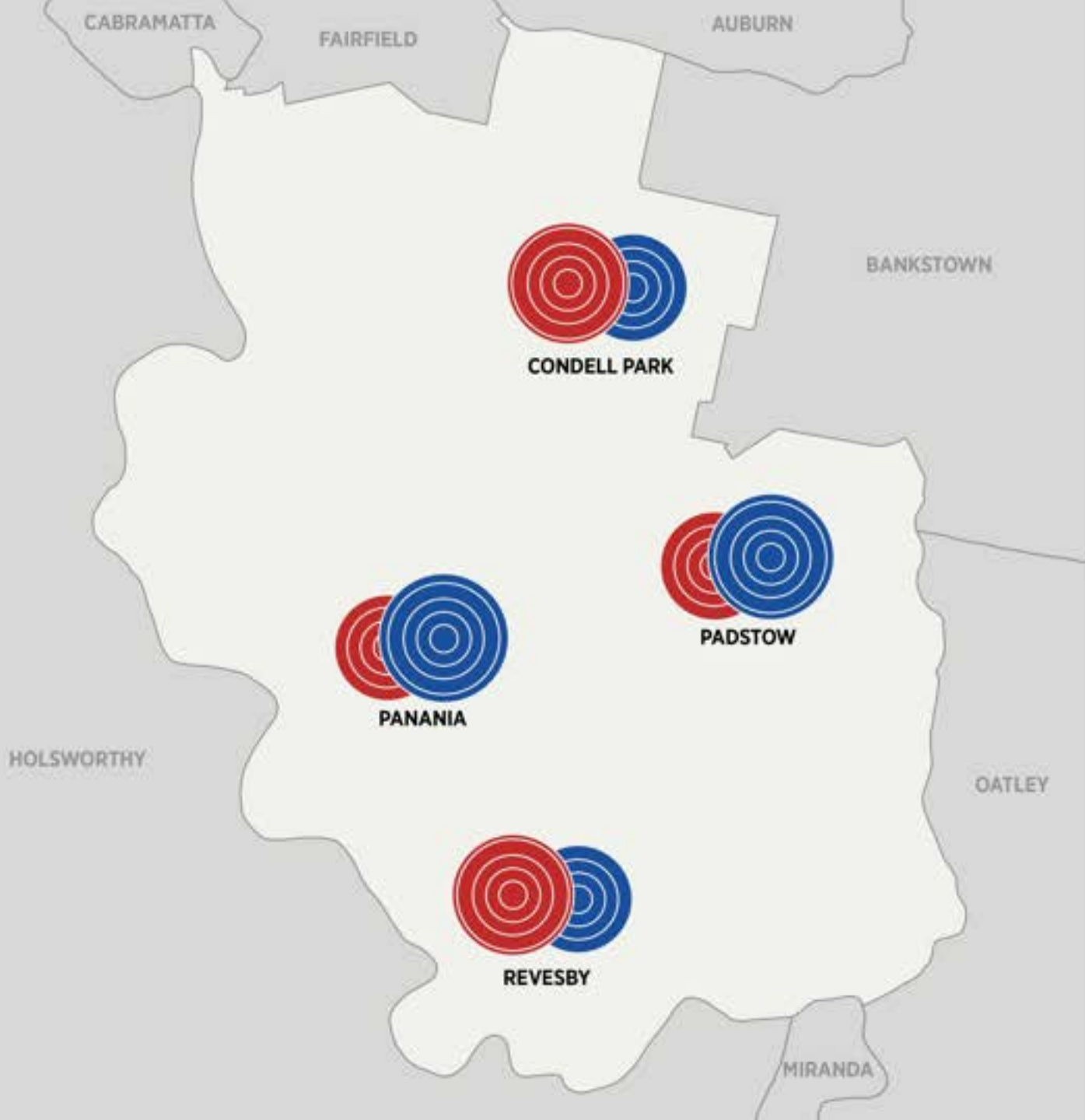
**“The targeted announcement by the Coalition that the new Bankstown Hospital will be built in East Hills may make the difference in this closely fought battle.”**

Wendy Lindsay returns to contest East Hills for the Liberals. She will be hoping four years as the local member will have given her the track record and profile within the community required to hold the knife-edge seat. The Premier's \$1.3 billion hospital pledge for the electorate was confirmed with Lindsay by social media on 3 February, but not widely publicised via wider government channels.

