

THE VICTORIAN NATIONAL PARTY MEMBERSHIP

OUTLOOK



Recover. Rebuild. Rally p11

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NATIONALS OUTLOOK

SUMMER 2021



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Your Party head office has moved.
 Our new address is **Level 13, 30 Collins St, Melbourne.**
 Please update your records to this address and of course members are always welcome to drop in and say hello when in Melbourne.



Level 13, 30 Collins St

HISTORY OF *Head Office*

1916

VFU conference determined that the party's office should be in Melbourne - early office locations were at the Australian Buildings (49 Elizabeth Street Melbourne) and 301 Little Lonsdale Street Melbourne.

Early 1920s

The party moved to the St James Building (123 William Street Melbourne). The party remained at the St James building until 1965 (except for a brief period at 523 Bourke Street, Melbourne in the early-to-mid 1930s).

1966

The party moved to 431 Bourke Street Melbourne.

1969

The Victorian Farmers Union (now the VFF) offered the Country Party the opportunity to purchase part of their new office building, Farrer House, on the 7th floor at 24 Collins Street Melbourne. The party remained at Farrer House until the NPA office was sold in 2008.

2008

After selling our Farrer House office the Party moved a block away to 140 Bourke St.

2012

Moving back towards Farrer House we moved into 30 Collins Street, Melbourne.

2017

The Party then took a lease out at 343 Little Collins St, Melbourne.

2021

We are now back into a new office at **30 Collins St, Melbourne on level 13** which will give us the space and facilities to run effective campaigns.



123 William Street, Melbourne

SAVE THE DATE

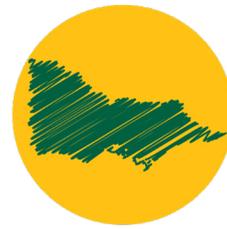
2022 STATE CONFERENCE

FRIDAY MAY 27- SATURDAY 28 2022

Shepparton Harness Racing Club

STATE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Neil Pankhurst



AS WE APPROACH ANOTHER FESTIVE SEASON IT NEVER CEASES TO AMAZE ME THE SPEED AT WHICH THE YEARS FLY BY.

Yet, for many regional communities and businesses the last twelve months must have seemed to be a never-ending nightmare as they faced constant uncertainty and disruptions caused by the ever-changing rules and restrictions implemented by a power hungry Premier.

Rather than the freedoms we are all used to in a federated nation, we have had to deal with border permits and travel restrictions usually associated with travel to a foreign country as individual states have interpreted advice to suit their own cause.

Families have missed the opportunity to celebrate special occasions, to farewell loved ones at the end of their lives and to simply gather and enjoy each others company.

Our party has also faced similar challenges throughout the year however, it is important for us all to remember that our strength comes from having both state and federal parliamentarians that are fighting for the benefit of regional Victorians as a team.

All our MPs are amazing advocates for their local electorates and regions, but it is the opportunity to sit around the cabinet table when in government that sets them apart from a noisy independent.

In the next twelve months we're faced with both a state and federal election.

The state election will be held on November 26th, however the date of the federal election is less certain but expected to be sometime between March and May.

Australia dodged a bullet by not electing a Shorten Labor Government at the last federal election and certainly can't afford an Albanese government in 2022. Labor have been in power for 20 of the last 24 years in Victoria so it is definitely time to break the nexus between this government and it's ever-expanding bureaucracy.



It is important for us all to remember that our strength comes from having both state and federal parliamentarians that are fighting for the benefit of regional Victorians as a team.



Our review of the previous elections has provided the party with guidance for future campaigns however we are still very reliant on our party members to help during these campaign periods.

Now that they can get back to the office Matthew and his team are enjoying their view from our new offices on level 13 at 30 Collins Street in Melbourne. I encourage you to call in and see them when you are in Melbourne, and I thank them all for the work they have done under difficult circumstances during the last twelve months.

May everyone have a happy and healthy Christmas and New Year and I hope you get to enjoy it with family and friends. Travel safely when able to do so and I look forward to seeing you all out on the campaign trail in 2022.

Best Wishes

**NEIL PANKURST
STATE PRESIDENT**



FIRE REBUILD AT GLACIAL SPEED

Tim Bull

AS WE APPROACH TWO YEARS SINCE THE EAST GIPPSLAND REGION WAS RAVAGED BY FIRES, IT WOULD BE REASONABLE TO EXPECT ALL OUR PUBLIC TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE WOULD BE WELL AND TRULY REBUILT - SADLY THIS IS NOT THE CASE.

