

Peta Credlin unleashes on ‘hapless bunch of bedwetters’ who orchestrated coup on Tony Abbott

Rob Harris, national politics reporter, Herald Sun, July 4, 2016 10:30pm
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TONY Abbott’s former top adviser says Malcolm Turnbull is now the man who “broke the Liberal Party’s heart”.

Peta Credlin, the much-maligned chief of staff to the former PM, last night launched an attack on the “hapless bunch of bedwetters” who orchestrated Mr Turnbull’s coup on Mr Abbott in September last year.

She said it was karma that two of the group — Peter Hendy and Wyatt Roy — had lost their seats and another three — senators Arthur Sinodinos, Scott Ryan and James McGrath — survived only because they were in the Senate.



Peta Credlin has slammed the people who orchestrated last year’s coup on Tony Abbott. Picture: Sam Rutty

“That wonderful victory we had in 2013 has been squandered in a term of infighting ... we swore it would never happen to us and it took us two years to pull ourselves apart,” Ms Credlin told Sky News.

She questioned whether Mr Turnbull was capable of handling tough negotiations with the crossbench and his own party room during a hung parliament, and said he was a “complete bit player” during the 2010 talks.

She also attacked his widely ridiculed speech on Saturday night, but said Mr Turnbull had a track record of being less than gracious.

“Anyone who is surprised needs to go back and look at the speech when the referendum went down ... Malcolm Turnbull you’re the man who broke the Liberal Party’s heart,” she said, playing on the PM’s comments about John Howard at the time.

She dismissed questions whether Mr Abbott should return to lead the party, saying those queries should be put to her former boss.

Tony Nutt, the head of the re-election campaign, was another Coalition figure copping flak yesterday as he was accused of blowing the government’s chances by running an eight week “dictatorship”.

Angry Liberal MPs and officials are lining up to attack the veteran party strategist, accusing him of “micromanaging” the marathon campaign and refusing to accept advice or feedback.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull’s message to voters has also been questioned. The criticism is that his focus on innovation and company tax cuts did not cut through with average voters. Regional MP’s believe the focus on the “new economy” confused older voters who became scared when subjected to Labor’s campaign that Medicare was under threat.

They were also bewildered that Mr Nutt and pollster Mark Textor did not roll out negative advertising focusing on Opposition Leader Bill Shorten’s links to unions, the carbon tax, and Labor’s record on asylum seeker boats.

The Herald Sun understands Liberal Party state branches around the country, furious they were sidelined during the campaign, could soon push for Mr Nutt’s removal as federal director..

Mr Nutt is understood to have directed expletive-ridden abuse at those who questioned his approach during the past two months, telling them the campaign was not a “democracy” but a “dictatorship”.

State branches are also believed to have had to commission their own polling during the campaign, due to suspicion of Mr Nutt’s “command and control” approach, his lack of concern over Medicare attacks, and his refusal to share internal marginal seat polling.

One party powerbroker said Mr Nutt would “come under some serious pressure”. No one saw any polling so no one saw this coming,” the source said. “It is a terrible result and the party needs to ask how it happened.

But senior Liberal sources said the approach of Mr Nutt, a former top aide to former PM John Howard credited with state election wins across the country, was the same as his predecessor Brian Loughnane.

However, others said he was not up to modern politics. “He’s an administrator, not a campaigner, Why he was allowed to run the show anyway I have no idea”, one said.

Another said: "He spent his time as (former Victorian Premier) Ted Baillieu's chief of staff doing nothing more than complaining if his tea didn't come in a cup and saucer and making orders for the stationery cupboard. He can hardly use email".

Former Defence minister David Johnson, who is likely to lose his Western Australian Senate seat, attacked the Coalition campaign as "shocking". He said the poor result proved that the Liberal Party's strategists were "light years away" from being able to relate to voters.

"We did not fire any of the ammunition we have", he said. "I was tearing my hair out –'Jobs and Growth?' It's a bit trite", he said. This was a shocking campaign".

During the campaign, Mr Abbott also questioned why there had been almost no attention paid to national security.