The Labor challenger is Kylie Wilkinson, who has lived in the area for 35 years with her husband and six children. She will seek to turn her experience with a range of local groups and charities into the momentum required to return this seat to Labor for the first time since the 2007 election.

Trends at a federal level offer little insight as to who will emerge victorious. While miniscule swings at a booth level towards the Coalition were registered at the federal poll, this was offset by an overall swing towards Labor driven by early voting. How this plays out at the state level will be intriguing.

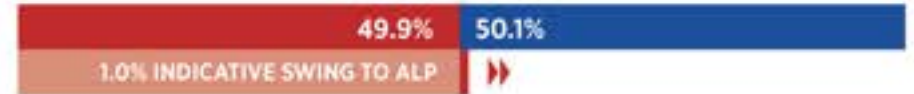




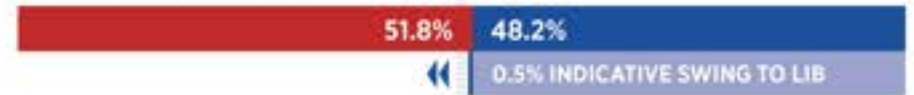
## EAST HILLS BOOTH CLUSTER ANALYSIS



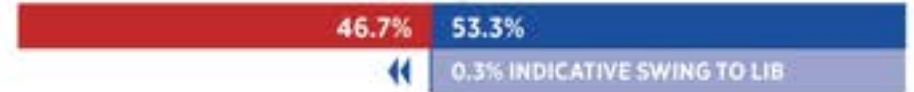
### EAST HILLS OVERALL



### CONDELL PARK CLUSTER



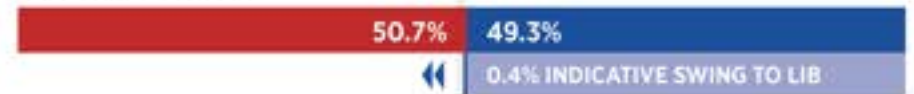
### PADSTOW CLUSTER



### PANANIA CLUSTER



### REVESBY CLUSTER





## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# LEPPINGTON: THE NEW KID ON THE QUARTER-ACRE BLOCK

**NOMINALLY A LABOR HELD SEAT AFTER RE-DISTRIBUTION, Leppington will likely produce some surprises on election day.**

Made up of a patchwork of territory from five separate electorates, Leppington encompasses rapidly growing population centres, established housing estates, and properties on acreage. Candidates will need to tread a fine line to balance varied constituent views and win the seat.