A large amount of our tourism infrastructure, under the responsibility of Parks Victoria, is not only not rebuilt, but much of it has not yet commenced.

For a region coming out of the significant economic impacts of the Coronavirus, following the devastating fires, this is simply not good enough

Rather than be an excuse, the pandemic provided the perfect opportunity to get this work done as the construction industry has been able to proceed in rural areas of Victoria.

It is another example of this city centric government ignoring the needs of the regions. If it was infrastructure along the Yarra River or Fitzroy Gardens, it would have been repaired within months, not years.

While the list is long, some of the major infrastructure still unrepaired are the iconic Cape Conran Boardwalk (not started), the rebuild of the several Cape Conran Cabins destroyed by fire (not started) and the Thurra River Bridge (not started)

“

The Premier and his Ministers were happy to stand in front of the camera in the days after the fire saying they would “walk with us” through this recovery. However, now the cameras are off they are no where to be seen.”



This bridge, while unrepaired, cuts off access to the popular Thurra River Campground and the iconic Point Hicks Lighthouse and its accommodation.

What's worse, is much of this work is not even pending. I was recently informed the Thurra River Bridge will not be completed until 2023, which is outrageous. More than three years to build a bridge!

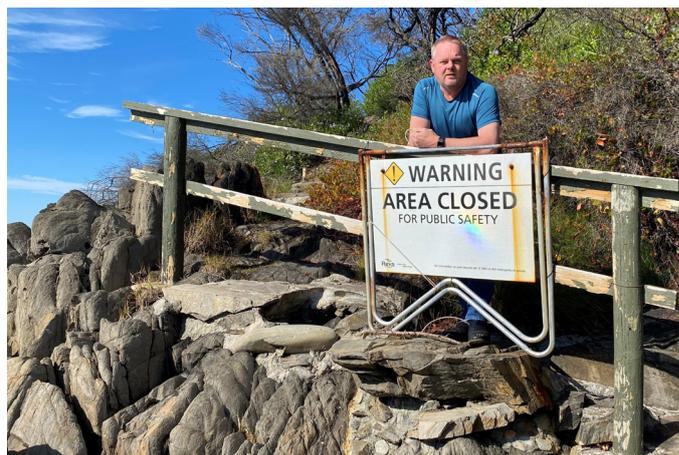
Lack of access to these locations the fact these attractions are not rebuilt, further hurts our local economy unnecessarily.

While I have raised this matter in Parliament many times and had national media attention brought to the plight, there is still very much a 'no urgency' attitude.

The Premier and his Ministers were happy to stand in front of the camera in the days after the fire saying they would “walk with us” through this recovery. However, now the cameras are off they are no where to be seen.

Despite Coronavirus, there have been ample chances for the Minister or Premier to return to the region, but not once has either done that.

I hope the wider population remembers this arrogance in November 2022.





NET ZERO TARGET

Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie

It is fashionable for the commentariat to try frame the Nationals as anti-environmentalist energy dinosaurs; the last political party holding out against a tide of public opinion wanting to embrace an economy not reliant on fossil fuels.

The truth is much more prosaic.

Firstly as people from the regions we care for the environment because we live in it, we live off it, and our personal identity is intrinsically embedded in our sense of Place. We are natural conservatives, predisposed to conserve and preserve.

We were conservationists long before the environment was weaponized for ideological purposes.

Secondly, among our ranks as Nationals MP are people who have a range of strong views, including those wanting a rapid adoption of renewable technologies and alternatives; those who fear the costs of doing so outway the benefits; through to those who warn any Australian contribution won't make a jot of difference if we are simply outsourcing our own emissions to developing nations.

I am absolutely certain of one thing, however. Every single Nationals MP, to a man and a woman, will fight to protect the people we represent.

Our opposition to carbon taxes and emissions trading schemes, which is now bipartisan policy by the way, has been made because they would not only have hurt our people, but



would also not have resulted in a reduction in global emissions. Let's be frank and honest about this.

It is easy for the Member for Kooyong or the Member for Wentworth to publically embrace net zero before the Government has a position, because there would be next to zero real impact on the way of life of their affluent constituents.

