

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 Naphine 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 Napthine 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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Ignore Shaw and focus on the real issues



The actions of Frankston MP Geoff Shaw could lead to the unravelling of the State Government. Image:

www.womensagenda.com.au

OPINION — ROY REEKIE

[dropcap style="color: #A02F2F;"] A [/dropcap]s someone with a keen interest in politics and a local political profile, I've recently been asked my thoughts on **Geoff Shaw**, State Member for Frankston and parliamentary recalcitrant.

Ex-Liberal Shaw holds the balance of power in State Parliament and seems to hold something of **Premier Denis Napthine's** political destiny in his hands. Personally, I think that we – the people of the South West – should decide Dr Napthine's political destiny.

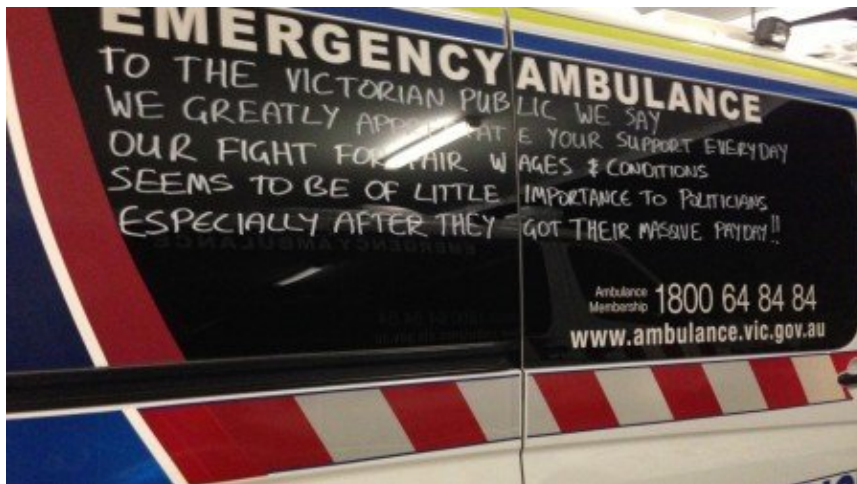
What are my thoughts on Shaw? Precious little as it happens. My thoughts are focused on more substantial, positive and progressive things, about our region, community and its future, rather than the fate of a parliamentary representative of an outer suburban seat.

However, I do have some thoughts about the process that seems to be unfolding around him.

This Tuesday (10/6), Opposition Leader **Daniel Andrews** and his Labor parliamentary colleagues are likely to present a motion that might result in Shaw being expelled from Parliament. The pressure will then be on Denis Napthine and his coalition colleagues to either support that rather moral motion or oppose it and save Shaw's bacon.

Liberal member and ex-Speaker of the Assembly, **Ken Smith**, may cross the floor to vote with the Labor Opposition. In this case, the motion would succeed and Shaw would be tossed out, perhaps heading immediately to the Supreme Court to lodge a writ challenging his expulsion.

[Crikey](#) recently published an excellent analysis and critique of the situation. I tend to agree with Crikey's William Bowe's view that Parliament voting to expel a member, even one as scurrilous as Shaw, creates a dangerous precedent on a slippery downhill slope towards a potential political cesspool.



The focus on the future of the Member for Frankston is detracting from the real issues facing Victorians, such as health care, jobs and emergency services. Image: aeavvic.com.au

[dropcap style="color: #A02F2F;"] T he Geoff Shaw situation mirrors that in Federal Parliament recently when the Coalition Government attempted to use its parliamentary majority (and an accommodating Speaker) to have comments made by an Opposition member excised from Hansard and replaced with words that the Government saw as more acceptable.

Here was a Government that espouses free speech as an inalienable right seeking to exploit its numerical advantage on the floor of parliament to put words into an Opposition member's mouth in place of her real views.

Meanwhile, in Victoria, the State Government may join with the Opposition to form a super-majority to expel a member, someone from their side of politics no less. This is a government that decided to drop criminal charges against that member, most probably for political expediency and survival. So, Shaw's future will now be decided by a parliamentary vote. Criminal charges remain a genuine alternative to this intensely political process.

This is my point: it is dangerous – and morally murky – to use a parliamentary political process to solve what is arguably a criminal issue and inarguably a moral question that society, rather than Parliament, should judge.