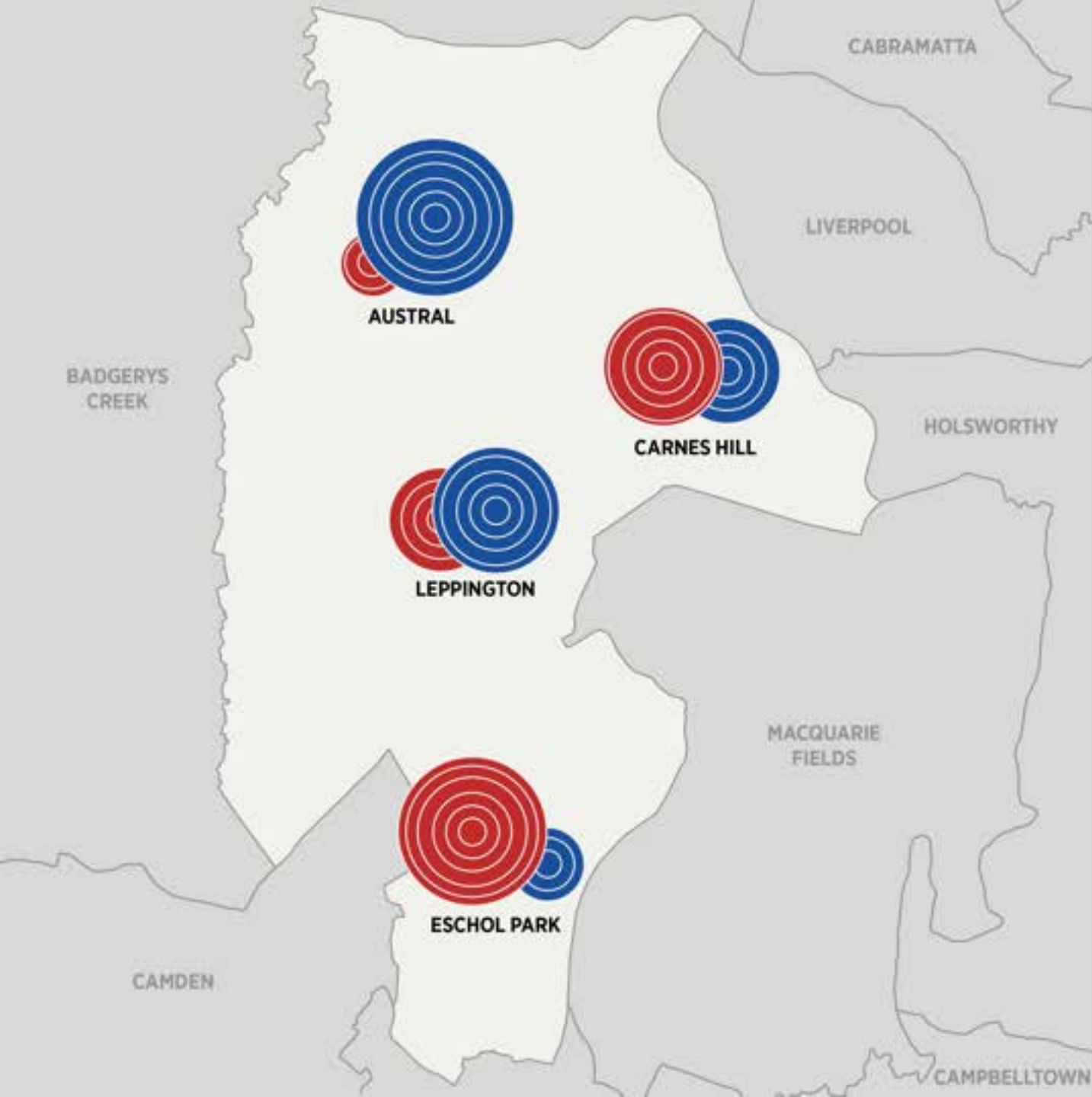
**“If the Coalition were to secure this seat, it would be nearly impossible for Labor to secure the majority required to govern.”**

Stung by his defeat in the Liverpool mayoral race in 2021, Labor's Nathan Hagarty will be looking to bounce back by becoming the inaugural member for Leppington. His local government experience with key issues for the Kemps Creek and Carnes Hill areas could prove critical.

He will face another candidate from local government, Camden Mayor Therese Fedeli. Thus far, her campaign communications have focused on infrastructure announcements, including road upgrades and community facilities.

Given the significant changes in population in the electorate since the last election, there is a high level of volatility in the indicative swings drawn from federal voting patterns. It remains to be seen how well these candidates align with voter aspirations in this new electorate.





# LEPPINGTON BOOTH CLUSTER ANALYSIS



## LEPPINGTON OVERALL



## AUSTRAL CLUSTER



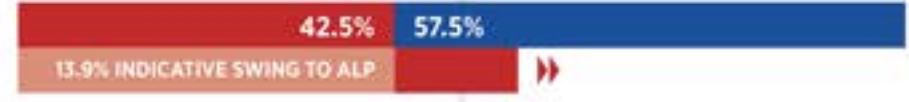
## CARNES HILL CLUSTER



## ESCHOL PARK CLUSTER



## LEPPINGTON CLUSTER





## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# WINSTON HILLS: A MOUNTAIN TO CLIMB FOR LABOR?

**FRESH FROM YET ANOTHER NAME CHANGE AND A BOUNDARY SHIFT, Winston Hills (formerly known as Seven Hills, and earlier Toongabbie), is firmly within Labor's sights this election.**

Spanning the corridor between Blacktown and Parramatta, Winston Hills has emerged as a strategic seat for both sides of politics. Redistribution has favoured Labor, with the addition of Lalor Park infusing the electorate with a boost in its traditional support base.

