

## Turnbull wants Joyce to have continuing 'prominent role' in public life

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

---

Malcolm Turnbull has strongly backed Barnaby Joyce running for another parliamentary term, in contrast to Nationals leader Michael McCormack's much more lukewarm attitude.

As the Joyce saga continued to suck political oxygen in the wake of Sunday's TV [interview](#) on Seven with Joyce and partner Vikki Campion, the former deputy prime minister rejected speculation that he might not contest his New England seat.

"I am disappointed to hear some people speaking about me not contesting the next election," he said in a statement. "I will certainly be contesting and have been humbled by the support I have received so far from around the New England electorate."

Turnbull, on a "listening" tour of drought-affected areas, told reporters in Blackall, "Barnaby has been a great advocate for regional Australia ... and I look forward to him running again in New England.

"I look forward to him continuing to play a role, a prominent role in Australian public life."

At a later news conference in Charleville, Turnbull was as enthusiastic when asked if he would be happy for Joyce to run again: "Yes absolutely, absolutely."

Turnbull's comment came despite their huge public spat earlier this year over Joyce's affair with Campion, his former staffer, and the criticism both Joyce and Campion made of Turnbull in the Seven interview.

Joyce said in the interview that Turnbull's doing a doorstep on the matter, rather than following the usual course of admonishing privately and giving support publicly, had been "wrong". Campion said, "It's like you can chew out your vice-captain in the locker room but not on the field."

## Turnbull wants Joyce to have continuing 'prominent role' in public life

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

---

When McCormack, standing with Turnbull at the Charleville news conference, was asked whether he echoed the Prime Minister's comments on Joyce's running again, he gave a less-than-full endorsement.

"Yes. At the end of the day it's a matter for the local branch in New England and a matter for the National Party members of the federal electoral council there ... they do the preselection, just like they do the preselections right across Australia in the Liberal National parties.

"It's democracy at work. So you put your hand up, anyone can get challenged, anybody can win so long as they've got the support of their local branch and their local federal electorate council and that's the way it works."

McCormack was similarly qualified in comments last week in a podcast with The Conversation.

---

**Read more:** [\*Politics podcast: Michael McCormack on Barnaby's future, latte sippers and other matters\*](#)

---

The Seven interview has intensified suggestions in the Nationals and elsewhere that Joyce should quit parliament at the election.

But the chair of the Nationals' Tamworth branch, Ian Coxhead, told The Conversation it supported Joyce running again.

Coxhead said the branch had given a vote of support to Joyce in February, before he resigned as leader. The motion was carried unanimously, with applause, he said. The Tamworth branch is the biggest of some eight branches in the New England electorate.

## Turnbull wants Joyce to have continuing 'prominent role' in public life

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

---

Coxhead said he had spoken to Joyce on Tuesday. “He said that as chair of the Tamworth branch I’d be the first to know if he was not recontesting. But he said ‘I have no thought along those lines,’” Coxhead said.

Joyce has a book coming out later this year, which is likely to generate more controversy around him.

*Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organisation that would benefit from this article, and has disclosed no relevant affiliations beyond their academic appointment.*

Authors: Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

**Read more** <http://theconversation.com/turnbull-wants-joyce-to-have-continuing-prominent-role-in-public-life-97805>