If anyone of us committed a serious fraud against our employer, we'd most likely face two consequences – criminal charges and dismissal by our employer.



Surely the people of the South-West should decide the future of their local member, Denis Napthine, not an MP from a seat in Melbourne.
Image: Angela Wylie, The Age.

[dropcap style="color: #a02f2f;"] S [/dropcap]haw's employer is not the Parliament, but the people; in this case, the people of Frankston.

One genuine option now might be for Daniel Andrews' motion to be re-framed so that Geoff Shaw's fraudulent actions are the subject of criminal charges, rather than seeking to expel Shaw from Parliament.

Let the courts decide on his criminality.

Let the people of Frankston judge him in November.

Ignore Shaw.

Focus our politics on the most meaningful issues that impact on our communities – jobs and training for our young people, health services for our ill and aged, emergency services to keep us all safe – rather than on the criminality and morality of individuals. Lift our political discourse to the intellectual and moral heights that the issues our society faces deserve.

Let's realign our political compass.

While Spring Street sorts itself out, I'm going to continue to try to realign the politics of the South West. Frankston electors can sort out their own member.

[box] Warrnambool lawyer Roy Reekie is a member of the ALP and stood for the now-defunct seat of Warrnambool in 1999. He then contested the new seat of South West Coast against Denis Napthine in 2002, coming within a few hundred votes of victory. Reekie last ran against Dr Napthine in 2006.[/box]

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T-shirt captures the infamous 'Cri'

Lawyer **ROY REEKIE**, who recently returned to live in his home town of Warrnambool, tells us about an item that is dear to his heart in this week's Treasures:



Roy Reekie with his treasured Cri t-shirt (and matching sunglasses!) outside where the Criterion Hotel stood for more than 140 years before being demolished last year.

[quote]

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #0A0A0A;"] I treasure this t-shirt because it incites memories of the (in)famous, dear-departed Criterion Hotel in Kepler Street, Warrnambool.

The Cri was one of three pubs that my high school friends and I would visit, despite being under-age...

Pat Farrell holding court in the front bar with the Wooden Eye joke is one vivid memory – most likely burned in by repetition.

Cri gigs by Psycho Sloth, the Bondi Cigars and Rollerball all figured highly in the development of my musical appreciation, with loud, raucous, guitar-driven rock a common thread.

My 21st birthday downstairs in Bungs also comes to mind: teacher and singer/guitarist Don Cowling played all night – a happy troubadour until he smashed his back windshield packing his amps away.



After a fire, the shell of the Criterion Hotel was all that remained until its demolition.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #0A0A0A;"] T
[/dropcap]he guys on this t-shirt – the Cri Pigs – hold a special place in my memories. They were ex-clients; brothers who dabbled in minor, sometimes violent, but always thoughtless crime. They could play pool like demons and held those two Cri tables with an iron grip.

I went in there one night, with my sister Kathy, for a few celebratory beers for some reason. The two brothers held both tables, having played and intimidated everyone else out of challenging them.

Given that I knew them, I bowled up, chatted a while, shouted them some beers and got shouted back, before putting it to them – the best of 3 games; doubles; my sister and I against them. They scoffed but didn't factor in Kathy's consummate pools skills and my misspent youth and determination.

Three-nil later, Kathy and I held the tables, and kept them all night with the Cri Pgs doing their snarling utmost to win them back.

A t-shirt of memories – and well-earned, I'd say."

[box] Do you have a treasure? It might be sentimental, it might be valuable, it might be part of a collection, or it might be something you just can't live without. If you have a treasure that we can feature here, let us know! Email us at editor@bluestonemagazine.com.au [/box]



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[Bowlin, bowlin', bowlin'...](#)

A little less conversation, a little more action



How to improve the CBD: offer financial incentives for property owners to paint the glorious shop tops along Timor St.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] W
[/dropcap]hat is this inertia that appears to be holding Warrnambool in an iron-like grip and preventing this beautiful city from reaching its full potential?

It was with a heavy heart that I read respected lawyer **Roy Reekie's** recent letter to the local paper, lamenting that he had returned to Warrnambool after five years to find the Warrnambool City Council locked in a petty, schoolyard stand-off and he pondered if he had made a mistake in coming home.

A mistake! What an indictment: intelligent, energetic people like Roy should feel delighted to be back, not disappointed.



How to improve the CBD: paint a mural on the hideous Koroit St toilet block and, later, close it down. Relocate the bus transit to the old Post Office area.

