

Why I am running: Michael McCluskey, Indpt



There is not just one vet running for South-West Coast at the next state election. Independent Michael McCluskey plans to bring his science and economic skills to the political arena. Image: Supplied.

[box]In the lead-up to the Nov 29 state election, *Bluestone Magazine* invited candidates from the three major parties – [Liberal](#), [ALP](#) and [Greens](#) – to tell us why they were running for the seat of South-West Coast. Michael McCluskey is an Independent candidate who contacted us with his response to this same question. He has chosen a question and answer style.[/box]

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] W
[dropcap]hy have you decided to run?

I have held a long term frustration with the way our political

system operates, particularly in regard to the lack of science-based, 'bigger picture' thinking amongst our politicians. The quote 'A statesperson thinks about the next generation whilst a politician thinks about the next election' rings very true to me.

What skills do you believe you can offer the community and the electorate?

I believe my diverse background, in particular my strong grounding in science, would be an invaluable asset to our current political system. Initially I worked as a dairy farm hand for 3 years before joining the Federal public service as an Employment Officer.

After leaving this role I then went to spend the next 24 years as a veterinarian, serving the agricultural industry and then later the equine (horse) industry. I have also completed extra university study with units in Psychology and Economics, and obtained entry into the Australian College of Veterinary Scientists.

What are the main issues affecting our community?

I believe the main issue affecting us is the level of violence within the community. Until we more effectively deal with this issue our four main well beings – economic, social, environmental and animal well being – will never realise their full potential.



Violence in our community, including family violence, must be tackled if we are to progress across a range of areas. Image: www.stylemagazine.com.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] W
[/dropcap]hat other issues are important to you?

Health care– Currently our pets and racehorses receive access to a better healthcare system than what most humans do, particularly in relation to surgery waiting lists. A well funded and wisely operated health system, with timely access to needed care will bring greater economic and social well being both in the short and long term.

Education– If we look at any community throughout the world there is little doubt access to education is a key determinant of how well a society functions, both economically and socially. Whether one takes a trade, university or other creative pathway, we need to do all we can to maximise access to these pathways, including restoring the TAFE system.

Public transport– an efficient, well funded public transport system, along with the provision of quality roads will produce

a significant boost to the economic, social and environmental well being of all our communities.

Fracking for natural gas mining– the known short term and unknown long term risks associated with injecting many millions of litres of chemically laden fluids into the ground/aquifers outweighs the potential benefits. It took politicians nearly 80 years to acknowledge lead in petrol was harmful to our children. For the sake of our grandchildren we can't afford to wait another 80 years on this issue.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] W
[/dropcap]**hy didn't you run through a political party?**

My concern is once in the party system, the ability to speak one's mind and act with one's head and heart can be stifled, which for me defeats the purpose of being in politics in the first place. If we can't vote with our conscious on every issue, are we really being true to ourselves and to our electorate?

How can we fund these important issues you have raised?

Reducing wastage within our system is one key component. \$100 wisely spent is better than \$1000 poorly spent. Tapping into some of the billions of dollars entering our superannuation system presents an opportunity as well. It would help fund vital projects in healthcare, education and public transport, as well giving super funds a safe, alternative asset class in which to invest in. In the 'chase for yield' there is already concerns about asset prices being pushed beyond fair value due to pent up investment demand.

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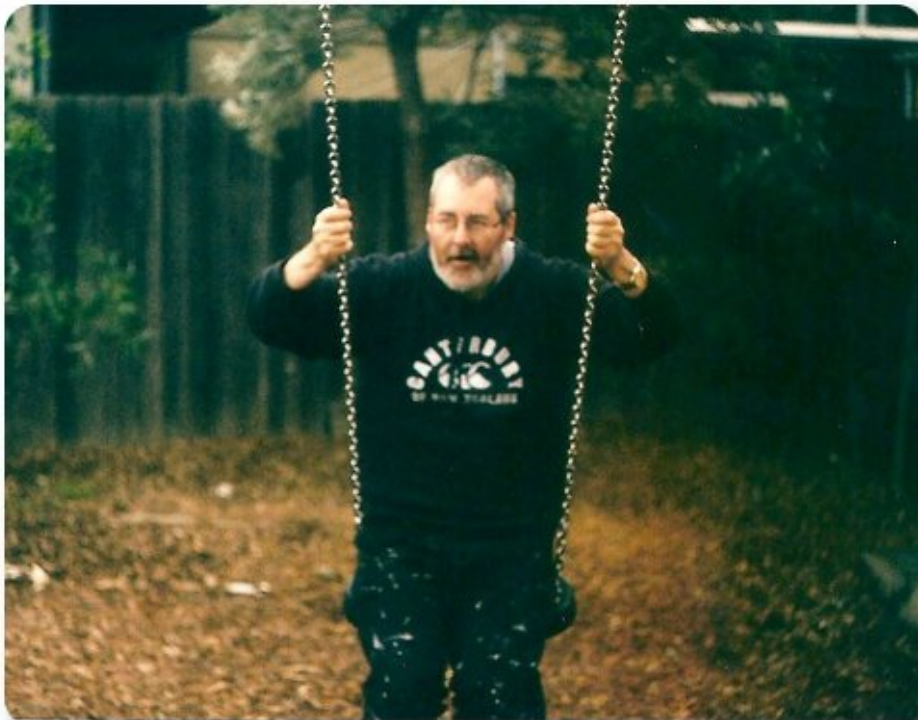