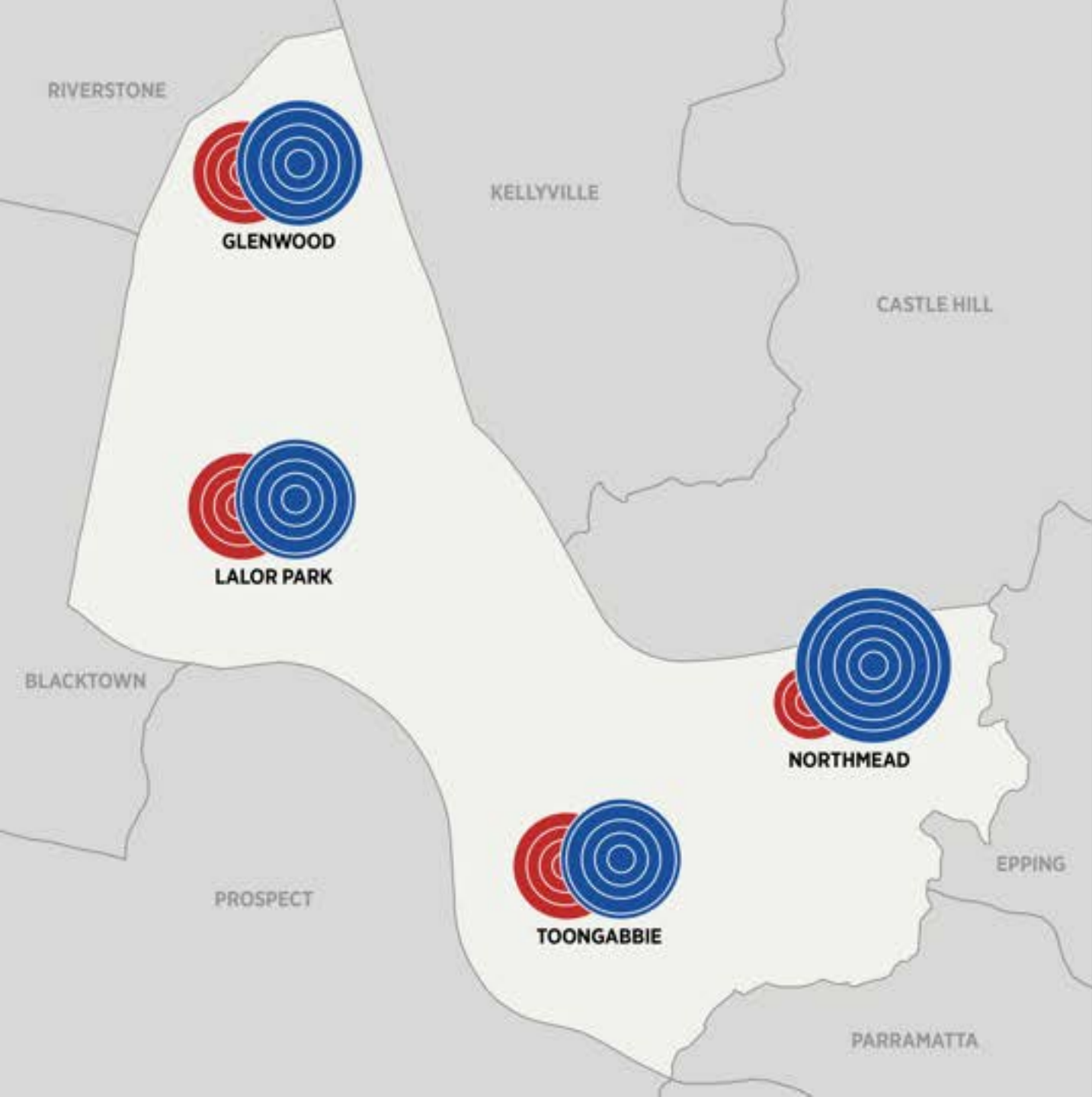
**“A red wave swept the Western portion of this seat during the Federal Election and will deliver victory if it is replicated in March.”**

Standing in the way of this wave is Mark Taylor, who has held the seat for the Liberals since 2015. In the lead-up to the election, he has been deploying a grassroots strategy focusing on local investment the Coalition has directed towards schools, roads and green spaces.