Our people by contrast are generally living in the electorates with the lowest per capita incomes, while the industries that underpin our regional economies are emission intensive. Not just in coal, but farming, transport, manufacturing, food processing and more.



PAST AND PRESENT CAME TOGETHER WHEN THE NATIONALS MEMBER FOR GIPPSLAND SOUTH, DANNY O'BRIEN HELD A LISTENING POST AT THE LEONGATHA COMMUNITY MARKET LAST MONTH.

Korumburra's Hugh Hendry was the Country Party candidate for Gippsland West at the 1973 election and he and Danny had a great chat about the current state of affairs.

Hugh is now 94 and still as sharp as a tack, full of wisdom and eager to share it with the current incumbent. Hugh's home town of Korumburra used to be in the seat of Gippsland West, which was abolished at the 2002 redistribution, and is now in Gippsland South.

Hugh - with his spectacular beard and moustache - was one of dozens of people at the Leongatha market dropping in for a chat. As restrictions have eased, Danny has been out and about at local markets and events, ensuring Gippsland South locals have a chance to bend their local MP's ear on issues of importance to them.

Upper House MP Melina Bath also dropped by with dog Buddy to help Danny at his listening post.



Meet a member

JAMES BROOK

JAMES BROOK IS A SHEEP FARMER FROM LOCKSLEY AND YOUNG NATIONALS MEMBER WHO YOU'RE BOUND TO SEE VOLUNTEERING ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL NEXT YEAR.

James, how long have you been a Nationals member and what drew you to the Party?

After covering the 2014 state election as the work experience kid for the Seymour Telegraph it became clear that the party values and interests were very much aligned with my own so when it was suggested to me to join the party I had little hesitation.

Tell me a little about yourself and your involvement in your community.

As far back as I know my family have been sheep farmers in the Goulburn Valley town of Locksley. Not long after leaving school, I started working on the farm full time. When I'm not working on the farm, I'm heavily involved in the Nagambie Cricket Club whom I play for and am heavily involved in our junior program. I've previously served on the Football-Netball club committee, since I was 13 I've umpired footy as a boundary and now central umpire which takes up most of my weekend during winter with seniors on Saturdays and generally juniors on Sundays.

What do you enjoy most about our annual Conference event?

Conferences are a great opportunity to discuss what you're passionate about with people in the party. As well as meeting members from across the state the perspectives from across the state vary so much purely from their own varied experiences.

Looking into the future, how do you see yourself involved with the Nationals?

I'd like to continue in much the same way as I am now, the party as a whole has so many talented people that if we can work together, there's so much we can achieve.

What would you say to other young people looking to get involved?

That this party stands up for its members and what they believe in. The Young Nationals and National Party as a whole are some of the more welcoming people you're likely to come across.



James with the Young Nationals at the 2021 State Conference

James (left) at the 2018 State election in Euroa

“
The Young Nationals and National Party as a whole are some of the more welcoming people you're likely to come across.”



MP MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

LEADER OF THE NATIONALS PETER WALSH



Nationals leader and Member for Murray Plains Peter Walsh is describing the Andrews Government being forced to back down on bulldozing its controversial pandemic laws through parliament as “just the beginning.”

“ This is not democratic government; that is why the first thing a Liberal Nationals government will do when elected is repeal the whole legislation and replace it with something to protect the people, not imprison them. ”



MEMBER FOR NICHOLLS DAMIAN DRUM



The Nationals in Government are getting things done.

Once completed, the Echuca-Moama Bridge Project - made possible with \$126 million of federal funding - will have an enormous impact on the region, both practically and financially.

MEMBER FOR OVENS VALLEY TIM MCCURDY



Nationals Member for Ovens Valley Tim McCurdy highlights concerns for regional Victoria with the Andrews Government directing more of their budget to office staff rather than to our seasonal firefighters.

“ The Andrews Labor Government needs to get the focus back on managing our land, rather than on employing countless public servants in city high-rise towers. ”

MEMBER FOR LOWAN EMMA KEALY



“ The Grampians Peaks Trail is officially open! ”

While this iconic trail will no doubt attract tourists to the region and help create and support jobs, to be honest, I'm just as excited that we have a new trail to explore in our own backyard. ”

SENATOR FOR VICTORIA BRIDGET MCKENZIE



The Liberal and Nationals Government is rolling out a second round of funding worth \$50 million, which is now available for priority flood mitigation infrastructure projects across Australia.