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Why am I running? Roy Reekie ALP



Labor candidate Roy Reekie will be aiming for the swinging voter when he takes on Dr Denis Napthine for the seat of South West Coast at the November state election.

[box] Roy Reekie has chosen a Q&A style for his piece. The

questions were selected by an interested observer, not *Bluestone Magazine*. [/box]

[dropcap style="color: #dc943c;"] R [/dropcap]oy, the margin of the Liberal Party in South West Coast is nearly 12%. No-one else seems to have been interested in running for the Labor Party in this election. Why are you running?

When I first ran in 1999, it was about getting a few key issues on the agenda – logging of native forests in the Otways and the impact of pokies. We had a win in getting logging stopped in the Otways, but pokies are still the scourge they were.

When I ran again in 2002, it was about building some momentum to make the South West marginal. We got awfully close (well under 1%) but couldn't quite get there.

I knew that was about as close as we might ever get, but felt honour-bound to run again in 2006. That was about making Dr Napthine accountable for the things he had promised in 2002 and trying to squeeze as much as we could out of our seat's marginal status. We got a huge amount for South West Healthcare and multi-millions for Portland Hospital and schools in Warrnambool, Portland and Port Fairy. We got Port Fairy its public swimming pool and got funding for Stage 2 of South West TAFE's infrastructure project. We got Warrnambool's new courthouse built.

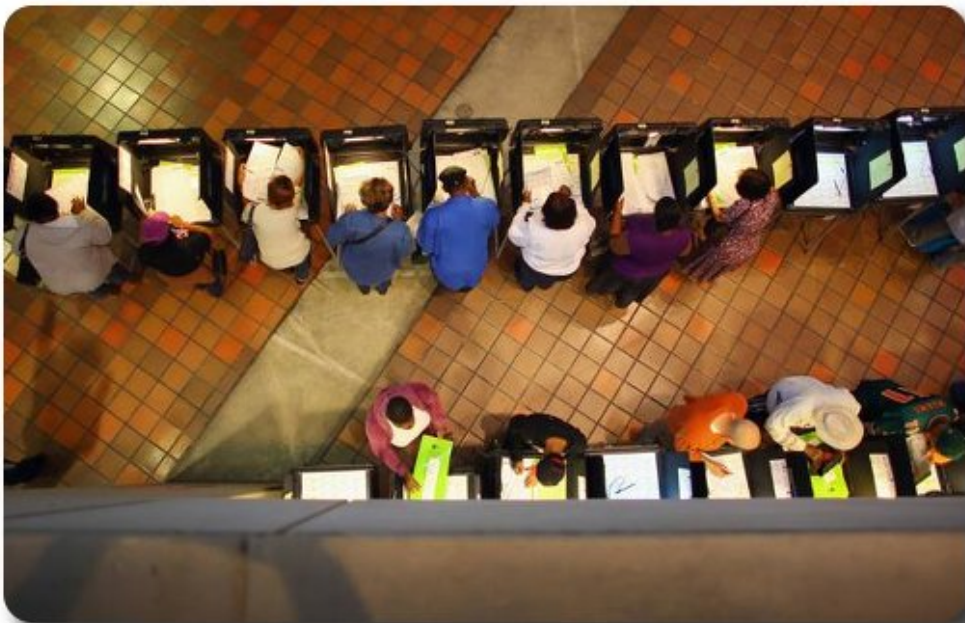
I left the region at the end of 2006 to live and work overseas, returning to Australia in 2009 to work in Melbourne, so I missed the 2010 State election down here.