Sameer Pandey, the Deputy Mayor of Parramatta and Labor candidate, represents a formidable challenge. He will be looking to leverage the overlap of his council ward and the southeast portion of the Winston Hills seat. He will, however, need to quickly establish his credentials in the Lalor Park and Glenwood clusters of the electorate if he is to be successful.

Notably, there is a high level of variance in several key demographics in the Winston Hills electorate, including cultural and linguistic diversity, educational attainment and household income. The winner of this seat at the election will be the candidate who has been able to deliver messaging that both targets and consolidates the varied interests of these groups.





# WINSTON HILLS BOOTH CLUSTER ANALYSIS



## WINSTON HILLS OVERALL



## GLENWOOD CLUSTER



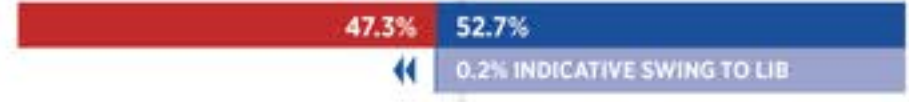
## LALOR PARK CLUSTER



## NORTHMEAD CLUSTER



## TOONGABBIE CLUSTER





## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# RIVERSTONE: LEAVING NO STONE UNTURNED?

IT WAS ANTICIPATED THAT THE COALITION would have a tough task retaining the seat of Riverstone. However, the retirement of Kevin Connolly – who had served since 2011 – has further weakened its position in a fast-growing, rapidly changing and politically pivotal seat.

Both parties have been quick to support key transport connections for Riverstone constituents, pointedly, a business case for a metro line linking Tallawong and St Marys.

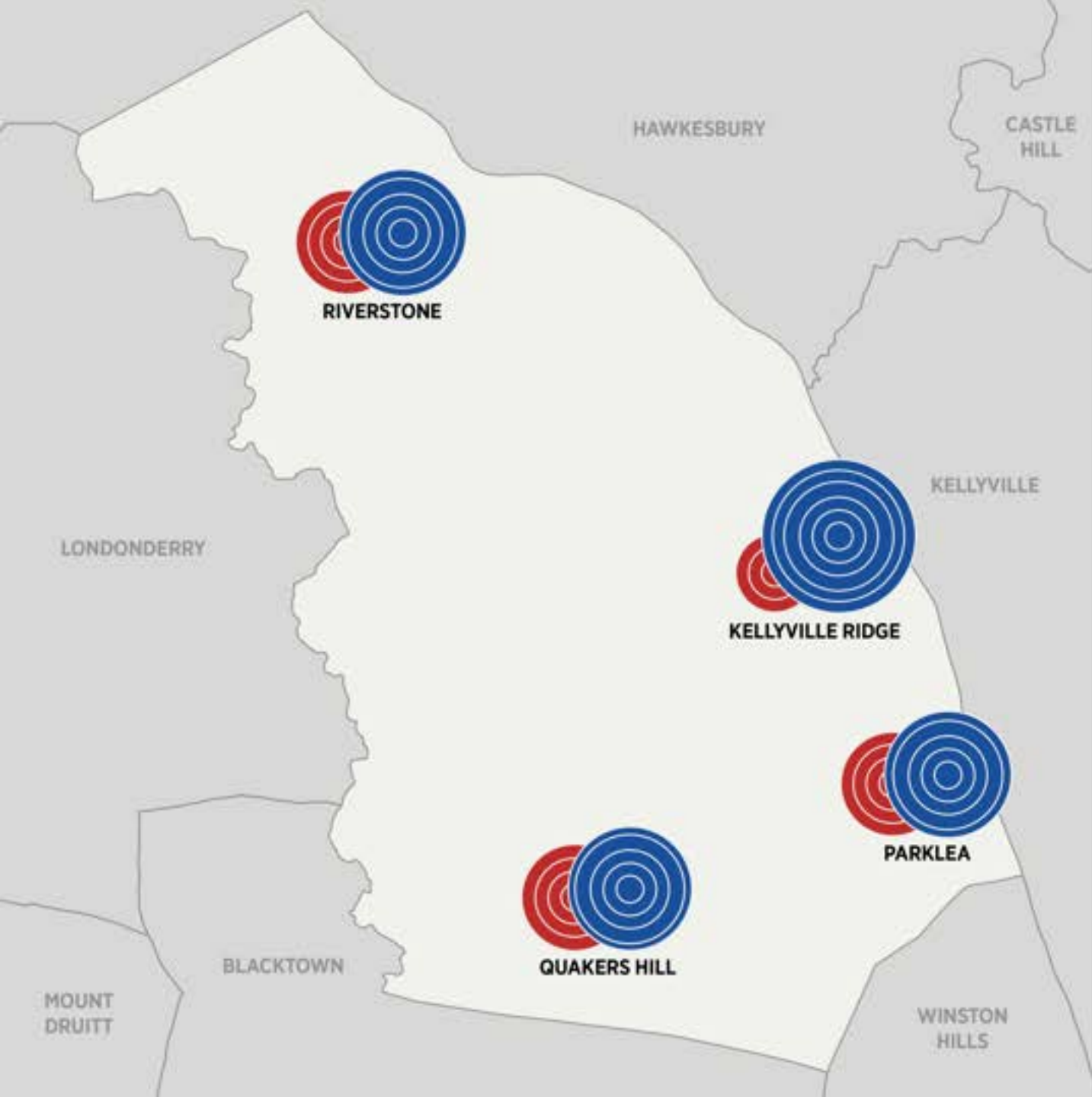
**“Despite plans for transport links, many residents of this electorate are frustrated over the perceived lag in essential infrastructure delivery.”**

