



Bridget McKenzie

SENATOR FOR VICTORIA

Autumn Edition 2013

Newsletter

What a busy start to 2013. The March sitting weeks were another example of what a shambles the Federal Labor government is. First the proposed new media laws and then the leadership spill that never eventuated.

March also saw bi partisan support for the National Apology to victims of forced adoptions. This was an important day for victims of forced adoptions, their families and the Parliament.

The Nationals have pre-selected some very high quality candidates to run in the September election and we are all geared up and ready to go.

The Victorian Nationals Party State conference is this month. It's a great opportunity to catch up with everyone and work through Victoria's policy issues.

What's in this edition?

- Aged care reforms
- Food producers and processors need our support
- Victorian Federal Nats team prepare for September
- On the road
- Media reforms
- Saluting retiring National Party Colleagues

Aged care reforms

Five years ago the federal Labor Government promised to reform the aged care sector.

This is another broken promise from a Government that has shown little interest or compassion when dealing with older Australians living in regional Victoria.

After a staggering 20 reviews and three Productivity Commission reports, the Government delivered a package of Bills that fail to address the bulk of the Productivity Commission report's key recommendations.



John Begg, CEO of Leading Aged Services Australia.

There are currently 3 million people over 65 years old living in Australia. Unless the workforce is supported to grow, 279,000 Australians will be without aged care by 2050.

I recently met with John Begg, CEO of Leading Age Services Australia, to discuss the proposed aged care reforms. He explained that the impact of the reforms in regional areas could be devastating.

Under the new funding model aged care facilities with less than 50 beds would struggle financially and would be forced to close or amalgamate.

This would hit rural and regional communities hard. People deserve to grow old in the community of their choice and close to their family base.

If elected, the Coalition will seek to work in partnership with the ageing and aged care sector to achieve sustainable reforms

The Senate Community Affairs Committee, that I am a part of, is currently conducting an inquiry into the reforms and will table it's findings on June 17, 2013.



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Food producers and processors need our support

Australia's fruit and vegetable industry is struggling. Since 2009, 11 major processors have closed, the sector has lost more than \$800 million and 1200 direct jobs have gone.

The Federal Government has continued to ignore the plight of food processors and producers.

For the sake of jobs and businesses, the Federal Government must shake off their indifference to the fruit and vegetable processing sector.

Victoria in particular has an important stake in this industry. We have some of the largest food processing sites in the country.

After visiting a number of these businesses and meeting with business owners and CEOs, I understand the challenges to the sector including the high Australian dollar and the cheap imports that flood this market.

We should all be supporting our local farmers and food processors if we want a vibrant and successful food industry.

Kagome CEO John Brady gives me a tour of the factory



Victorian Federal Nats team prepare for September



From Left- Darren Chester MP, Myself, Andrew Broad and Martin Corboy.

With the September federal election looming, the Victorian Federal Nationals are gearing up for a strong campaign.

Darren Chester and I will be joined on the campaign trail by newly preselected candidates Andrew Broad and Martin Corboy.

Andrew Broad will be running in the seat of Mallee. Andrew is the former president of the Victorian Farmers Federation and has a long history of representing community and industry groups.

Martin Corboy has been endorsed as the Nationals Victorian lead Senate candidate. Martin is a key part of a successful family business and is a member of a number of local Wangaratta community groups.

The team will be working together for the next six months. I will be traveling around Victoria and meeting with as many people as possible to hear first hand what issues are affecting them.

The Nationals have a long and proud history of representing regional Victoria, and we plan to continue that into September.

The federal election is our opportunity to stop the waste of the ALP, start paying back the increasing amount of debt and give a voice back to people in regional and rural areas.

The Nationals have a plan for a strong and prosperous economy that will deliver higher wages and better living standards for all Australians.



Meeting at Tongala in February

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On the road



The East Gippsland Field Days were in April and it was wonderful to be joined in the Nationals tent by Darren Chester, MP, (pictured above) and member for Gippsland East Tim Bull.

