



Form guide for the Lib poll race

Wanted: Liberal Party federal president and federal director to run a champagne campaign for Malcolm Turnbull on a beer budget.

It's the job ad that could determine the next federal election. An already uphill Coalition victory looks impossible without two talented picks. They will need the PM's blessing, widespread respect across the unhappy party and — perhaps most importantly — a flair for raising money.

President **Richard Alston** and director **Tony Nutt** departing, hand in hand, is not ideal. It's like a listed company hunting for a new chair while they are conducting a CEO search.

Federal executive will formally make the decision, but it will be on the PM's instruction. So who does Turnbull have in mind — and will they say yes?

Back when **Brian Loughnane** was running the show it seemed **Damien Mantach** was being groomed for the federal director gig. Mantach complicated his run by stealing \$1.55 million from the Liberals' Victorian division. Being in jail for another year makes Mantach an unlikely choice.

Mark Neeham was the Liberal state director that oversaw

Barry O'Farrell's landslide in the 2011 state election against a tattered NSW Labor Party. Neeham is now running government and marketing at Primary Health Care, who have their own leadership vacancies with CEO **Peter Gregg** on the way out to fight ASIC in court. A way out of Primary might be tempting — if he was asked.

There's also the man who helped get Turnbull into his seat of Wentworth, **Scott Briggs**, currently the NSW Liberals honorary treasurer. But only last October, Turnbull launched Briggs' new venture-capital shop Pacific Blue Capital. And Briggs is on the Cronulla Sharks board. Seems a lot to give up in Sydney.

More likely is **Andrew Hirst**. Hirst was a loyal deputy chief of staff to **Tony Abbott** and worked for Turnbull in opposition and alongside Nutt on the 2016 campaign. And he already lives in Canberra, where he is the well regarded director of **Lynton Crosby** and **Mark Textor's** strategy and research shop, the

Continued on Page 20

Continued from Page 19

Liberals campaigning firm of choice.



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Would you have preferred a chair?...

Is that an interview question?...



CLEMENT



Tony Abbott with Andrew Hirst and Peta Credlin in 2013