

Cory Bernardi to disband Australian Conservatives

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Senator Cory Bernardi will wind up his Australian Conservatives party, after its abysmal showing at the election.

Bernardi, who defected from the Liberals and formed the party in 2017, said on Thursday: “The inescapable conclusion from our lack of political success, our financial position and the re-election of a Morrison-led government is that the rationale for the creation of the Australian Conservatives is no longer valid.

“Accordingly, I will shortly begin the process of formally deregistering the Australian Conservatives as a political party.”

Read more: [**As South Australia heads to the polls, the state is at a crossroads**](#)

There has been speculation that the South Australian senator - who is making it clear he wants to do all he can to help the Morrison government - may seek to rejoin the Liberals.

He told The Conversation: “I have not thought about it. My focus has been on the future of the [Australian Conservatives] party and will now consider what role I may or may not play in the next parliament”.

In his statement he said, “the Morrison government victory and policy agenda suggests we are well on the way to restoring common sense in the Australian parliament. That is all we, as Australian Conservatives, have ever sought to do.”

The Australian Conservatives attracted some disillusioned Liberal supporters while Malcolm Turnbull was prime minister.

Cory Bernardi to disband Australian Conservatives

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

The party swallowed the small conservative party Family First, which briefly gave it two South Australian state parliamentarians. It also briefly had representation in the Victorian parliament, with the defection to it of a Democratic Labour Party upper house member.

Read more: [*Bernardi split is symptomatic of a fractured political system, here and abroad*](#)

Bernardi said times were “very different” when he launched his party in early 2017.

“Malcolm Turnbull was leading a Labor-lite Coalition into political oblivion. As they abandoned their supporter base in pursuit of green-left policies, major party politics became an echo chamber rather than a battle of ideas.

“The fact that over 22,000 people formally joined the Australian Conservatives in our first year demonstrated just how badly the Coalition were haemorrhaging supporters who wanted their enduring values and traditional principles upheld.

“However, the decision to make Scott Morrison prime minister truly changed the political climate and our political fortunes.

“Rather than punish the Coalition for another new leader, many Conservatives breathed a sigh of relief that a man of faith and values was leading the Liberals back to their traditional policy platform.”

Read more: [*Bernardi should have resigned his Senate seat: here's why*](#)

Cory Bernardi to disband Australian Conservatives

Written by Michelle Grattan, Professorial Fellow, University of Canberra

Bernardi said that at the election the party polled “a tiny fraction of the votes” required for success.

“We can make all the excuses in the world for the result but it is clear that many of our potential voters returned to supporting the Coalition when Malcolm Turnbull was replaced by Scott Morrison.

“Although we made it clear in the lead-up to the campaign that we were only running in the Senate so as not to be the catalyst for a change of government, our message didn’t get through.”

He said that while he had been urged to “deliberately court controversy” during the election to win attention, this “would have undermined the very premise of what we offered to the Australian people – a credible and principled alternative to the political fringe.

“Unfortunately steady and sensible didn’t work and it was frustrating that some single interest parties gained more votes than we did.”

Michelle Grattan does not work for, consult, own shares in or receive funding from any company or organization 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/cory-berardi-to-disband-australian-conservatives-119186>