Connolly’s successor, Mohit Kumar, has been in a flurry of activity since being confirmed. The fact that he has been joined by the Premier, Treasurer and Education Minister at various pre-campaign events demonstrates the Coalition’s desire to hold this seat at all costs.

Labor’s candidate, Warren Kirby, has also been flanked by party heavyweights, including Chris Minns and Prue Car. Kirby, a long-time resident, will be trying to leverage his status as a local business leader to connect with constituents on key issues, including an appeal to the seat’s high number of first-time voters.

Given the significant swings in this area at the Federal level, Labor will be confident of mounting a successful challenge. Stemming any losses from the traditional Liberal stronghold clusters of Kellyville Ridge and Riverstone will be an imperative for Kumar and the key to holding the seat.





## RIVERSTONE BOOTH CLUSTER ANALYSIS



### RIVERSTONE OVERALL



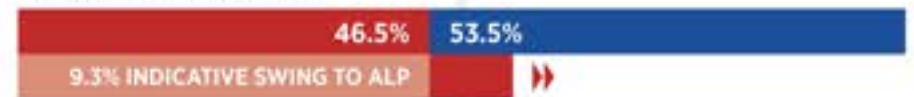
### KELLYVILLE RIDGE CLUSTER



### PARKLEA CLUSTER



### QUAKERS HILL CLUSTER



### RIVERSTONE CLUSTER





## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# HOLSWORTHY: NEW BOUNDARIES, SAME STORY?

Nowhere are the shifting sands of seat redistribution more evident than in the electorate of Holsworthy.

Post-redistribution, each booth cluster has a distinctive local flavour, with demographics in the Lurnea, Chipping Norton, Wattle Grove and Menai clusters differing markedly. The messaging of both candidates and how it cuts through for each of these cohorts will be the key to securing this seat.

