

By-election: why we are backing Roy Reekie



This time: independent candidate Roy Reekie has our vote for the south-west by election. This will be his fifth attempt at the seat. Image: Supplied.

Comment – Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] T
[/dropcap]here is a great line floating around about the South West Coast by-election this Saturday (Oct 31) – **don't keep voting the same way and expect things to be different!**

Yet so many south-west Victorians do just that: keep voting the same party back in year after year and then complain that things don't change.

You only need to look around our beautiful corner of the world to see the hazards of living in a super safe seat and when it comes to the condition of our roads they are, quite literally, hazardous.

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The roads are dreadful and the train service is old and inadequate.

The local job market – especially for young people – is shrinking as traditional industries close down or dry up, with few adequate replacements.

Portland should have, by now, been sitting at the forefront of the state's renewable energy industry, but has been hamstrung by the poor policies of the conservative parties at both a state and federal level.

Our key tertiary institutions, South West TAFE and Deakin University, are struggling to either get back on their feet (as in the case of TAFE which was gutted under the Napthine Government) or to keep upright, as in the case of Deakin-Warrnambool.

Warrnambool used to be a humming university town: it is no longer, as bit by bit tertiary courses are shut down, relocated, or moved online.

Mainstreet is struggling, shops sit empty and fibs are told – such as the fib about the number of jobs that would come from a largely automated powdered milk factory and cold store in Merrivale – to make it look like change is happening.



Big dollars for big ads: the Liberal Party has gone for wall-to-wall advertising on websites like The Warrnambool Standard.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] T
[/dropcap]he people living in the south-west are not suckers, yet every election that comes along, be it state or federal, I believe we act that way.

We forget all that has gone before and fall for the glossy, big-faced posters that are strung up on fences, even if, in the case of **Michael Neoh**, they only joined their party (the Nationals) minutes after it became clear they were not wanted by their first party (the Liberals).

Or we are bombarded by advertising from deep-pocketed parties like the Liberals, who have long treated this seat like a personal fiefdom.

And, sure enough, the same party wins each time, and nothing actually changes.

So the roads get lumpier and bumpier, the old train with its old carriages still runs late, and more young people slip into a zone where they leave school, jobs are harder to find and things like "ice" become a way out of reality.

This Saturday, things can be different.

We can make a change – a real change – by voting for an independent, and that independent is Warrnambool legal aid lawyer **Roy Reekie**.



[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #DC943C;"] B
[/dropcap]luestone is backing Roy for this election because we believe he has the experience, commitment and creative thinking needed to put the south-west back on the electoral map.

We want to live in an electorate that is no longer taken for granted, and attracts as much attention from Spring St as the other marginal seats around Victoria. As an independent, Roy can make a lot of noise and he can make it now – not stuck on the Opposition benches.

Roy has a range of creative and interesting ideas (you can read more on [his by-election Facebook page](#) and his [open letter to voters](#)) and, above all, he has shown a unbendable commitment to representing this corner of the world – even at his own expense.

Why else would anyone run *five times* against formidable odds?

The odds are still formidable – former Liberal Premier **Denis Napthine** pushed the seat out to an 11 per cent margin – but we are hoping that, this time, the south-west is ready to back a different runner in Roy Reekie and come home a real winner.

[box]A forum featuring all candidates will be held at the

Lighthouse Theatre, W'bool, tomorrow (Monday Oct 26) at 7pm.
The candidates are: Roy Reekie (independent), Thomas Campbell
(The Greens), Roma Britnell (Liberal), Michael Neoh
(Nationals), Michael McCluskey (independent), Swampy Marsh
(independent), Pete Smith (independent), Jim Doukas (Country
Party), Rodney Van De Hoef (independent), Jennifer Gamble
(Animal Justice Party), Lillian Len (Australian
Christians).[/box]

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