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Peters declares rules for coalition

Kingmaker says he won't support National's tax cuts or Labour's 'unfair' capital gains policy

Hamish Rutherford and Vernon Small

Winston Peters is starting to lay down the ground rules for coalition negotiations, dismissing National's plans for tax cuts and signalling Labour must be prepared to modify a key tax policy.

At a speech in Porirua, Peters spelled out a series of concerns held by a "majority of New Zealanders". A former parliamentary colleague of his said it was his way of sending a message to other parties of his priorities for possible post-election negotiations.

Those ranged from Kiwis' alarm at national debt levels, to concern about the state of the economy, foreign ownership of houses and land, immigration, poverty and unemployment.

Unusually, the speech made not a single mention of asset sales or buying back former state assets, although Peters insisted afterwards he still shares the view of the public, which was opposed to partial sales of state-owned assets.

Most political polls – which historically underestimate NZ First's support come election day – put the party near or above the 5 per cent threshold which would return it to Parliament.

Although National is polling at about 50 per cent, the party acknowledges it is likely to need support parties to form a government.

Peters said National's own polling showed that his party was on such a rise that it was panicking.

Yesterday's speech fired shots at major policies of both National and Labour.

On Monday, Prime Minister John Key signalled that if re-elected National would set aside \$500 million a year for possible tax cuts in 2017.

But Peters said there was no room for tax cuts under the current settings, and dismissed the announcement as "cynical" electioneering.

"The National Party is having a private laugh at the public's expense. When have you ever heard a party campaigning on 'virtual tax cuts' for the election beyond this one?"



Winston Peters: Sending a message.

Peters also sent a clear message to Labour to be prepared to modify its capital gains tax policy, which NZ First would not support without allowing those who incurred capital losses to claim a credit.

"A capital gains tax without compensation where there are capital losses is demonstrably unfair."

In recent months Peters has said repeatedly that he would be prepared to sit on the cross benches without going into government, but yesterday's speech was themed "Forming Coalitions".

Peters said his position had not changed, but a former colleague said the wording of the speech was a clear signal he believed he had the 5 per cent threshold sewn up and was now clearly shifting to negotiating to be in government.

Running through the things that were important to a deal was his way of negotiating through public statements, even though he always said he would not negotiate before an election.

"He always does this," the former colleague said. "We'll do this, we'll do that. That's a negotiation."

Key said yesterday that Peters should declare who he would prefer to form a government with, and that uncertainly risked an early election not long after the September 20 poll.

Rescue on skis for winter woolly



Alpine rescue: Marlborough skier Pete Oswald rescues a 40kg sheep stranded high up the Hector Mountains, in Otago.

Photo: DAN POWER

Heather Simpson

A snowballing sheep will become the stuff of legend for semi-professional skier Pete Oswald.

The Marlborough man carried out one of the world's few sheep rescues on skis after an exhausted ewe slid into his life.

He was high in the Hector Mountains, Otago, on a photo shoot for *Snow Action Magazine* with Southern Lakes Heliski when the woolly story unfolded.

Oswald, 29, and photographer Dan Power were on the last run of the day setting up for a shoot when a piece of snow fell from the slope and hit Oswald's ski boot, causing him to take a backward glance at the slopes.

He saw a "little bundle of wool"

tumbling head over feet over a rocky ridge and down the mountain.

The sheep landed 100 metres from Oswald and, fearing the sheep had been killed, he skied over for a closer look.

"The sheep's head was bent underneath its body. I put the sheep upright and it was bleeding from the nose. It was trying to walk but was totally exhausted. It wouldn't have survived if I had left it there."

Oswald squatted down and lifted the 40-kilogram ewe on to his legs and skied slowly down the slope.

"It was really hard to ski, there was a lot of wool in my face when I carried it."

He nearly fell over a few times travelling down the mountain before leaving the lucky sheep on a flat, grassy area where it could



Sheep save: Pete Oswald had his arms full after a sheep rolled down the mountain near him.

feed. The sheep slowly walked off unperturbed by its snowy ride.

His father, John Oswald, a former farmer from the Awatere Valley, told him the sheep could have been up there since the start of winter. Its wool had not been shorn and was inches deep.

"They are pretty resourceful animals," Oswald said. The sheep was fully grown, a female and was tagged.

"It's a bit of a yarn. It is definitely the oddest thing I have found skiing."

Oswald is a semi-professional skier and cinematographer based in Innsbruck, Austria.

During his career he has seen mountain goats, marmots in France and bears in North America but the sheep is his favourite find.

Troubled school asks for help

Jody O'Callaghan
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Staff "dissatisfaction" at a Christchurch school has led to its second government intervention in just over three years.

Linwood College's board of trustees had asked the Ministry of Education for a limited statutory manager to step in to resolve employment-related issues, chairman Dave Turnbull said.

There had been a "degree of dissatisfaction" within the school, he said.

"[But] we're not dealing with a specific staff member who has or hasn't done something and so on."

It related to "time consuming" procedural issues like contracts, appraisals, teaching programmes, appointment processes and allocations to classrooms, Turnbull said.

Ministry head of sector enablement and support Katrina Casey said statutory intervention was requested to deal with "a number of employment issues".

The length of intervention depended on the "complexity of issues to be addressed".

It comes after the school's board was sacked in March 2011 by then education minister Anne Tolley, who said it was taking too long to move the school to Cashmere High School after the February 2011 earthquake damaged its buildings.

Commissioner Janet Kelly took over on a short-term contract, followed by Michael Rondel until June 2012, when a new board was elected and took office.

There was no connection between this intervention and the last, Turnbull said.

"There was some disquiet on my part that a commissioner was appointed in 2011. If there hadn't been an earthquake, there would never have been a commissioner appointed at the school," he said.

The latest notice to parents said the limited statutory manager would not replace the board, who would continue to govern other matters such as "significant educational initiatives" underway.

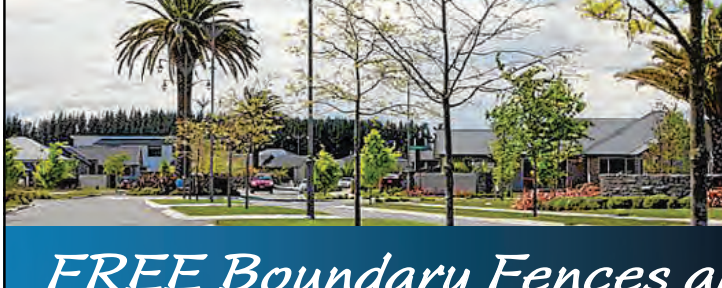
Linwood College is due to be demolished and is designing new buildings around becoming the country's first science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) focused school.

Turnbull said he had received four emails from parents, all in support of its request for statutory support.

The board would also conduct a survey of the staff and parent community with respect to their impressions of the college.

Principal Margaret Paiti said she and the board had sought the input of a limited statutory manager "to ensure our continued commitment towards enhancing achievement of all students at the college".

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