

Bridget McKenzie

The Nationals Senator for Victoria

Newsletter



August 2012

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COSWG says *thanks Bendigo*

The Coalition Online Safety Working Group thanks the following local organisations for their input during our Bendigo forum. Your thoughtful contributions will help shape our future cybersafety policies.

Catholic College Bendigo (pictured above)
Lodden Mallee Cybersafety Project partners
Strathfieldsaye Primary School
La Trobe University Bendigo
Victoria Police
Centre Against Sexual Assault - Loddon
Campaspe
Loddon Campaspe Victoria Legal Aid
Our Place
Bendigo Football Netball League
AXIOM Group

Reports into agriculture and engineering skills shortages handed down

As a member of the Australian Senate's Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee, Senator McKenzie recently participated in two important inquiries into skills shortages in the engineering and agriculture sectors.

The inquiry into the future of Australia's agriculture sector showed it is a thriving, multibillion-dollar industry filled with exciting career options, high tech research and world-class practice, however a critical skills shortage threatens our ability to meet increasing global demand for food and fibre.

The number of universities offering agricultural-based courses in Australia halved between 2000 and 2010 even though agriculture is a key export earner for the Australian economy. In 2009-10 the gross value of agriculture, forestry and fisheries was \$43.6 billion or three per cent of Gross Domestic Product.

The inquiry into the engineering skills shortage highlighted the significant impact the deficit has on Australia's economy, workforce infrastructure and project delivery.

The committee found the shortage has resulted in poorly conceived and poorly delivered projects by both the public and private sectors, culminating in cost blow outs and delays.

It heard that the training and development of graduates and experienced engineers was being impacted by high workloads and low retention rates, further worsening the shortage.

International experience suggests that government investment in education and training alone will not be enough to address our skills shortages, and that stronger partnerships are needed between industry and educational entities to encourage more effective use of existing skills.

Senator McKenzie said both reports made a range of recommendations for government to consider. To view the committee's final reports and recommendations visit the Senate Committee's page at www.aph.gov.au.



The Nationals 2012 State Conf in Bendigo

The Nationals were proud to hold their 2012 Victorian State Conference in Bendigo during May.

Some 48 motions were debated during the conference, covering a broad range of topics. A small selection are identified below:

- ✓ That the Conference calls on the State and Federal Governments for increased support services that will assist regional Australian businesses to be more competitive.
- ✓ That the Conference calls on the Federal Government to legislate that all land purchased by foreign interests over \$2 million be referred for prior approval to the Foreign Investment Review Board for consent.
- ✓ That the Conference encourages the participation of youth in organised

sports by allowing the cost of memberships to be considered as a tax deduction for paying parents or guardians.

- ✓ That the Conference calls on the State Government to ensure that Victorian communities are protected under the Murray Darling Basin Plan, as Victoria has already met its in-valley targets and water savings can be achieved through further environmental works and measures and better management of the Murray River system.
- ✓ That this Conference recognises the importance of quality teachers in delivering education for young people in regional Victoria and calls for action to drive improvements in teaching and to attract the best and brightest people into the teaching profession.

L: Sen Fiona Nash, Federal President John Tanner and Sen McKenzie at the Conference.

R: Deputy Premier & Leader of The Nationals Peter Ryan presented life memberships to Robert & Lorraine Mitchell, Noel & Dorothy Maughan and The Hon Pat & Merryl McNamara.



Bridget meets Local Councils in the Nation's Capital

Local councils converged on Canberra en masse last month for the Australian Local Government Association Conference. This afforded Senator McKenzie a wonderful opportunity to host talks between several of the Victorian councils she met on her local government listening tour and her Coalition colleagues.

Council representatives highlighted a number of important issues during the series of meetings including the Commonwealth's rejection of applications for clean up assistance following the Victorian floods in 2011 and 2012, local infrastructure needs, challenges securing monies through the Regional Development Australia Fund, constitutional recognition of local government and the economic and social impacts of the draft Murray Darling Basin Plan.

Following the meetings, Senator McKenzie provided the opening address at the Murray River Group of Councils biennial Bridging the Border Conference, where she spoke about regional life.

A copy of the speech can be found at www.bridgetmckenzie.com.au

Current Senate Inquiries

Senate Committees provide organisations and individuals with an opportunity to participate in federal policy development and to have their views placed on public record and considered as part of the decision-making process.

Senator McKenzie's committees have several inquiries underway. For more information or to contribute, please visit the Senate Committee page at www.aph.gov.au or contact Senator McKenzie's electorate office on 1300 889 103.

