



 Australian Senator Cory Bernardi.

NSW

# Cory Bernardi quits: National MP Luke Hartsuyker considered walking out on Coalition

SHARRI MARKSON, The Daily Telegraph

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ROGUE Senator Cory Bernardi is not the only politician who has contemplated quitting the Turnbull Government, with Nationals MP Luke Hartsuyker issuing an ultimatum that he would consider walking if not given a portfolio after last year's election.

While Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull did not reach out to Senator Bernardi over his threats to leave the government until Monday — when it was too late — the government gave in to Mr Hartsuyker's demands and appointed him Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister, Barnaby Joyce.



📷 Australian Senator Cory Bernardi announces his decision to leave the Liberal Party.

The Daily Telegraph can reveal Mr Turnbull first picked up the phone to call Mr Bernardi on Monday to try to convince him to stay in the Liberal Party, but the call was rejected.

Behind the scenes, Liberal MPs were critical of the PM for failing to reach out to Mr Bernardi in the wake of revelations last year that he was contemplating forming his own political movement, the Australian Conservatives.

### **Analysis: Cory Bernardi's real aim is to make himself redundant**

Mr Turnbull last met Senator Bernardi — who he has a long-running animosity with — in New York in September, where the topic of superannuation was discussed.

By the time the PM made Monday's call following reports Mr Bernardi would resign the following day, the Senator did not bother answering.



📷 Nationals MP Luke Hartsuyker, pictured with PM Malcolm Turnbull during question time, threatened to join the crossbench if not handed a portfolio after the last election. Picture: Getty Images

While there was some criticism directed at Mr Turnbull, there was far greater anger at Mr Bernardi for what senior ministers described as his disloyalty and betrayal for gaining his South Australian senate spot off the back of Liberal support, and then quitting the party seven months later.

But Mr Bernardi calmly explained why he had given up on the Libs, saying he could better advance conservative policies and values on his own.

He spoke of wanting to restore the public faith in politics which, he argued, had eroded since 2005.

**[‘Reluctant and relieved’, SA Senator Cory Bernardi confirms he’s leaving](#)**



Following rogue senator Cory Bernardi's defection, this is how the new Senate will look.

The Government gave in to Mr Hartsuyker's demands and appointed him Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister

“The level of public disenchantment with the major parties, the lack of confidence in our political process and the concern about the direction of our nation is very, very strong,” he said. “This is a direct product of us, the political class, being out of touch with the hopes and aspirations of the Australian people.”

[Attorney-General George Brandis said Mr Bernardi had broken the faith of the people](#) who supported him for decades and not behaved in a “conservative” way.

“Might I say that if one seeks to restore confidence in the political class, it is a poor way to begin by breaking the promise one makes to one’s electors to serve on the platform one stood,” he said in the Senate following Mr Bernardi’s resignation.



📷 A newly independent Mr Bernardi speaks in Parliament yesterday. Picture: AAP



📷 Attorney-General George Brandis has savaged Bernardi's defection claiming he broke the faith with the people.

“What Senator Bernardi has done today is not a conservative thing ... because breaking faith with the electorate, breaking faith with the people who supported you through thick and thin for years and for decades is not a conservative thing to do.”

Defence Minister Christopher Pyne called for Mr Bernardi to resign and recontest as an independent.

“If Bernardi really wants to restore faith in politics, he must resign and recontest as an independent, otherwise it's all hot air,” he tweeted.

“If Bernardi wants to restore faith in politics, how does that sit with getting elected as a Liberal and then turning independent?”



📷 Pauline Hanson talks with Mr Bernardi after he announced his defection. Picture: AAP

Despite his resignation from the party, Mr Brandis said the Government would treat Mr Bernardi professionally, courteously and as a colleague.

Senior sources told The Daily Telegraph the Nationals had not intended to give Mr Hartsyker a portfolio, but the MP, who beat independent candidate Rob Oakeshott in his mid-North Coast seat of Cowper, raised the prospect of moving to the crossbench.

With only a one-seat majority, Mr Turnbull could not afford to lose Mr Hartsyker in the lower house.

Other Nationals learned of his demand and some were furious, particularly after the party dedicated significant resources in the dying days of the campaign to secure Mr Hartsyker's seat. Mr Hartsyker and Mr Joyce declined to comment.



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