

Nunawading: It's Libs by laps

NO DOUBT ABOUT IT!

WHEN Rosemary Varty's campaign manager, Ian Hanke, organised the Liberal Party's victory celebrations last week he was already confident of the election's outcome.

Box Hill Town Hall's Whitehorse room was hired, and by 8 p.m. Saturday more than 200 supporters gathered to congratulate the new member for Nunawading Province, Mrs Varty.

Two large tables held food for the crowd, which gathered in clumps of six or seven under the gaze of three giant Rosemary Varty posters — the only decorations apparent, apart from a crudely-made sign reading: "You canna hand a man a grander panner" (an obvious reference to the Labor jibe that Liberal leader Jeff Kennett would "put a spanner in the works" with control of the legislative Council).

Cattlemen

Several cattlemen were obvious by their "Mountain Men Love The High Country" T-shirts, and Pastor J Watson, the Call to Australia Party candidate, dropped in to congratulate the winner.

Mr Watson's preferences (he won 483 primary votes) were not needed by the Liberals.

It was obvious by the first count shortly after 6 p.m. that Labor candidate Bob Ives would lose by a substantial margin.

Mrs Varty polled 45,418 votes to Mr Ives's 36,503. Australian Democrats candidate Mr Michael Nardella won 4284 votes. The other candidates polled indifferently.

Around the corner from the Liberal victory celebration, a smaller party was held at the Labor Party's campaign rooms. Bob Ives arrived with Premier Cain, to three cheers and the chant: "Four more years!"

Mr Cain said the 4.3 per cent wing against the Government was typical by-election result. He said he two-party preferred system was affected by the standing of nine candidates compared with three in March — Mr Ives, Mrs Varty and Mr Nardella.

"I can't recall any campaign where more complaints were voiced by more interest groups in so small a space of time," he said.

It was a "did our best" attitude at Labor's party, where about 150 people gathered with Mr Ives.

Green, gold and white balloons and campaign posters of Mr Ives decorated the room and, as at the Liberal Party, there was plenty of

by GLEN DOWER

beer and wine. Mr Ives had been campaigning officially for six weeks but unofficially since the March 2 decision — the breaking of a tied result by drawing his name from a box — was challenged in the Court of Disputed Returns by Mrs Varty.

He looked tired, but managed a wan smile as supporters cheered and praised his hard-fought campaign. Having resigned from his position as lecturer at Swinburne Institute, Mr Ives is looking forward to a holiday before making plans for the future.

A look at two booths from Mitcham and Box Hill indicates the trend, although Labor and Liberal officials say the greatest changes were in Ringwood and Croydon, and some claim the cattlemen's ride through that area may have had an effect.

In Box Hill, the Tyne St booth gave Mrs Varty 780 and Mr Ives 760 votes in the March election, with 105 for Mr Nardella of the Democrats. This time, Mrs Varty got 778 votes to Mr Ives 635, and Nardella only 49.

Democrats

For the Australian Democrats it was a typical result. Their percentage dropped from eight in March to 4.6 this time.

The Call to Australia Party, which almost doubled the Democrats' vote in Waverley Province in March, won only 2.7 per cent on Saturday.

The Nunawading East booth in Mitcham gave Mrs Varty 1083 votes in March, Mr Ives 1193, and Mr Nardella 91. On Saturday Mrs Varty won 1017, Mr Ives 821 and Mr Nardella 113.

Nunawading Province electors were asked to vote for issues ranging from reform or retention of the Upper House to brothels and Alpine parks.

The six-week Nunawading campaign will go down in Victorian political history as one of the most arduous and expensive ever fought.



Victor and the vanquished ...

THAT'S my girl! Mrs Leila Aitken, mother of Liberal candidate Rosemary Varty, enjoys a joke with her daughter and Liberal leader Jeff Kennett at the victory celebrations on Saturday night. RIGHT: Smile, though your heart is breaking ... Labor loser Bob Ives puts up a brave front at his party's campaign headquarters.



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