

McMahon loses support

Branch won't bow to Labor pressure

PREFERRED Shellharbour Labor candidate Lylea McMahon has lost the support of one of the seat's key branches as anger grows over the party's decision to deny members a rank and file preselection vote.

At a meeting on Monday night, Shellharbour ALP branch members unanimously adopted a motion that unless party powerbrokers allowed a rank and file vote in the safe Labor seat, they would refuse to support Ms McMahon during next year's state election campaign.

"Last night's unanimous decision is unprecedented in the Shellharbour branch and indicates the depth of anger members are feeling after again being denied the right to elect their own candidate," branch president Mat Badcock said yesterday.

"If our call is ignored by the party, Shellharbour branch members will refuse to man polling booths in the electorate next March, and go out and help campaign in others' seats.

"This should not be seen as any sort of personal attack on Lylea, it is a protest against members being denied democratic preselection processes."

Sitting MP Marianne Saliba attended Monday's meeting, but Mr Badcock said there was no animosity towards her over her shock decision to not seek a third term.

Ms McMahon is one of five candidates preferred by Premier Morris Iemma who are expected to be endorsed at a meeting of the party's national executive in Canberra today. A number of Illawarra unions have publicly declared they will oppose Ms McMahon with their own candidate at the election.

Leading the campaign of union opposition is AWU secretary Andy Gillespie, who claims Ms McMahon is not a suitable candidate because of her role as a senior human resources officer with BlueScope Steel.



MS McMAHON