



Bridget McKenzie

SENATOR FOR VICTORIA

Christmas Edition 2011



Newsletter

During my first six months, I have focused completely and unashamedly on the needs and interests of regional Victoria.

I look forward to the challenges and opportunities of 2012 and to keeping the Federal government accountable.

I wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a happy and safe holiday period.

Bridget

What about water?

"The Murray Darling Basin Authority has started public consultations and I strongly urge regional Victorians to make their concerns known."

"Last year it was people power that made all the difference . . . and any drop off in that intensity will give the impression this latest Draft Plan has local approval."

"This is about you and your communities, but that can only happen if you make your voices heard."

Victorian farmers can expect to be significantly affected if 2,750 billion litres is taken from farming and allocated to environmental flows. The Goulburn Valley alone provides nearly 20 per cent of Victoria's agricultural production and 80 per cent of this production is only possible as a result of irrigation.

"We recognise the need for environmental flows but not at the expense of water for dairy farming, fruit production and the food processing industry."



Nationals State MPs Bill Sykes and Paul Weller with Senator Bridget McKenzie at the release of the Draft Murray Darling Basin Plan in Shepparton in November 2011.

What's in this Edition?

- *Senator McKenzie wishes you a Merry Christmas*
- *Murray Darling Basin Consultation begins*
- *Contribute to the Senate's Food Processing inquiry*
- *Take a Break funding*



As an active member of the Inverloch Surf Lifesaving Club, I add my support to the lifesaving movement, particularly those clubs along the Victorian surf coast. The loss of eleven lives on beaches in Australia last year was eleven too many. Enjoy the summer and swim safely.

I also recognise our pain in Victoria during this bushfire season. A special thank you to the 60,000 CFA volunteers who will be working alongside their 550 paid colleagues and providing emergency response services to 90% of Melbourne's suburbs and all of regional and country Victoria. When most of us are running away from the fires, they will be running towards the danger.

Be sure to have your fire plans up to date and be ready.

Pictured with Dual Olympic 1500m Freestyle champion Grant Hackett in Canberra to support funding for Surf Lifesaving Australia research and projects that will help save lives and keep our beaches safe.



Follow Senator McKenzie on Facebook or www.bridgetmckenzie.com.au

THE NATIONALS for Regional Victoria



Bridget McKenzie
SENATOR FOR VICTORIA

Christmas Edition 2011

Newsletter

World recognised accountability

October saw Senator McKenzie in Canberra at her first annual Senate Supplementary Estimates - where she not only asked a myriad of questions across eight legislative committees, but was also the Acting Coalition Chair for both the Environment and Communications, and Community Affairs committees.

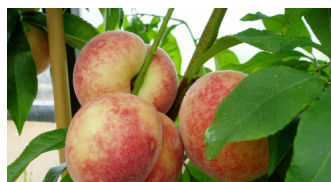
The Senator asked questions on a range of issues affecting regional Victoria - from health to job losses, to education and defence. She asked about operation expansions at Gippsland Aeronautics; and she questioned the Defence Materiel Organisation on the Government's delay in making a decision on defence contracts that will impact on jobs at Thales in Bendigo.

"Senate estimates in Australia is the envy of the democratic world," Senator McKenzie said.

"It provides Australians with an opportunity to keep watch on Government expenditure. It was a privilege to be in a position to ask questions about projects that will keep our regional communities sustainable." Next year's Senate Estimates will begin on February 13.

"Senate Estimates is a great accountability mechanism and it was a great experience to be able to ask questions about so many portfolios."

Pictured above: Senator McKenzie at Thales in Bendigo.



Food Processing

The Senate is inquiring into Australia's food processing sector. The committee will consider the health of the entire food supply chain; from the cost of primary inputs to the competitiveness of the retail sector as the point of supply to Australian families. The inquiry will look at the impact of the global market on the food processing sector, investment capital, skilled labour, and review the impact of anti-dumping laws and international anti-free trade measures. We will be looking at Australia's international competitiveness and future viability, as well as examining opportunities for producers to strengthen and grow their businesses. It is important that regional Victorian interests are highlighted for reflection by the committee throughout the process. The inquiry will hold public hearings and will release its report by June 30, 2012. Details can be found on Senator McKenzie's website.



White Ribbon Day

Statistics continue to show that one in three women experience violence in their lifetime, and one in five experience physical violence. "I encourage men and boys never to commit, excuse or remain silent about violence against women," Senator McKenzie said in Canberra on White Ribbon Day. Domestic violence is not just physical violence. It also encompasses sexual, emotional and psychological forms of violence. VicHealth research reveals that domestic violence is the leading risk factor contributing to death, disability and illness in Victorian women between the ages of 15 and 44 - a higher risk than from smoking, alcohol use, high blood pressure or from heart disease. And the evidence of associated economic damage is significant. In 2002-2003, the cost of domestic violence to Australia was estimated at \$8.1 billion. For details and support see the White Ribbon Day website.



Take A Break

Labor finally joined the Coalition, Greens and Independents to support a motion calling for the reinstatement of \$12m of Australian Government support for Victoria's 'Take a Break' occasional childcare service. "This has been an about-face by the Gillard Government. While Labor supported the motion, we are yet to see a firm financial commitment. We are now waiting for the Federal Government to approve the funding to keep this important community program running." For Victoria, this is potentially very welcome news. By January more than 9,000 families and 200 occasional care centres are due to lose any form of government support for this service. Many disappointed and angry families contacted my office. They weren't interested in the arguments between politicians at state and federal level - they just wanted funding certainty. They have Shadow Minister, Sussan Ley and Nationals Darren Chester to thank.



Regional Development Australia Fund

The criteria and the application process for the Regional Development Australia Funding has been changed and the department has completely re-written the guidelines - partly as a result of Senator McKenzie's questions in Senate Estimates. She highlighted the issues surrounding the application process and the distribution of almost \$1 billion to support the infrastructure needs and economic growth of Australia's regions. This year in Victoria, all but \$1 million went to projects in ALP seats. Of the \$36 million allocated in Victoria during Round One funding, four of the five funding packages went to projects in Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat. I encourage communities and organisations to apply in 2012. I am hoping the department will assess the applications according to need rather than whether or not they happen to be in an ALP seat. Details can be found on Senator McKenzie's Website.

Send your email address to Senator McKenzie and receive our eNewsletter regularly.

Electorate Office: 188-190 High Street, Bendigo, 3550. TOLL FREE 1300 889 103.
Ph: 03 5441 4251. Fax: 03 5441 4260. Email: senator.mckenzie@aph.gov.au

THE NATIONALS for Regional Victoria