

News NSW

Kerry Chikarovski was considered for New York trade commissioner role

Former Liberal leader Kerry Chikarovski was discussed as a possible contender for the US trade commissioner post eventually offered to John Barilaro, sources have revealed.



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Sky News Queensland Editor Peter Gleeson says the speculation surrounding former NSW deputy premier John Barilaro's trade role appointment is a classic case of a "job for the boys gone wrong". Mr Gleeson's comments follow revelations from Mr Barilaro's former chief of staff, Mark Connell, who claimed Mr Barilaro told him...

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Senior NSW government ministers secretly floated having former Liberal leader Kerry Chikarovski “or someone of her calibre” appointed to the now infamous New York trade commissioner role.

The discussions occurred prior to former deputy premier John Barilaro bringing to cabinet a submission to change the state’s new senior trade and investment commissioner (STIC) roles from public service appointment to ministerial appointments.

A source familiar with the talks said the idea to have ministerial appointments was to bolster the calibre of candidates applying to the roles, with cabinet — rather than the public service — deliberating on who would be most suitable.

The source claimed Ms Chikarovski’s name had been raised by senior Liberal Party ministers as the type of person who should be considered.

There is no suggestion Ms Chikarovski was aware she was a prospective candidate.

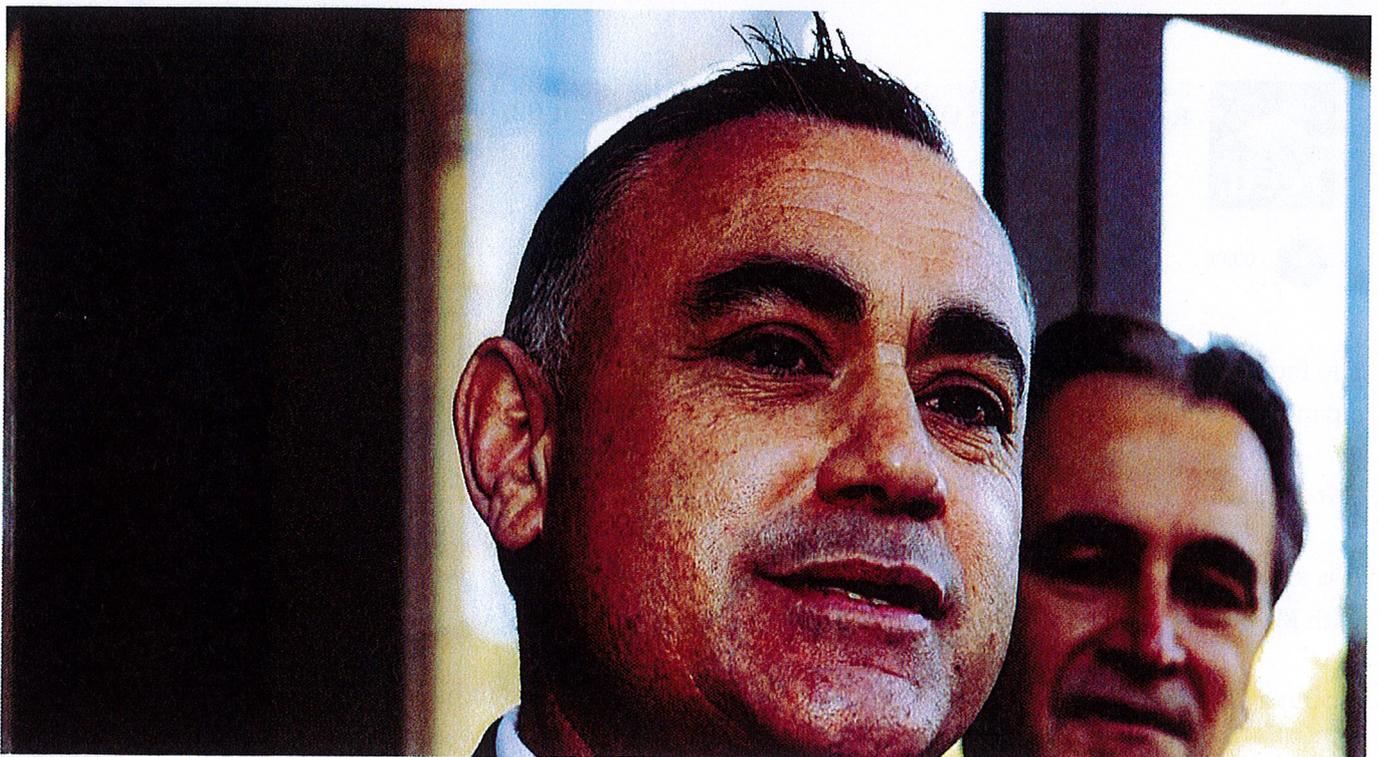


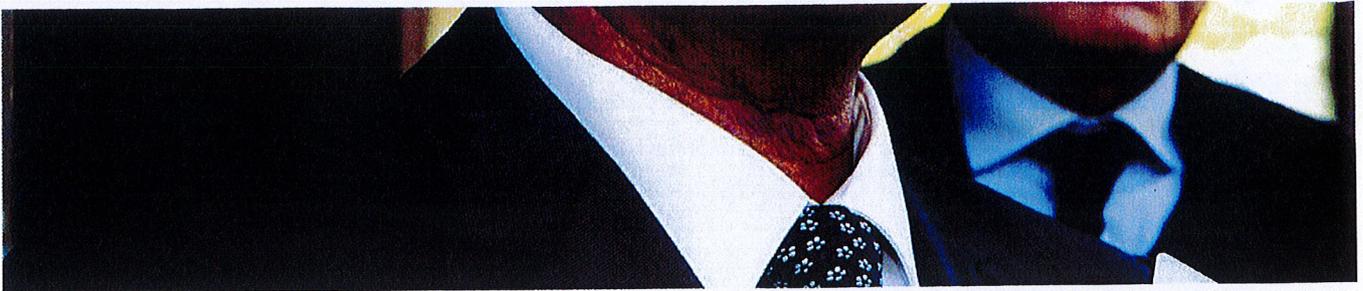


Former Liberal leader Kerry Chikarovski was named as someone who could take up the US trade commissioner post. Picture: Jeremy Piper

The claim comes as Labor and crossbench members on Friday blocked a move for Mr Barilaro and a trade post selection panel member to appear before the Upper House inquiry examining the process this Tuesday, with the motion put forward by Nationals MP Wes Fang voted down.