The National Flood Mitigation Infrastructure Program will now deliver \$100 million over 2 years for projects that prepare and protect communities from future flood events.



MEMBER FOR GIPPSLAND EAST TIM BULL



New on-the-spot fines for extreme activists who trespass on Victorian farms and threaten the safety of farm families still aren't in place, nearly two years since the protective measure was recommended.

“ The Agriculture Minister has bizarrely claimed that the delay doesn't matter because farmers are protected by existing laws – but flaws in existing legislation are exactly why these reforms are needed, ” Mr Bull said. ”



DEPUTY LEADER OF THE NATIONALS
STEPH RYAN



Hospitality businesses across Victoria are reporting losses due to the worsening post-pandemic staffing shortages in the industry

“ Lockdown after lockdown saw thousands of workers forced to leave the industry in search of more certain work, but not enough have returned.”

“Who can blame workers for leaving the industry when lockdowns and yo-yoing restrictions left them unable to pay the bills?” ”



MEMBER FOR EASTERN VICTORIA
MELINA BATH



“ Today I presented a petition with 11,764 signatures urging the Victoria State Parliament to reject the flawed and undemocratic Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (Pandemic Management) Bill 2021.

Despite significant opposition, this draconian Bill debate is commencing today, brought forward again by Labor in an attempt to ram it through without comprehensive consultation. ”



MEMBER FOR GIPPSLAND
DARREN CHESTER



Mirridong received \$2.32 million as part of the Federal Government's Building Better Regions Fund to undertake this important project.

“ Fantastic to celebrate today's official opening of two supported living units at Mirridong in Yarram... I handed the scissors to Kyle for the ribbon-cutting ceremony! The completed units mean that Mirridong can offer services to more Gippslanders and meet the demand for disability services. ”



MEMBER FOR GIPPSLAND SOUTH
DANNY OBRIEN



Danny O'Brien has called on the Andrews Labor Government to reset its environmental priorities after it was revealed field staff in the environment department were cut while office-based staff increased dramatically.

The DELWP annual report for 2020-2021 showed that the full-time equivalent number of field staff was cut by 133, but the number of office-based public servants rose by 444.

MEMBER FOR MALLEE
ANNE WEBSTER



“ I was thrilled to be able to deliver \$2.36 million for Kerang and Murrabit through the Federal Government's Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program.

I'm looking forward to seeing the finished work. ”



WOMEN'S EXECUTIVE REPORT



Meree Bath

A PRE CHRISTMAS HELLO TO EVERYONE.

Similar to other groups, our Women's Executive has been COVID quiet and communicating remotely.

I am pleased to welcome our two new representatives, namely Jade Benham for the Northwestern region and Gabriella Tam for the Southwestern region.

Jade holds the position of Swan Hill Rural City Council Deputy Mayor. She is a committed Nat who grew up in Swan Hill, the daughter of fruit farmers. She has travelled the world and returned to her home area, living near Robinvale where she is a small business owner and wife of an almond farmer.

To find more about Jade's current passion projects, visit her website jadebenham.com.au.

Doctor Gabrielle Tam is a dentist practicing in Colac. She received her Doctor of Dental Medicine from the University of Sydney and provided dental care in rural communities in NSW. She is passionate about rural health and the need for greater accessibility to healthcare for people living in the country. We look forward to sharing ideas with these enthusiastic women and meeting face to face.

On the back of our very successful event at Trawool in

February 2021, we have set the date of February 12, 2022, for our next conference and Ladies Day.

The Mercure Hotel and Convention Centre at Ballarat has been booked and are looking forward to hosting our Nationals Women's group on that day.

Please mark February 12, 2022, in your diary!!

Invitations and registration will be sent out in December and a reminder in January.

We would like to streamline our motions gathering, so start considering issues that are important in your region and we look forward to announcing our special guest for that day.

Due to the impact of COVID and the forthcoming Federal and State elections in 2022, we anticipate re-commencing the Isobel Project in early 2023.

Emma Williamson continues to thrive as secretary of Women's Federal Council, and we will provide a report on WFC to accompany your invitation.

It is a relief and pleasure to finally have home gatherings again and I'm sure we will all make the most of Christmas celebrations, remembering the birth of Christ and our coming together.

WOMEN'S EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE

SATURDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2022

The Mercure Hotel and Convention Centre
BALLARAT

Invitation and registration forms will be sent via email in December. If you do not have an email address, please contact head office to have them sent via post.





