

Cook blasts 'no-alition' on day of conference

BETHANY HIATT & ROSE PATANE

The Premier has lashed out at the Opposition on the day of the State Liberals conference, calling them a "chaotic and dysfunctional" party who "don't represent mainstream WA".

As Opposition Leader Basil Zempilas declared the "time is right" for his style of leadership, Roger Cook said the Liberals and Nationals were a "mess" because they could not decide whether to form a coalition.

"The Liberals and Nationals can't decide on who they should work with or how they should work together, and it's an indication of just chaotic and dysfunctional they are," he said at a press conference in Bunbury on Sunday.

"We just despair that they provide absolutely no alternative to the Government in relation to what they want to see happen in WA. All we see from them is just thought bubbles, political slogans, but no solutions for the people of WA."

"You see them chasing off all these fringe issues inspired by right-wing church groups, by the anti-gun law reform lobby, and quite frankly, they don't represent mainstream WA."

Pushed on whether the Government should continue with plans to build a racetrack at Burswood Park, in the face of a growing public backlash, Mr Cook said it would uphold its election commitment.

He accused the Liberals and the Greens of joining as members of the "no-alition", ready to oppose anything.

"They're anti-jobs, anti-sport, anti-progressive," he said. "The Leader of the Opposition changes his view depending on the last person he spoke to."

"If the Liberals had won government under Basil Zempilas, they would be investing billions of dollars on the Commonwealth Games. We are spending \$3.2 billion on new health infrastructure."

Responding to a call from a senior hospital doctor for an inquiry into the health system, Mr Cook reiterated WA had seen a 33 per cent increase in the health workforce, and an increase of 900 beds since 2021.

"We have a plan to continue to address the needs of health care in WA, making sure every Western Australian, no matter where they live, has the opportunity to gain appropriate access to health care," he said.

THE COMEBACK LIB

Basil Zempilas declares his team can win 2029 election



Pictures: Canvyn Monck

JESSICA PAGE

Basil Zempilas has declared the "time is right" for his style of leadership, vowing his team can win in 2029 while also taking a veiled swipe at some in his own party.

He used the Liberal Party's State Conference on Sunday to announce the launch of a new website in his name, zempilas.com.au, but denied it was because the Liberal brand has been too badly damaged by two election thrashings.

"When you go onto that website all of the team are represented, all of our messaging is represented," the Opposition Leader said.

"But it is also a name that people know in WA and there's no problem using that name."

A month after the party's State Council voted to urge the Federal Liberals to abandon net zero targets, Mr Zempilas, pictured above, said energy policy should focus on cost-of-living instead of climate wars.

"Western Australians do care about the environment. They want to reduce emissions," he said.

"We need to accept this or risk looking out of touch."

Headed a caveat: "as long as



Party members watch on as Liberal leader Basil Zempilas delivers his speech.

it doesn't send us broke". And a day after Senator Michaelia Cash, pictured below, objected to "tokenistic" welcome to country ceremonies and declared "One Australia, one flag", Mr Zempilas stood next to her and vowed to focus on "bread and butter" issues including schools, safety and housing.

"I'm here to win and to return the Liberal Party to government here in WA," he said.

"Everything the WA parliamentary team and the Liberal Party does, including those of you in this room, must revolve around that goal. Make

no mistake about this. Our campaign to win in March 2029 is under way."

He said the key to the comeback is "teamwork, strong leadership, a clearly defined and articulated plan, strong messaging and everyone doing their job".

There was applause at key moments throughout the 50-minute speech, and a standing ovation at the end, but the loudest laugh was prompted by a list of Cook Government Budget blowouts and excuses that included Russian

President Vladimir Putin.

"The Smart-Rider replacement,

to tap your phone on the device walking to the train or the bus, like they do in every other jurisdiction around the world, is six years and \$7 million over budget," Mr Zempilas said.

"The Transport Minister blames Putin's war in Ukraine for that! He's not our favourite, but he doesn't deserve that."

Transport Minister and Treasurer Rita Saffioti was targeted as often as Premier Roger Cook, as Mr Zempilas declared WA's health system and the proposed \$217 million Burswood entertainment precinct the Government's biggest weakness.

"When money is clearly needed for these important projects, they persist with what must be the most insensitive and tone deaf project of any West Australian Government," he said.

"The racetrack has become a metaphor for this Cook Labor Government and their wrong priorities."

Mr Zempilas said detailed policies "can, and will, wait until closer to the election", refusing to set a timeline when pressed by the media.

"But I'll give you one policy: we would scrap the Burswood Park racetrack today," he said.