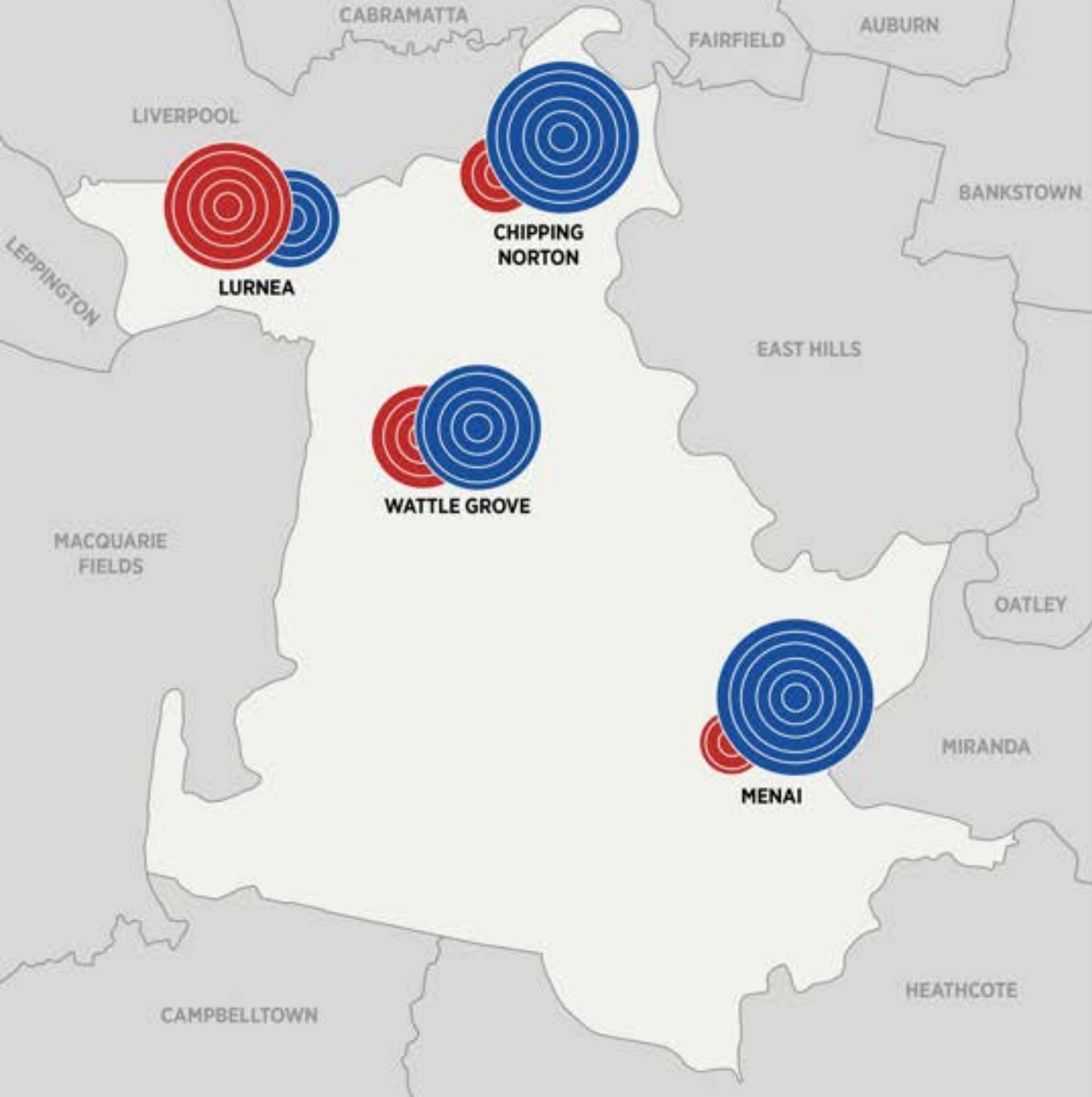
**“The Coalition were clear winners from the redistribution of the seat, with a 3.3% margin doubling to an estimated 6.0%.”**

Shockwaves were sent through the Liberal party when Melanie Gibbons was ousted in preselection by Tina Ayyad. As a former Liverpool councillor, her experience with constituents in the Lurnea booth cluster will be invaluable when defending the seat.

After pulling out of preselection for the seat of Heathcote, Mick Maroney was chosen as the Labor candidate for Holsworthy. Throughout his teaching career, he has worked with children and families in the Menai booth cluster; however, he will need to do plenty in the lead-up to the election to connect with the western portion of the seat.

Given the demographics of the Holsworthy electorate as well as trends at the federal level, it is unlikely that there will be enough momentum to carry Labor over the line.





