

# SPECTATOR | AUSTRALIA

## Inside the federal by-election you may not have heard about



AEC

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Due to the impending Queensland state election, there has been little discussion about the federal seat of [Groom](#), which is now vacant following the resignation of John McVeigh. Centred on Toowoomba, Groom is a seat which the Coalition had a 70-30 two-party preference at the last election.

Matt Canavan is said to be mulling over the switch from the Senate and relocating his family 600 kilometres down the A3 from his

home in Rockhampton. Though the candidate would be 'Liberal National', if he did contest the seat, he would be pressured to sit in the Liberal rather than the National Party room, though he could insist on a Nat filling his Senate vacancy.

Canavan is said to be unwilling to switch to the Liberals but doing so would suit his purposes if he is to make a future run at the prime ministership.

In this respect, Henri de Bourbon comes to mind. A Protestant, he was offered the French throne in 1593 conditional on him becoming a Catholic. "Paris is well worth a mass", he allegedly said. Crowned King Henri IV a year later, ruling with "weapon in hand and arse in the saddle", he oversaw a period in which France enjoyed great prosperity.

Other contenders for the top job in the event of Morrison being run over by a bus or policy strains — Frydenberg, Dutton and Taylor -- will be tempted to root for a "good local candidate". Senator James McGrath, facing an internal wrestling match with Amanda Stoker for first spot in the Senate candidates' list, is also likely to be interested; he was born in Toowoomba but his past association with the left of the Coalition could leave him disadvantaged in this conservative constituency.

This is a significant factor since, though Groom is a massive Coalition stronghold, these regional seats have a habit of seeing considerable swings to conservative or populist candidates, particularly in bi-elections. And there is a base for this to take place in Groom since in 2019, One Nation, United Australia and Conservative National

picked up 20 per cent of the vote with Labor and the Greens polling 26 per cent.

No date yet has been set for the by-election.