

# Nats' youth elixir plan

## But tonic is bitter for ageing MPs

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IT MIGHT take more than a shot of Botox, but State Opposition Leader Lawrence Springborg seems determined to get rid of the wrinkle parts of the National Party.

Mr Springborg, who turns 40 next month, wants young talent like federal election candidate Hajnal Ban to help him refresh the party's state ranks.

The newly restored Queensland Nationals leader, now on a "conversation tour" of the state that he says will help shape party policy, last week asked older MPs to consider quitting to allow "generational change" in the Coalition.

Ms Ban, 29, a barrister and Beaudesert Shire councillor, was unsuccessful in the federal seat of Forde, southwest of Brisbane, in November.

But she has a high profile within her community and sources said she would be on the Nationals' target list in the event of a party makeover — especially if veteran Beaudesert MP Kev Lingard, 65, retires from politics at the next state election.



**CHANGING GUARD:** Lawrence Springborg (left) wants to replace the likes of veteran Kev Lingard with youthful candidates such as Hajnal Ban

Some other older Nationals, though, might resist Mr Springborg's youth elixir plan. Emergency services spokesman Ted Malone, 64, said many of today's young politicians had no life skills and the emphasis on age was too great.

Primary industries spokesman Mike Horan, 63, said he had no plans to retire and believed his experience could help younger members.

Burdekin MP Rosemary Menkens, 61, said: "I don't think it's about age, it's about

energy." Controversial local government spokesman Howard Hobbs, 58, and Nationals' favourite Vaughan Johnson, 60, also felt they still had plenty to offer.

Mr Springborg said as long as his MPs remained "enthusi-

astic" and committed to the job, they would have his support. But he described Ms Ban as a "brilliant local candidate". He hoped he could persuade her to stand at the next state poll, which could be called as early as this year.

## 'I don't think it's about age, it's about energy'

Burdekin MP Rosemary Menkens, 61, on Lawrence Springborg's proposed makeover

Ms Ban said her immediate focus was on the March 15 council elections and trying to win a seat on the newly amalgamated Scenic Rim Regional Council.

Meanwhile, Mr Springborg is expected to urge the Liberal Party not to delay considerations on a merger between the two conservative parties when the state council meets at Nerang today.

Liberal parliamentary leader Mark McArdle has thrown his support behind Mr Springborg's merger proposal and is expected to ask the executive to back a plan to establish an eminent persons' group to investigate a new united entity.

But Liberal sources, including state president Warwick Parer, have indicated merger discussions will be placed on the backburner as the executive concentrates on the council elections.