

Senator Bridget McKenzie

# THE NATIONALS *for Regional Australia*

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It has been an extremely busy time recently in Bendigo, where my office is based, in Indi working with Nationals candidate Marty Corboy and soon, with the newly endorsed candidate for Murray Damian Drum.

Marty is an extremely hard working candidate and has been out on the ground campaigning since last November. Marty comes from a local business family involved in the stockfeed industry and has taken time out to run for Indi. It is always a pleasure to visit Marty in his Wangaratta campaign office and to campaign with him throughout Indi.

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Damian Drum also has a high profile in the National Party. He is a former Minister in the Napthine State Government in Victoria and is currently the leader of the National Party in the States Upper House.

I am really looking forward to supporting and campaigning with Damian and I am confident that with his undoubted ability and profile that the Nationals have a great chance of winning Murray back.



Politics aside, I had the great pleasure of opening the Bendigo Tennis Association tournament recently with Mayor Fyfe. I am proud to support the application to the National Stronger Regions Fund by Tennis Australia, Bendigo Tennis Association and City of Greater Bendigo for a project which would see this facility improved to be able to host more international events

in regional Victoria

What an eye opener it was for me to see such an array of talent taking part in the Bendigo Tennis Association Macdonald Classic which is the highlight of the club for the year and draws talent from across Australia and on this occasion, some competitors from New Zealand as well.



From tennis to representing Darren Chester, the Minister for Infrastructure and turn the first sod at the Halletts Way extension. Funded by the Bridges Renewal program this \$2.177 million investment by the Federal Government, in partnership with the Moorabool Council also stumping up \$2.177mill, will connect residents of Bacchus Marsh safely.



Darren, as Minister for Infrastructure and Transport, was also the special guest at a recent breakfast that I hosted in Bendigo. He spoke with local business owners, transport operators and others on what was a positive and informative way to start the day.



In Canberra, I spoke at a breakfast meeting with some influential business leaders organised by the Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals ahead of the tabling of a report which I co-proposed into co-operatives. Businesses at the meeting including Australian Unity, Capricorn Society Ltd, Credit Union

Australia, Defence Bank and HCF. The changes in the view of the Council will unshackle the sector to reach its full potential and enable co-operatives to step up and be full partners in supporting regional communities and their economies.



Another vital issue and one that represents a significant win for the National Party concerned competition policy. In line with the Harper Review recommendations, the Turnbull/Joyce Government will legislate to fix competition policy in Australia. The inclusion of an “effects test” in competition law is designed to provide fairer outcomes to small business owners.

The inclusion of the test — designed to make it easier for small business to prove anti-competitive conduct by larger rivals will I believe deliver a positive outcome on the issue for smaller operators and be a real boost to small business in regional and rural areas.



Great to be at the Wild Deer Expo which this year was staged in Bendigo. Thousands of visitors and heaps of exhibitors- great to catch up with members of the Victorian Hound Hunting Association Sporting Shooters Association of Australia, Field and Game Australia local Reps and many others.

We even had our own stand which was popular with visitors and friends like. Staff member Amanda McLaren helped out in true style on the day.



One of my big issues so far this year has been my Private Members Bill into the ABC and its lack, in my opinion of local content. I discussed this issue with WIN News today and the Coalitions media reform package, much of it instigated by the Nationals. I have long been an advocate for retaining localism and giving rural and regional Australians the very best local coverage in this digital age. Locally produced content retains essential skills and know how local knowledge in communities, people who can accurately pronounce the names of our towns! The Bill introduces a new incentive to provide local news that features footage filmed in the local area, each minute of which will count for 3 points of local content. This will encourage broadcasters to maintain a presence in regional news.



Now you will all know that politicians never brag - but this is an exception. As Captain of the Parliamentary Netball team which defeated the Press Gallery 9-3, I just had to tell the world! The annual match was a great event with the pollies retaining the trophy. Bipartisanship was front and centre for the pollies who put political differences aside to wallop the press who shouldn't feel too bad - there's always next year!

Could I also add my welcome to Sally Branson the new State Director for The Nationals in Victoria. Sally brings a wealth of experience and skills to the position and I look forward to working with her well into the future.