

Academics query odds behind Ham

BY REX MARTINICH

PUNTERS remain confident that Wagga byelection Liberal candidate Julia Ham will prevail this weekend, but several political experts have questioned relying on bookies' forecasts.

One of Australia's largest online bookmakers, Sportsbet, has the Coalition on \$1.30 to win the byelection versus \$2.80 for an independent and \$8 for Labor.

A theory that bookmakers are a better indicator of election winners than opinion polls has been gaining ground in Australia in recent years.

At its most basic level, the theory is that since companies taking bets have a substantial financial stake in the outcome of the election, they have extra incentive to find

the best information and make the best predictions.

However, multiple academics who have studied the correlation between odds and election winners told *The Daily Advertiser* that election betting markets were usually set up as novelties for marketing purposes.

For example, Sportsbet is offering \$81 for a No Land Tax victory in Wagga despite the party not registering a candidate.

University of Queensland law professor Graeme Orr said he did not think political bets should be allowed.

"The betting companies do this for free publicity. Election betting is not huge in Australia," he said. "When it comes to framing the odds, they don't have inside access to polling information, so the initial odds are like sticking

your finger in the air.

"Then they are relying on (indications from the market), which is a small pool and can easily be swayed by a \$1000 bet."

Tasmanian election analyst Dr Kevin Bonham said betting companies would not take large bets on elections due to the threat of people with actual insider knowledge.

"If they take large bets then they are leaving themselves open to losing money," he said.

"The bets are more like hobby betting. There have been cases where very short-odds favourites have lost."

One of the most prominent advocates using odds to predict elections is Andrew Leigh, a former ANU lecturer and now federal Labor MP, who declined to comment.



CAMPAIGNING: Robert Borsak of the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers with his party's candidate in the Wagga byelection, Seb McDonagh (right).

Borsak tips byelection upset

THE Liberal Party is in danger of losing its 60-year grip on the seat of Wagga Wagga, according to the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers' Robert Borsak.

Mr Borsak was in the city on Tuesday, campaigning for his party's candidate Seb McDonagh.

"We are seeing a lot of people walking straight into the polling booth, taking nothing off anybody," Mr Borsak said.

"In my experience that usually means they're out to punish the government. They've made up their minds. They don't like what's happening and they're just

going straight through.

"I think it's a mixture of all sorts of things. I think there are all sorts of leftover issues around what's going on in Canberra.

"I think people are very unhappy about having to attend a byelection this close to a state election."

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This is a bad deal for NSW taxpayers

Only developers will profit

Regional visitors will lose out

Demolishing the Powerhouse is wasteful, risky, stupid and unnecessary

The Powerhouse belongs to the people of NSW, not politicians. Founded in 1883, the museum is an endowment for our children and grandchildren. It is not the government's property play or political trophy. Parramatta should have a unique new museum. And the Powerhouse must stay in Ultimo where it is accessible to regional visitors and open to everyone.

Protect the Powerhouse from property developers

On Saturday send the Premier a message, put the Liberals last

Authorised by Kylie Winkworth on behalf of the Powerhouse Museum Alliance

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On Saturday put the Liberals last