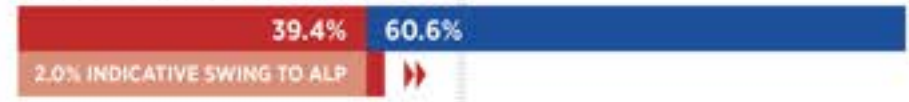
# HOLSWORTHY BOOTH CLUSTER ANALYSIS



## HOLSWORTHY OVERALL



## CHIPPING NORTON CLUSTER



## LURNEA CLUSTER



## MENAI CLUSTER



## WATTLE GROVE CLUSTER



## WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

# HOW THE WEST WILL BE WON

**THE PARTY THAT WINS WESTERN SYDNEY on election night won't be the one that deploys the smartest political strategy. It won't be the party that makes the most generous funding pledges or the largest infrastructure commitments. Victory certainly won't be earned by the campaign that most effectively neutralises opposing candidates.**

The politics that will win Western Sydney is that which treats the region seriously. Not as an electoral battleground. Not as a work-in-progress, a region with abounding promise that is yet to reach its potential. Not as a region to be placated, or assured it deserves a fair go.

**“The key to addressing Western Sydney's challenges lies in understanding and amplifying its strengths.”**

The politics that will win the West is that which understands it is already a vibrant, dynamic and diverse region. Not a region that needs saving. Not a region desperate to become like Sydney, or anywhere else. But a region that has its own distinct identity, with unrivalled global connections and even closer community ties. A region that is comparatively well educated, multilingual, young, creative and deeply engaged socially, civically and politically.

These strengths in no way eclipse the many challenges Western Sydney faces. Rapid gains in education are punctuated by pockets of persistent disadvantage. And such is the pace of the region's growth, Coalition and Labor governments, over recent decades, have failed to provide sufficient educational, health, social and transport infrastructure.

Addressing Western Sydney's challenges requires amplifying its strengths. The party that understands that will go a long way towards winning the West at this election and beyond.



# WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

## About the authors

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**PROFESSOR ANDY MARKS** was appointed Director of the Centre for Western Sydney in late 2019. He is also the CEO of the NUW Alliance and Pro Vice-Chancellor, Strategy, Government and Alliances at Western Sydney University. He leads major strategic initiatives with government, industry, and the community.

Andy has a PhD and first-class honours in political science and literature. He writes regular columns for the Sydney Morning Herald and the Daily Telegraph. He is also an occasional panellist on ABC Sydney's 'political forum' and a regular on The Drum.

Andy is also Chair of the Western Sydney Community Forum and a Non-Executive Director with Wentworth Healthcare Ltd. He is the founder of the CatalystWest interactive policy forum, and co-founder of the Launch Pad start-up incubator.

Prior to his current role, Andy was senior researcher with the St Vincent de Paul Society and the Smith Family, a Council member at the University of New England, and an ARIA nominated professional musician and composer with Crow, Lunarcide, the Vanilla Chainsaws and others.



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## About the Centre

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**THE CENTRE FOR WESTERN SYDNEY** is a regional think tank based at Western Sydney University. The Centre is about putting the voices of the region first. That objective is pursued via conversations, collaborative research, and advocacy for, and with, the Western Sydney region.



**CENTRE FOR  
WESTERN SYDNEY**

# WESTERN SYDNEY VOTES

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**TOM NANCE is the Manager, Strategy and Delivery with Western Sydney University. He is a leading contributor to the Centre for Western Sydney's research, partnership and activation platforms, shaping regional narrative and conversation in a way that prioritises equity and opportunity.**

Tom has an extensive track record of cultivating partnerships and delivering results for government, business and community stakeholders in a way that addresses a range of complex social, economic and systemic issues. He has been sought after to comment on a broad range of issues that affect the region, including gambling-related harm, urban planning and development, education and politics.

Previously, Tom held senior leadership roles in the not-for-profit sector, where he co-authored a range of reports that have shaped policy development and service delivery in Western Sydney, including Communities of Change, Home in Western Sydney and The Culturally Responsive Framework to Address Gambling Related Harm.



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