

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.

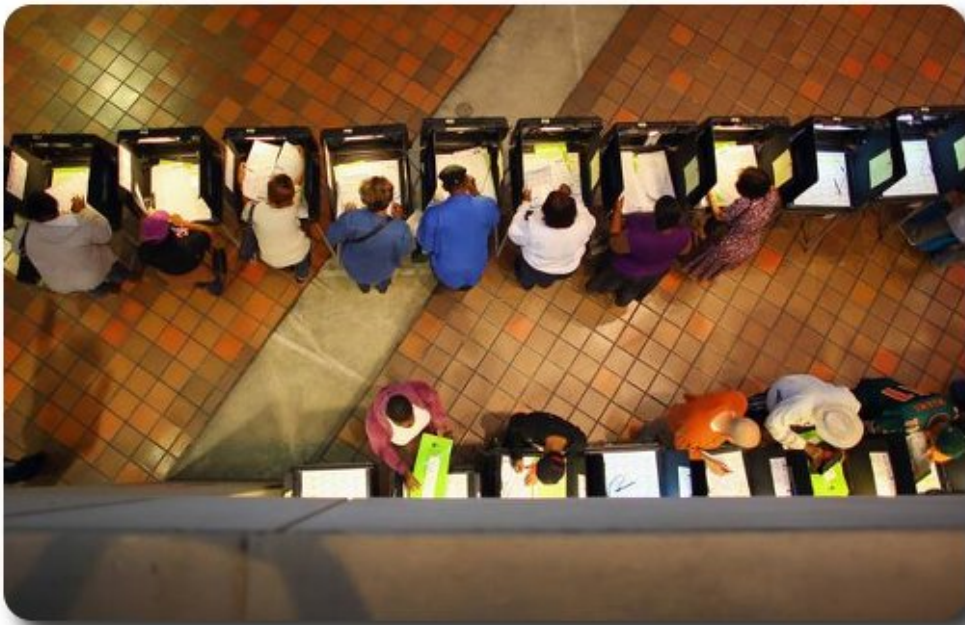
I left the region at the end of 2006 to live and work overseas, returning to Australia in 2009 to work in Melbourne, so I missed the 2010 State election down here.

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.

Y 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.

W 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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