Saturday 27 November marked 12 months until the next state election. To start the countdown to election day, we held a rally with our Liberal partners in the suburbs of Melbourne. With a theme of Recover and Rebuild, all the speakers spoke of our positive plan to get Victoria back on track after the disastrous handling of the COVID pandemic by the Andrews Labor Government.

Emma Kealy highlighted the shocking toll on mental health due to unnecessary restrictions and lockdowns across regional Victoria and Melbourne, whilst Steph Ryan talked about the damage done to small businesses across the state who had to deal with ever changing, inconsistent directions from the Premier.

State Leader Peter Walsh acknowledged how tough Regional Victorians have had it under Daniel Andrews and how our communities have been ignored for too long. He spoke about Victorians having a choice at the next election; to vote for an old, tired, and arrogant Andrews or an invigorated Liberals and Nationals who

are ready to lead our state as we recover and rebuild.

As Walsh is fond of saying, the state election is “closer than you think”. In less than a year we will all be door knocking, phone banking and standing at polling booths in rain, hail or shine. Victoria desperately needs a change of government. So when your local candidate comes calling for help during their campaign, please answer the call – and sign up two or three new volunteers to assist at the same time.



DOGS SAVING VETERANS LIVES

By Darren Chester MP

WHEN IT COMES TO OUR DOGS, THE PHRASE 'MAN'S BEST FRIEND' SUPPOSEDLY DATES BACK TO THE 18TH CENTURY, AND FREDERICK THE GREAT OF PRUSSIA.

The term refers to the thousands of years of close relationships between our canine companions and humans. It speaks of loyalty, companionship, friendship and the unconditional love we receive from our pets and working dogs.

So it shouldn't be any surprise that specially trained psychiatric assistance dogs are helping our defence force veterans who are experiencing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

It was one of my best decisions as a Minister for Veterans' Affairs to work with the Department to develop a program to purchase dogs for veterans, on the advice of medical specialists.

When I started as Minister in 2018, it was put to me that there was no evidence-based research to support the use of assistance dogs to treat PTSD. That was despite the repeated anecdotes I heard from veterans who told me they had bought their own dog, and it changed their life.

On more than one occasion, veterans privately confided in me that they had been experiencing suicidal thoughts until they received their dog.

Sadly, those who couldn't afford a dog were relying on the fundraising efforts of charities. When the dog arrived, veterans were often reporting reduced anxiety, better social connections, and less need for medication or visits to specialists.

Who really knows how it works, or why it works better for some people? The dogs give unconditional love and attention, provide a distraction during anxious moments, and can intervene when the night terrors start, giving PTSD sufferers the chance of a good sleep.

They provide a reason to get out of bed and exercise, which leads to positive interaction in the community as people ask about the assistance dog and its job.

The emails, letters and phone messages I have received from veterans and their families have spoken about lives being changed and families being restored because of an assistance dog.

We are trying to find some more answers with a government-funded research program involving LaTrobe University and veterans who have volunteered to examine the findings in close detail. The early findings from that research program are incredibly positive as researchers seek to match veterans with different breeds of dog to suit their diverse lifestyles.

That program will take several years to complete, and the evidence will refine future initiatives, but in the meantime we are undoubtedly making a difference.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs has already placed about 40 dogs with defence force veterans, and there's another 140 in training at the moment. Even with COVID travel restrictions, the DVA program is rolling out, and a total of 276 veterans have had their applications approved.





The ongoing success of the DVA program prompts an obvious question: why aren't we using more dogs and other animals like horses, for other groups of people experiencing mental health issues?

Former emergency service workers across Australia would be an obvious group of people who would benefit from animal therapy if they are struggling with PTSD.

Thankfully, it appears to be gathering momentum but I fear the state bureaucracies are moving too slowly to fully fund assistance dogs for eligible first responders dealing with the impact of trauma.

In one celebrated case, decorated Victoria Police officer Ron Fenton spoke about the changes to his life which were made possible by his assistance dog 'Yogi'.

Yogi was actually trained by an inmate at Bathurst prison as part of an extraordinary program that helps both the prisoners and the recipient of the assistance dog. Ron fought the bureaucracy and won his case to get the Victorian Government to pay for Yogi's upkeep, as a recognised part of his mental health plan in retirement.