Now that I'm back home, I feel that I have something to offer to get our region back into marginal territory.

This is largely about encouraging – enabling – people to think carefully about how they vote and why they vote a certain way and what it might take for them to change the way they vote,

to make their vote count and to make it work towards our region becoming relevant to both parties by being marginal. People down here tend to vote blindly the way their parents did. I want them to think about it.

I want both major parties to be forced to think about how they represent and support our region. I want them to fight for our votes. I look at Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo and what they get each budget and think 'why not the South West?' We need a strong voice for the South West that is listened to because both parties have to pay attention. I can help achieve that.



Mobilising voters to think about their vote and make the seat of South West Coast marginal again is at least part of Roy Reekie's motivation for running.

[dropcap style="color: #dc943c;"] Y [/dropcap>**ou said you were overseas. Where were you?**

I spent about five years in total in Scotland. I was working on addressing anti-social behaviour – neighbour disputes, vandalism, community issues, youth crime, family violence – of which there is a lot in Glasgow. I learnt a helluva lot doing that work, and living in that environment – about myself and

about what makes communities tick. I came back with a new set of skills and a renewed enthusiasm for community and an admiration for the power of community-based action. I'm keen to apply those skills here now.

What's your vision for the South West then?

Having travelled in the UK and Europe – and lived recently in Melbourne, I can honestly say that the South West is a special place with unlimited potential. I can sense that it has changed, matured. It really has amazing potential – mainly in food production, but also in renewable energy generation and tourism.

As a young person, I left Warrnambool to go to uni and to start my career. I returned to raise my children here and now they've all left for work and career advancement. Having been away and returned again, I've noticed that a lot of people my age are returning, like migrating whales.

My vision for the South West is that we have an economy, supported by social infrastructure (for health, education and transport), that makes it possible for our young people to either stay here for their education and careers or to return quicker. We need to keep our best and brightest connected to the South West and support them and welcome them when they return, and we need to provide those who prefer to stay with opportunities to advance their careers. This will help us to achieve our region's potential. I want to be part of that.

What are your chances of winning?

Let's be realistic – not good. But let's also have a red hot go at getting the seat as close as possible, and some fun in the process.

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A different way of doing things



Up it goes: The Fletcher Jones silver ball (sans silver) is hoisted into position in 1967 with campaigner Julie Eagles' sister watching the action.

OPINION

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"]T[/dropcap]oday marks the beginning of a new chapter in the life of the former Fletcher Jones factory and iconic silver ball, with confirmation that it has been sold for about \$1 million to a man by the name of **Dean Montgomery**.

I say a new chapter, because Dean – even at face value – appears to be a person who does things very differently to what Warrnambool is used to in that he doesn't see heritage as an obstacle, but as an asset.

We know this because he is already involved with restoring and renovating the historic Leura Hotel in Camperdown. We also know this because, even more incredibly, Dean joined the

grassroots campaign, [Save the Silver Ball and Fletcher Jones Gardens](#) which is being driven via Facebook, prior to the announcement of the sale. He even posted a wonderful photograph of the ball that he was given by the volunteer groundsman at Pleasant Hill, **Lex Caldwell**.

This doesn't sound like a man who is about to bring in the bulldozers and knock the whole thing down to replace it with apartments or "big box" retail like that which dominates the outskirts of Warrnambool.

Indeed, in 2011, Dean was quoted in the [local Camperdown newspaper](#) as saying: "We're (he and his brother) both passionate about heritage buildings and restoring them, it's what we do."



The new owner of the former Fletcher Jones factory, Dean Montgomery, who is passionate about history. Image: Camperdown Chronicle.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"]D[/dropcap]ean, to my mind, represents a generational change for how things can be done in Warrnambool, where a developer with a vision and the funds works *with* the community to create something special, and enduring, on what is one of the most prominent and important sites in the city.

This doesn't mean the whole derelict building will be preserved (nobody expected or wanted that), but it does mean that an iconic landmark that is so special to the community will be retained. Word has it that Dean already has cranes organised to start tidying up the ball.

That all of this is happening is testament to how grassroots activism can work when people unite for a common cause, and the Save the Silver Ball campaign has united people.

Living in Tasmania for about six years taught me everything I know about the ability of ordinary people to fight for something they loved, even if they were told that they were being unrealistic, out-of-touch or nostalgic at the expense of progress.

