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Nats flee the House to duck vote on their own urgency motion

Independent MPs yesterday accused the Nationals of drumming up false hopes over research stations in NSW.

Today in State Parliament the Nationals refused to support their own motion to debate the retention of the Gosford, Temora, Deniliquin, Grafton, Manilla and Trangie Research Stations.

In the most spectacular display of hypocrisy in recent times National Party MPs ran out of the Chamber when the vote was called on their leader's urgency motion.

The Independents pointed out that the Nationals leader Andrew Stoner strongly supported by his backbench team had indicated for some time that retention of the research stations was one of the most important matters facing the Parliament.

They raised the issue widely in the media and led rallies around the State protesting against the proposed closures.

"Their actions in Parliament today told a completely different story," said Member for Northern Tablelands Richard Torbay.

"I was pleased that the five Independent members opposed the Labor Government and voted in favour of the Nationals call for a debate on the issue that all six research stations be retained at full operating capacity."

Member for Tamworth Mr Draper pointed out that while ever the Nationals remained captive to the Liberals "there would lots of tough talk in the press, but when it came to the vote in Parliament there would be a complete lack of commitment to country issues."

"If even the diehard supporters had watched the leader of the Nationals passionately arguing for his motion and then running out of Parliament when the vote was called, they would have been totally disillusioned," said Member for Port Macquarie Rob Oakeshott.