Mr Fang had argued that it was time Mr Barilaro had his say on the matter.





The role eventually went to former deputy premier John Barilaro, but he has since withdrawn. Picture NCA Newswire/ Gaye Gerard.

Announced by Mr Barilaro in 2020, the five NSW STIC positions and the agent-general in London was modelled on a similar Global Victoria program, with Investment NSW choosing the locations.

By May the following year, documents tabled in state parliament suggested two preferred candidates had been identified for the US posting, with Investment NSW chief executive Amy Brown declaring she made a verbal offer to former Investment NSW deputy secretary Jenny West in August 2021.

This has since been disputed by former Investment NSW general counsel Chris Carr, who this week told the Upper House inquiry examining the appointment that Ms West was never “fully” offered the job.

The source alleged it was around this time that discussions were being held among several senior ministers about the candidates, with Ms Chikarovski’s name raised.

In September, Mr Barilaro brought a submission to cabinet, with the proposal to change the process to ministerial appointments, which would require legislation, being supported by the majority of ministers and former premier Gladys Berejiklian, the source said.

For reasons that are still not clear, Trade Minister Stuart Ayres ignored the cabinet decision, reverting the process back to public service appointments after seeking support from the smaller and more informal “strategy cabinet”.



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The inquiry is now likely to hear how after submitting a CV for the STIC job, Mr Barilaro was interviewed by a panel before undergoing a psychometric test and a second interview.

“Mr Barilaro is waiting to have his say at the inquiry,” the source said.

It is also understood some of Mr Barilaro’s colleagues were approached about whether they had any concerns with Mr Barilaro applying.

On June 17, Mr Barilaro was announced as the successful candidate but has since [withdrawn from the role](#).

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