The people who fought, and continue to fight, for Tasmania's precious native forests have had everything thrown at them, including physical violence, yet they keep going because they know the battle is worth it. Native forests cannot be replaced simply by planting more trees: each forest is unique.



The Weld Angel (aka Allana Beltran) became a potent symbol of the campaign to save the Weld Valley in Tasmania from being logged. Image: Matthew Newton/Tasmanian Times.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] A [dropcap]mong the bravest of those fighting for Tasmania's forests was a woman called **Allana Beltran** who became the potent symbol of the anti-logging movement after dressing as an angel, decorated with cockatoo feathers and a long white curtain, and hoisting herself high among the trees in the Weld Valley, in southern Tasmania, where she sat poised on a tripod in silent protest.

"The Weld Angel", so beautifully captured by freelance photographer **Matthew Newton** who's image went around the world, provided an evocative reminder of what would be lost if the value of everything in the world was measured only by economics.

In Warrnambool, the Fletcher Jones silver ball has proven to be a Weld Angel: a galvanising symbol of what is irreplaceable

and worth preserving.

More than 600 people fell in behind the campaign on Facebook to share their memories, photographs and ideas about how to preserve a unique part of the skyline and landscape.



An early image of the silver ball that was posted to the Save the Silver Ball page by new owner, Dean Montgomery.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] B
[/dropcap]ehind the scenes, campaigners **Julie Eagles** and **Tonia Wilcox** – among others – met with the powers that be, agitated, asked questions, wrote reports, emailed, filmed, phoned, photographed and held gatherings at the Warrnambool Hotel to thrash out how to keep the ball in the air. (And *Bluestone Magazine* was right behind them.)

Of course there were the critics and doubters who said it was

all too hard (for whom?) and would cost too much (compared to what?) and that it would be so much easier to just knock it all down and start over again, just like in the Tasmanian forests.

But some people think – and act – very differently and **Dean Montgomery** looks like one of those people.

A new chapter is not only starting for Fletcher Jones, but for the whole city.

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Imagine the skyline without the silver ball?

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] A [dropcap]bove is a small tribute to the hard-working team behind the [Save the Silver Ball and Fletcher Jones Gardens campaign](#) who, today (8/5), have seen a reward for their efforts.

The purchase of the former Fletcher Jones Factory by businessman **Dean Montgomery** – a member of the Save the Silver Ball Facebook page – has provided hope that the ball will be preserved. Dean is a believer that history should be treasured and he has already shown that he is a man of action, not just words, by upgrading the Leura Hotel in Camperdown.

Today is the first step in what we hope is a new chapter in the life of the iconic ball.

Just imagine what the skyline would be like without it?



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Fletcher Jones site taken off the market



EXCLUSIVE

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] T
[/dropcap]he Fletcher Jones site has been withdrawn from sale,

pending a change to its zoning by the Warrnambool City Council.

Real estate agent **Mark Wilson**, from Wilson Real Estate, told Bluestone that the site had been withdrawn from sale by administrators just after Christmas in anticipation that it would be rezoned from industrial to mixed use.

“There are still ‘for sale’ signs all over the property and I am sure if a cashed-up buyer walked in tomorrow they would not be turned away, but it is not on the market right now,” he said.

Mr Wilson said a change of zoning would hopefully make the site a more attractive prospect for a potential purchaser because it allowed for greater flexibility.

“That is certainly the aim,” he said.

The present Industrial 3 zoning allows for such things as small scale retail, workshops, mini factories and office space.

The derelict site was listed for sale again in July last year, at which time [the council indicated it might be prepared to change the zoning](#) if it was presented with a compelling plan.

Despite the withdrawal from sale indicating such a plan may be afoot, the Warrnambool City Council told Bluestone that it has not received a submission for the zoning to be changed.

The 2.3ha site was owned by Geelong businessman **Ian Ballis**, who developed the Mill Markets, but has been under administration since July 2012 as part of his company, Daramking.

Administrator **Ken Sellers**, from SellersMuldoonBenton, is handling the affairs of Daramking, but was unavailable for comment.



The former owner of the Fletcher Jones site, Ian Ballis, who developed the Mill Markets before going into receivership in 2012. Image: Jeremy Lee, ABC Radio. Click on the image to hear Jeremy's story from 2008.

[box] Bluestone Magazine is part of a [growing grassroots campaign](#) to save the best of the Fletcher Jones site in Warrnambool from being lost through neglect. We support a sensitive development of the site that respects its social and physical history and preserves the iconic gardens and silver ball for future generations.[/box]



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