

Barnaby's choice *FIN 28/5/13*

Saturday's by-election in the NSW state seat of Northern Tablelands would hardly have gone unnoticed by federal independent MP **Tony Windsor**. The Nationals reclaimed the seat – which includes towns like Armidale that are also in Windsor's electorate – with a whopping 35 per cent swing. But critically Saturday's wipeout did exclude Windsor's Tamworth heartland.

Commentator and Friends of the ABC life member **Chris Kenny** put a widely held view on Saturday when he tweeted: "Still don't think Windsor will run, let alone win." But the independent is adamant he's running against **Barnaby Joyce** and that's that. It's even safe to say there are a few in the Coalition's joint party room silently barracking for the incumbent.

On the ground in New England, the issue of Joyce being a Queensland resident on a hefty government stipend is playing well for Windsor. It may force the senator to quit parliament early to make it abundantly clear he's running as a private citizen and a NSW local. Even the most senior Coalition figures concede it. But with the LNP keen to grab four senate seats in Queensland (as they did in 2004), and with Joyce's retail campaigning talent needed to counter **Bob Katter**, they are still a long way from figuring out their game plan.