

Victory Speech: Robert Menzies, Prime Minister (United Australia Party)

September 22, 1940

Taking Australia as a whole, the result of the elections must be regarded as a clear mandate to prosecute the war with the utmost vigor.

In five States out of six the vote is a great encouragement to the Government, and I expect that we shall, as a result, win 16 out of the 19 Senate seats contested.

The position has been obscured by the fact that alone of all the States New South Wales has administered a setback to the Government.

Why is this?

Is it because New South Wales is out of step with the war policy of the rest of Australia?

I think not, for the isolationist policy was sharply rejected.

Is it because New South Wales was affected by parochial issues? Surely not.

In my opinion, the result in New South Wales is to be attributed not to the Government's avowed enemies, but to some of its supposed friends.

Important sections of the Sydney press, in particular, while not actually advocating a Labor Government, have for many months constantly decried the Government's war efforts and attacked individual Ministers.

This kind of thing has its inevitable effect, as I have frequently pointed out to my Sydney friends, and therefore the result in New South Wales is no surprise.

It may do no harm if its lesson can be learned.

I deplore the loss of several most loyal colleagues, who have given good service to Australia.

In the case of my own electorate, I am indebted to hundreds of helpers who contributed powerfully to a vote which is the greatest personal encouragement and increases the obligation which I feel to do all in my power to give a clear and faithful service to the Australian people."

Source: Compiled from the Melbourne Herald, Canberra Times, The Age, 23/9/1940, page 7, the Sydney Morning Herald.