

By-election: are we on a road to nowhere?

South-west coast by-election: are we on a road to nowhere?

Roy Reekie's open letter to voters

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

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.

[button link="http://the-terrier.com.au/subscribe-2/" type="icon" icon="heart" newwindow="yes"]Bluestone is aiming for 500 subscribers. If you enjoyed this story, please click here to become one![/button]



You might also enjoy...

[Why I am running: Thomas Campbell, the Greens](#)

[Why I am running: Roy Reekie, ALP](#)

Why I am running: Thomas

Campbell, The Greens

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.

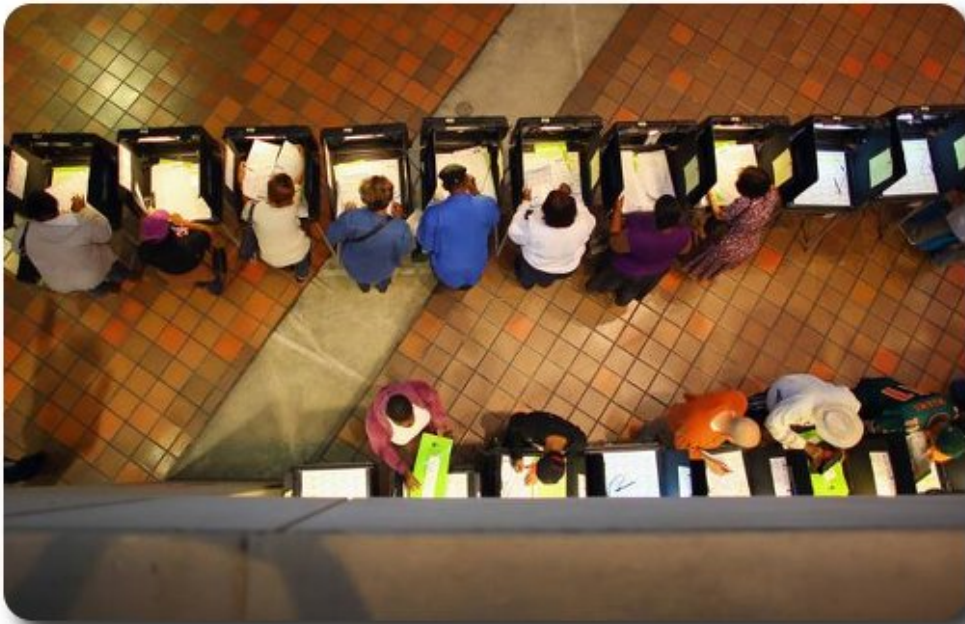
I left the region at the end of 2006 to live and work overseas, returning to Australia in 2009 to work in Melbourne, so I missed the 2010 State election down here.

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.

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.

<http://the-terrier.com.au/subscribe-2/>
Did you enjoy this story? Please subscribe here to help Bluestone thrive.



You might also enjoy...

[Reekie to challenge Napthine for South West Coast](#)

[Community vision needs to extend city wide: Julie Eagles](#)

[Forget cover ups: roll right over Rolf](#)

[What is holding Portland back?](#)

[Flagstaff Hill at \\$15 million crossroad](#)