I don't regret coming home after more than 20 years, but I, too, have been astounded by how the city appears to have lost its way. There is endless talk – usually accompanied by endless reports – about what could and should be done to revive the CBD, but there is no over-arching vision or

leadership to actually make it happen.

Instead, our new-old Mayor wants us to be excited by new housing developments – projects that extend out into the country and make it even more critical to retain a vibrant city centre, or we will end up like the ‘doughnut’ regional cities of the US, where everybody lives in the ‘burbs and shops in malls and the city heart is left for dead.

It is my fear that Warrnambool is at a critical juncture where, unless it gets its act together, we are at risk of that happening. We will have a city centre full of “services”, but no heart.



How to improve the CBD: offer up high-profile but ugly walls, like this eyesore, to public art.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] I [/dropcap] recently lived near a city like that: Morwell, in Gippsland. It was once a vibrant ‘SEC town’, but once the power companies were privatised, the jobs went and so did the

families who shopped, ate and socialised in the town. It now relies on being a “service” centre, full of bland state and federal government offices providing health, welfare and social support services.

Morwell’s main street is full of empty, dusty shops that were once restaurants, clothing stores, jewellers, butchers, bakers and newsagencies, some of which have moved out to the MidValley Shopping Centre – halfway between Morwell and Traralgon – because that’s where people now linger. Does this sound familiar?

Warrnambool, however, has a huge advantage over a place like Morwell and that is tourism. People flock to see the whales, and the beaches, and even good old Flagstaff Hill, but the CBD is letting us down, badly.

We have some of the most gorgeous and historic buildings in Victoria, but you wouldn’t know it. We have an incredible, vibrant arts scene, but – judging by the lack of public art – you wouldn’t know it. We have a deep and important indigenous history right around this area, but you wouldn’t know it.

I walked around the entire CBD last week and did not see one bit of indigenous public art and only a handful of public art. Perhaps I was looking in the wrong places.



How to improve the CBD: stop patching and start paving. Especially on high-profile corners like this one.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"] W
[/dropcap]hat I did see were many empty, dusty shops; dirty and stained bitumen pavements that had been patched and repatched to the point of being unsafe; a dark toilet block and a noisy bus transit zone dominating the hub of Liebig and Koroit streets; and, as always, pedestrians trying to skip between cars at intersections and being grateful when somebody stopped to let them pass.

And it appears that when some people DO try and make a difference, they are blocked at every turn. Take, for example, the artist who tried to open a pop-up market in an empty shop but was unable to find anyone (among the 20 or so people who apparently, between them, own the CBD) who would take it on. They would rather leave their shop empty. (What a contrast to [Revive Newcastle](#), where property owners actively encourage such ideas.)

And so the inertia continues...and more reports are written (*another* Liebig St revival plan is next) and older reports gather dust (remember the 2010 report on revitalising the Warrnambool Railway Station precinct?) and everybody sighs and says, "that's just how it is here", while cities and towns like Bendigo, Castlemaine, Daylesford, Ballarat, Kyneton and even Birregurra, power ahead.

We deserve better leadership and this is Mayor Neoh's greatest challenge: to unite the council and business community around a common purpose and to actually **get things done**.



How to improve the CBD: free (timed) parking, bike lanes and a 40 kph speed limit between Lava and Timor Streets.



What CAN be done: for more examples of creative street art click [here](#).

[learn_more caption="Ten ideas to improve the CBD, in some cases, almost instantly – click the arrow"]

1. All outdoor eating in Liebig St must use quality furniture – not cheap, plastic tables and chairs.
2. Paint a mural on the ugliest toilet block known to feature on a major intersection anywhere in Victoria...until you can close it down.
3. Relocate the bus transit area from Koroit St to outside the former Post Office Building in Timor St.
4. Provide financial support for all of the historic shop tops along Timor St to be repainted.
5. Repave all of the footpaths along Liebig St.

6. Free parking in the entire CBD, but with time restrictions enforced by local laws.
7. At least half a dozen bare and ugly walls around the CBD to be offered up for public art.
8. Ban all exposed skip bins.
9. Add bike lanes along Liebig St and reduce traffic speeds to 40 kph between Lava and Timor streets.
10. Cars entering roundabouts must give way to pedestrians.

Do you have anything to add?

[/learn_more]



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