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Former detective, vegan bodybuilder snatch final spots

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Upper House

A retired police detective and a vegan bodybuilder will enter the NSW Parliament as new MPs for One Nation and the Animal Justice Party, after results for the upper house were finalised yesterday.

Rod Roberts, a former police sergeant from Goulburn, became the second One Nation MP elected to the Legislative Council after he scraped into the 21st and final seat after preferences were distributed yesterday. Mr Roberts, who retired from the NSW police force in 2000 and now runs a small business in workplace safety, said he was "nervous and excited" about his new career.

A self-described former Liberal voter, Mr Roberts said he joined One Nation because the Liberal Party "have moved away from their core values".

"I believe One Nation speaks for the common man, the everyday person in the street," Mr Roberts said after learning of his election.

Mr Roberts was elected from the second spot on the One Nation ticket, which was led by party leader Mark Latham.

"Mark and I are good friends. We've only [got to] know each other over the last eight or nine months but I believe we've formed a good relationship."

Mr Roberts said he counted One Nation's federal leader Pauline Hanson as a "very, very good friend". He said his two-decade-long career as a police detective - over the course of which he says he led investigations into murders and kidnappings - left him well-placed to negotiate with other parties.

Animal rights advocate and bodybuilder Emma Hurst will also take a seat on the expanded 11-member crossbench as one of two MPs from the Animal Justice Party.

She said the party would use their parliamentary positions to advocate for the end of the battery cage egg industry and the "mass slaughter of kangaroos" for the meat industry, as well as seeking "better climate action".

"The people of NSW have spoken and animal cruelty is a big issue and it's something we want to see an end to - Australians love animals," Ms Hurst said.

Mr Roberts and Ms Hurst - both first-time politicians - beat a number of minor parties for the final two spots, including Keep Sydney Open, the Liberal Democrats, and the Christian Democrats.

Other new faces in the upper house include Labor MPs-elect Tara Moriarty, Anthony D'Adam, and Mark Buttigieg.

Teacher Mark Banasiak will also enter the upper house as a new MP for the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, while lawyer Abigail Boyd will join the Greens' ranks on the crossbench.

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