

# Liberal hope for outright victory

By KEN MERRIGAN  
and JOHN HINE

THE Liberal Party is confident of winning the Nunawading re-run election in its own right — a remarkable turn-around from the draw on March 2.

With 82 per cent of the ballots counted, the Liberal candidate, Mrs Rosemary Varty, had won nearly 49 per cent of the vote.

Jubilant party officials claimed a swing of about 6 per cent, but the Labor Party said the figure was 4.3 per cent — in line with the usual anti-government trend in by-elections.

The Labor candidate, Mr Bob Ives, had 39.3 per cent of the primary vote at the close of counting last night.

Liberal state director, Mr John Ridley, said that with 9000 postal votes to be counted, he believed Mrs Varty could win without relying on preferences.

The Opposition Leader, Mr Kennett, said the result was a kick in the pants for the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, and a rap over the knuckles for the Premier, Mr Cain.

But Mr Cain said the swing was the normal protest vote for by-elections.

"I accept without reservation what the electorate has said," he said.

"That's their entitlement to make those judgments and I had been hopeful it might not have used this occasion to voice the traditional by-election protest when nothing is at stake except for one seat."

Mr Kennett said the win was the best result since 1976, when the Hamer State Government



● A jubilant Mrs Varty relaxes with a friend yesterday.

"It is not a normal result, it is a stunning result for the Liberal Party and certainly continues our path back into Government," he said.

He said he would set up early next month a small, independent think-tank consisting of senior businessmen to help develop policy and organise the party in an effort to win Government at the next election.

release the strategy the party would follow until the end of 1986.

Mr Kennett said the result was a victory for common sense and decency. He expressed sympathy for Mr Ives, who he said had been through hell and back.

"I have no sympathy at all for John Cain and the Labor Party

election and he was running it," he said.

"He set the course and now he must accept the full responsibility for their massive defeat.

"Mr Cain, by his own choosing, decided this was an election about leadership — he deliberately set in motion a campaign to destroy my character, blacken my name and deceitfully put into my mouth words I never said.

"It is not my leadership that has been called into question tonight, but Mr Cain's."

Mr Kennett said Mr Cain had turned his back on his supporters and his party during the five-week campaign.

"He led them not to the promised land but firmly down the path to political oblivion," he said.

"Don't anyone let it be said that Labor lost this election, we won it."

Mr Cain said the possibility of reforming the Upper House appeared to have lapsed, as the Government no longer had the numbers.

"It will make it more difficult to govern," he said.

"We do not have certainty in the Upper House, the assurance we can go on governing without being threatened each time supply comes up."

Mr Cain said the party had done as well as could be expected in the circumstances.

He had hoped that voters would rise above single issues raised by interest groups.

He could not remember so many groups coming out during a campaign and "pedalling their wares and pushing their cause."