As a side note, when Ron died of cancer, the inmate who trained the dog, actually took Yogi back into his care. It's hard to imagine a more virtuous circle.

We are making progress but there's a few things that could happen right now across state and federal governments to expand the benefits of assistance dogs.



The bureaucrats need to share their experiences and the information they have already gathered, and look for any gaps in their respective programs.

The qualified assistance dogs which are already in the 'system' need to be recognised and eligible veterans and first responders should receive appropriate levels of funding to help look after their dogs.

All state and territory governments should consider buying assistance dogs for eligible first responders, on the recommendation of mental health advice, and stop depending on the goodwill of charitable groups.

Programs like the Bathurst prison initiative should be expanded to other jurisdictions to rehabilitate prisoners and supplement the work of accredited training organisations in meeting the growing demand for psychiatric trained assistance dogs.

And we need to keep funding research into other forms of animal therapy to lead the world in reducing the mental health burden of trauma on our defence force veterans, our first responders, and their families.

The men and women who have served our community in uniform, and sustained mental health impacts, should have access to the best care and support we can provide.



GET INVOLVED

ELECTION CAMPAIGNS WOULDN'T HAPPEN WITHOUT THE HELP FROM OUR MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS.



THE NATIONALS ARE TRULY BLESSED WITH THE MOST SUPPORTIVE MEMBERSHIP BASE IN VICTORIA AND WE ARE VERY PROUD OF OUR SUPPORTERS.

With two elections in the next 12 months, we need your support.

Whether it be phone canvassing, door knocking or handing out 'how to vote' cards, campaigns are driven by volunteers

THERE ARE ALWAYS MORE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED WITH THE NATIONALS.

As the Andrews Labor Government has worked to increase the cost of living, destroyed the CFA and continues to avoid regional Victoria, The Nationals in Victoria need your help to get ahead. If you are interested in becoming a member or would like to know how to get more involved, please get in contact via one of our contact points below.

FOLLOW US

Keep up to date and follow us on:

-  www.facebook.com/TheNationalsVic
-  [@TheNationalsVic](https://twitter.com/TheNationalsVic)
-  [@thenationalsvic](https://www.instagram.com/thenationalsvic)
-  [YouTube: The Nationals Victoria](https://www.youtube.com/TheNationalsVictoria)
-  [@nationalsvic](https://www.tiktok.com/@nationalsvic)

JOIN US

To become a member feel free to reach out via one of the following:

-  Website: vic.nationals.org.au
-  Email: vic@nationals.org.au

CONTACT US

You can reach the State Office at the following:

-  Mail: Level 13, 30 Collins Street Melbourne Vic 3000
-  Phone: (03) 9600 1424
-  Email: vic@nationals.org.au

YOUR STATE REPRESENTATIVES



PETER WALSH
MEMBER FOR MURRAY PLAINS
State Leader of The Nationals
Shadow Minister for Regional Victoria & Decentralisation
Shadow Minister for Agriculture
Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



STEPH RYAN
MEMBER FOR EUROA
Deputy Leader of The Nationals
Shadow Minister for Water
Shadow Minister for Public Transport
Shadow Minister for Gaming & Liquor Regulation



EMMA KEALY
MEMBER FOR LOWAN
Shadow Minister for Mental Health
Shadow Minister for Prevention of Family Violence
Shadow Minister for Women



TIM BULL
MEMBER FOR GIPPSLAND EAST
Shadow Minister for Carers and Disability
Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs
Shadow Minister for Racing



DANNY O'BRIEN
MEMBER FOR GIPPSLAND SOUTH
Shadow Assistant Minister for Regional Health
Shadow Assistant Minister for Ambulance Services



MELINA BATH
MEMBER FOR EASTERN VICTORIA REGION
Shadow Assistant Minister for Public Land Use
Shadow Assistant Minister for Education



TIM McCURDY
MEMBER FOR OVENS VALLEY

YOUR FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVES



BRIDGET MCKENZIE
SENATOR FOR VICTORIA
Minister for Emergency Management and National Recovery and Resilience
Minister for Regionalisation, Regional Communications and Regional Education
Leader of The Nationals in the Senate



DAMIAN DRUM
MEMBER FOR NICHOLLS
Chief Nationals Whip



DARREN CHESTER
MEMBER FOR GIPPSLAND



ANNE WEBSTER
MEMBER FOR MALLEE

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THE NATIONALS
for Regional Victoria