

Roy Reekie's open letter to voters

By-election: Roy Reekie's open letter to voters.

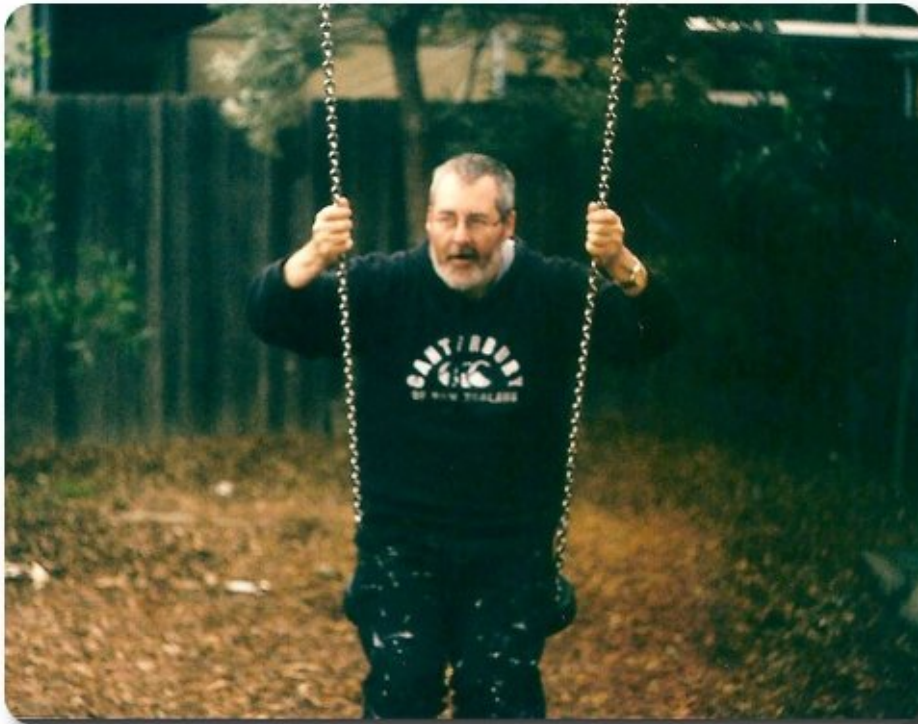
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Why is Thomas Campbell running for the Greens?

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.

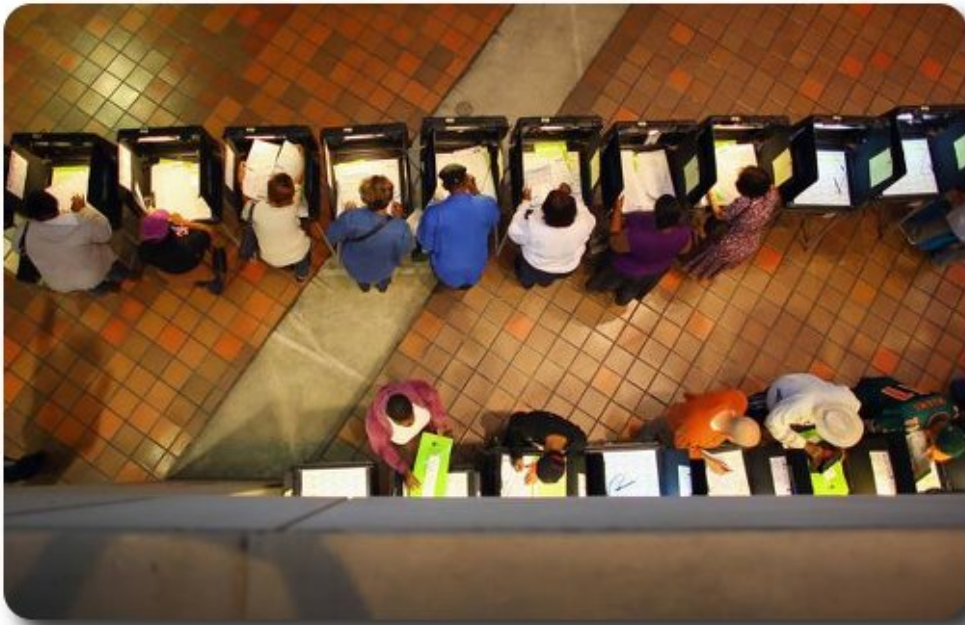
I knew that was about as close as we might ever get, but felt honour-bound to run again in 2006. That was about making Dr Napthine accountable for the things he had promised in 2002 and trying to squeeze as much as we could out of our seat's marginal status. We got a huge amount for South West Healthcare 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.

[dropcap style="color: #dc943c;"] W [/dropcap] **hat'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.

[dropcap style="color: #dc943c;"] W [/dropcap] **hat 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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Reekie to challenge Napthine for South West Coast



Warrnambool lawyer Roy Reekie will line up against Denis Napthine for a third time at the next state

election.

COMMENT

[dropcap style="color: #8f9f59;"] A [/dropcap]fter months of speculation, Warrnambool lawyer **Roy Reekie** is poised to announce his preselection as the Labor challenger to Premier **Denis Naphine** for the seat of South West Coast.

Well-placed sources said Mr Reekie's pre-selection had been recently finalised by the Labor Party and an official announcement would be made shortly.

Ever since returning to live in Warrnambool last year, Mr Reekie has been one of the most promising prospects for Labor because of an already-established profile on the back of the 2002 state election. In that year, Mr Reekie came within a tantalising few hundred votes of pulling off the greatest upset that the south-west has ever seen.

Then, as now, his competitor was Dr Naphine, as it was again in 2006.

The election on November 29 will see the third showdown between the pair, but this time Mr Reekie faces an enormous task, despite the polls indicating that the Coalition will lose office.

While far from the safest Liberal seat in Victoria (that honor goes to leafy Malvern on a 20.5% swing) South West Coast requires an almost 12% swing for the seat to change hands and that is highly unlikely to happen.

What will happen, however, is a concerted push by Labor to carve into that bloated margin and, at the very least, drag it back into single digits so that the 2018 state election becomes a real contest.

And this can only be good for everybody, whether you vote

Labor, Liberal, Greens, Nationals or for the Palmer United Party.

Marginal seats are seats where things happen and things get done.

As I [wrote last August in the lead-up to the federal election](#), why would anybody wish to keep voting in the same party, year after year?

Such predictability makes politicians go soft in the mouth. They know they don't have to work too hard to actually deliver, because, heck, we just keep voting them back in anyway.

Judging by his extraordinary number of media appearances of late, there is no doubt Dr Naphthine works very hard at his job, but the South West Coast is suffering.

Our major roads are terrible, our education standards are embarrassing, our tourism appeal is patchy (especially compared to what is happening at the *other* end of the Great Ocean Road), and our V-Line train service is one of the worst performing in the state.

We deserve better.

Mr Reekie, together with the Greens candidate **Thomas Campbell** and all of the other candidates yet to emerge, has his work cut out for him, but let's at least hope for a robust race.

We deserve that too.

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