

Katrina ponders tilt at Hume

By LLOYD SCROOPE

KATRINA Hodgkinson is considering stepping aside from state government and two ministries to take the fight up to Liberal candidate Angus Taylor at the next federal election.

Ms Hodgkinson, the NSW Minister for Primary Industries and Small Business and Burrinjuck MP since 1999, made no attempt to hide her train-of-thought in an interview with the *Post* on Friday.

The National Party is yet to confirm publicly if it will endorse anyone for the seat of Hume, to be vacated by incumbent Liberal member Alby Schultz at the next election.

Ms Hodgkinson needs the backing of Nationals' HQ and her own judgment before she can make a fully fledged play at federal politics.

But there's no question she has a desire for the job.

"As I get around the electorate a lot of people have encouraged me to run," Ms Hodgkinson told the *Post*.

"It's no secret that I really miss representing Goulburn. Goulburn was a part of Burrinjuck for eight years, and then with the redistribution it was moved.

"I love Goulburn very much. I've got five generations of history here, and in Lake Bathurst, and another five generations on Dad's side in Yass.

"I'm very attached to the regions... I love the communities I currently represent in Burrinjuck, and almost all of Burrinjuck is in Hume as well.

"It's a very big decision to make." NSW Senator Fiona Nash and Ms Hodgkinson are the two highest profile Nats touted as potential candidates for Hume.

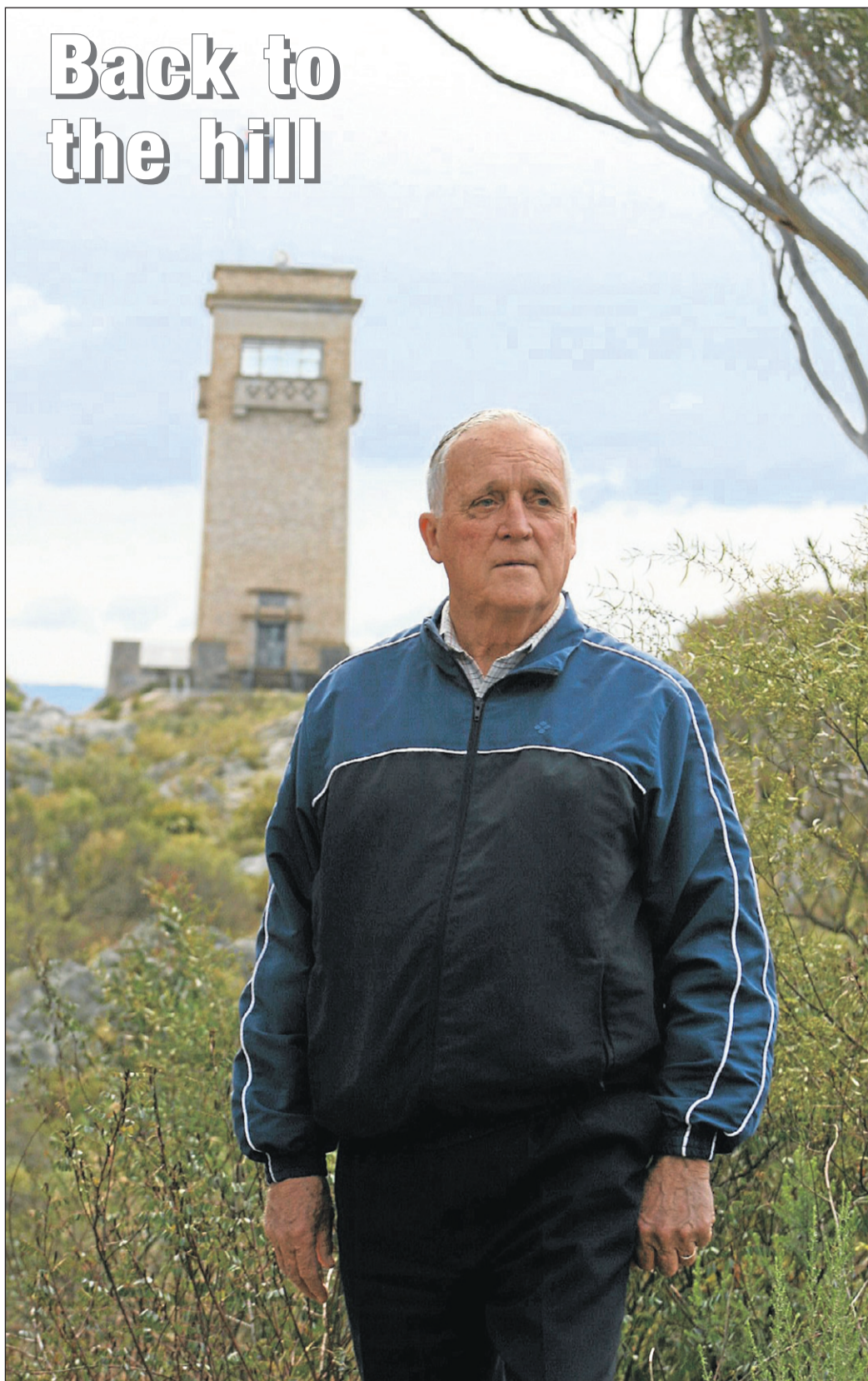
Both have plenty to lose. Ms Nash would sacrifice a place in the federal Senate if backed for candidacy. Ms Hodgkinson, who sat in opposition for 12-and-a-half years, would gamble two portfolios and a working relationship with Andrew Stoner and Barry O'Farrell, men she described as "the best premier and deputy premier in the country".

"Certainly I have looked very closely at this," Ms Hodgkinson said.

"I've never ruled (running for Hume) it out. It is something that I'm thinking about very carefully and very hard.

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Back to the hill



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