Community Affairs Committee

The factors affecting the supply of health services and medical professionals in rural areas

Administration of Indigenous Business Australia in relation to certain evidence given to the Senate Community Affairs Committee

Low Aromatic Fuel Bill 2012

Palliative Care in Australia

Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee

Social Security Legislation Amendment (Fair Incentives to Work) Bill 2012

The adequacy of the allowance payment system for jobseekers and others, the appropriateness of the allowance payment system as a support into work and the impact of the changing nature of the labour market

Environment and Communications Committee

Greenhouse and Energy Minimum Standards Bill 2012 [Provisions] and Greenhouse and Energy Minimum Standards (Registration Fees) Bill 2012 [Provisions]



Labor's Carbon Tax Betrayal

The betrayal of the Australian people by Labor is now complete, as the carbon tax the Prime Minister said we would not have becomes reality.

Under the carbon tax, the Victorian economy will be \$2.8 billion worse off by 2015.

Find some facts below on how the Gillard Labor Government is short-changing our families, our businesses and our communities.

Households

The government has claimed that 'the price on carbon pollution will only be paid by Australia's biggest emitters. It will not be levied on families.'

But families are paying.

On the Government's own figures, three million Australian households will be worse off under the carbon tax.

Every Australian pays the tax through higher electricity, food and healthcare prices.

Each morning when the alarm clock goes off, every time you open the fridge, every time you turn on the computer or flick a light switch, you pay.

Health

The carbon tax is set to hit our state's public hospitals hard with the bill to come in at around \$13.4 million, rising to \$19 million by 2020. Bendigo Health expects to have to find an additional \$600,000 to pay for the carbon tax this financial year alone.

And under a change approved by the Federal Minister, nursing homes will now be able to take 85% of the age pension, up from 84% due to the carbon tax. For a single age pensioner receiving \$695.30 a fortnight, the change means a nursing home carbon tax bill of \$180 a year.

Our Regions

As a Nationals Senator, I am more than aware the carbon tax will hit regional Australia hardest.

People living in regional Victoria typically spend 30 per cent more on electricity than those in Melbourne, so the 14.8% price hike for power in our state this year will really sting.

Victoria's local councils will also be forced to pay the carbon tax – meaning higher costs passed along to local ratepayers.

Independent modelling by Deloitte Access Economics suggests the carbon tax will be a \$7.7 billion expense for Victoria by 2020.

The report estimates the carbon tax will cost 1,658 jobs in Gippsland, 1,574 jobs in the Geelong region, 936 jobs in and around my patron seat of Bendigo, 822 in the Ballarat region and 728 in the Goulburn region.

Business

Every day, Victorian businesses are discovering additional inputs that are attracting the carbon tax, putting intense pressure on already slim profit margins.

From the Castlemaine carpet manufacturer who has to find an additional \$300,000 to cover the cost of the carbon tax this year or the Goulburn dairy farmer searching for an extra \$7000, to the pizza shop at Hastings who has been told the price of its pizza boxes will go up and the builder paying \$100 more for each skip bin, the tax will bite.

And watch out if you depend on refrigerants to keep your food fresh and safe during transport and storage or your customers cool and comfortable, as the price of some popular gases have soared 400-500%.

Instead of giving clear guidance on what is a fair cost to pass onto consumers, the Gillard Government has been threatening small businesses with million dollar fines.

A tax cut to compensate for a tax increase is not a cut. **It's a con.** Regional Victoria deserves better than Labor.



LABOR'S CARBON TAX HITS YOU EVERYWHERE



Newsletter

Bridget McKenzie
Senator for Victoria

Vale Peter Murphy, OAM

Earlier this year we were deeply saddened by the loss of staff member, Peter Murphy. Peter was not with my office long however his shadow looms large. An award winning journalist and press secretary to five CLP chief ministers, Peter was a strong advocate for regional Australia.

Our deepest sympathies to Lani, Shaun, Siobhain, Donnagh and Kelly.

Aust of the Year Awards 2013

With nominations now open for the Australian of the Year Awards 2013, the search has begun to find the next Australian of the Year, Senior Australian, Young Australian and Australia's Local Hero.

Nominating someone for the Australian of the Year Awards isn't just about being recognised as a finalist or recipient. It's also about someone feeling proud and appreciated for their efforts.

Wouldn't it be brilliant to see someone from regional Victoria honoured with an Australian of the Year Award next January? Shine a light on extraordinary Australians in our regional communities by nominating them for the 2013 Awards, it's a great way to say thanks for their efforts. Visit www.australianoftheyear.org.au to nominate before Friday 31 August.

Shine a light
on an Australian
you admire.



Out & About



Top to bottom, L-R: Behind the wheel of the Bushmaster with Sen Gary Humphries; talking carbon tax with local refrigerant supplier John Gillett; A beaut day out at the BFNL; Peter Nixon inspired us at his book launch in Gippsland; inspecting the Calder interchange with Shadow Roads Parl Secretary Darren Chester and resident Bronwyn Young; enjoying the Castlemaine Highland Pipe Band

Contact us

Need help with a federal government issue? Does a loved one have a 90th or 100th birthday or milestone anniversary coming up? Please contact my electorate office to see how we can assist.

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Presenting a jubilee portrait of Her Majesty the Queen to the Maldon Hospital. Contact the office for your poster today.

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THE NATIONALS for Regional Australia