It was a wonderful opportunity to talk to locals about issues that concern them going into the federal election.

The craft stalls and dog trials are also always a highlight of the East Gippsland Field Days.



Victoria now has a new \$288 million Centre for AgriBiosciences.

The new facility at Bundoora was opened on April 9 by Premier Denis Napthine.

Agriculture Minister Peter Walsh (pictured above) said the research undertaken at AgriBio would lead to significant on-farm productivity gains and new defences against pests and diseases.

Research is vitally important for the future of agriculture.



On April 23, Luke Hartsuyker, Shadow Minister for Regional Communications, joined Andrew Broad and I for a visit to Mildura to discuss the Coalition's broadband plan.

This plan will ensure that all regional Victorian households and businesses can reap the benefits of a national broadband network much sooner and more affordably.

Small businesses in country areas need access to high speed broadband to meet the demands of the customers and to keep up with their competitors



The Bendigo Football Netball League kicked off its 2013 season with an official launch on Wednesday April 3.

The BNFL is an integral part of the Bendigo Community and I am proud to be an official patron of the competition.

Best of luck to all the teams for the season ahead.



On March 14, the Big Issue held its fourth Parliamentary Cup competition.

The event aims to raise awareness of The Big Issue's federally-funded Community Street Soccer Program which supports homeless, and disadvantaged people around the country.

The Cup is a great opportunity for politicians and parliament staff to meet Big Issue Street Soccer players and learn about the enormous difference the program makes to the lives of participants.



The Regional Victoria Living Expo was held in Melbourne from 19-21 April.

The expo showcased the outstanding opportunities available in regional and rural Victoria.

There were over 100 exhibitors with information on careers, education, housing, health and the great lifestyle available in the regions.

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Media reforms- Local content and the reach rule

The news that the Federal Government has back flipped and abandoned its plans to remove the 75 per cent reach rule for television broadcasters is another sign of the dysfunction and chaos that has characterised Prime Minister Gillard and her team.

Communications Minister Stephen Conroy conceded in early April that the Federal Labor Government would not take the media reforms to the upcoming election after a failed attempt to pass them through the Parliament in March.

The proposed media reforms would have allowed big metropolitan based television networks to merge with regionally based affiliates. This would have put the future of locally sourced news, weather and content in jeopardy.

During hastily convened government inquiries into the reforms, CEO of WIN Television, Andrew Lancaster gave evidence to an inquiry into the removal of the 75 percent reach rule.

"It would be the end of regional television ... there would be no differentiation between what comes out of Sydney and what is aired in Victoria," Mr Lancaster said.

Any changes that contribute to the dilution of local content must be challenged. People in rural and regional areas have a right to see news, weather and sport that affect the way they live and work.

Australia has a diverse range of media and communication outlets across a range of technological platforms. As globalised access to news continues, the importance of localised news becomes an essential part of staying informed.

The proposed reforms would have threatened that unique regional voice.

The Federal Government's shambolic media reforms were destined to fail as they showed a complete disregard for the essential role of local news. The fact that the changes were even proposed illustrates that Labor doesn't understand regional Australians.

Saluting retiring National Party colleagues



The September election will see two veterans of the federal National Party retire from politics.

Paul Neville MP (pictured top left) has served the seat of Hinkler since 1993. His committed 20 years of service have been a credit to him and the Queensland Liberal National Party.

John Forrest MP (pictured bottom left) is also retiring. John has represented the people of Mallee, in Victoria, for twenty years. He has served the community there and fought for funding and programs that have made the area an even better place.



Ron Boswell, Nationals Senator for Queensland has also announced his retirement. Ron Boswell has been a Senator for an incredible 30 years. In that time he has campaigned tirelessly for rural producers and small businesses.

Paul Neville, John Forrest and Ron Boswell have set an example of how effective politicians can be and how dedicated the National Party is to representing regional Australia. Their contribution will be valued for many years to come.

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