



*3<sup>rd</sup> of June, 2022*

Hi there,

Well, Australian politics really is at a tipping point.

And Victorian politics over the past several years shows where things can go from here – collaborative change based on evidence and public interest principles. More on that below.

The November Victorian election is an opportunity to further the push for change so wonderfully evident in the federal ballot.

There is profound cause for optimism and even excitement.

NOT because of the election of a national ALP-led government per se, of course, but because of the transformation of the electorate from rusted-on supporters of one or other of the old sides.

The two-party system appears over. It is certainly looking crook.

This is liberal democracy in action and bodes well for policy based on evidence and first principles and focussed on the public interest. Not vested interest, party interest, factional interest, personal interest.

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## A reason for heartfelt thanks

A Congratulations and thank you to all our amazing volunteers and supporters who contributed to Reason's first ever Federal Senate campaign.

Throughout the campaign we constantly said that having a presence at polling booths can double our support.

The results tell us exactly that; people on the ground make all the difference. At our best-performing booth, Brunswick North West, we received 5.48% of all votes (thank you to the always passionate Ken and Lorraine!). At North Melbourne Central the Van der Weyden family worked hard to secure us 4.39% of the votes cast.

Now what? There's no time to rest. We have a State Election in November to fight, and if we're hoping to give me a Teal colleague to sit next to on the crossbench, we've got lots of work to do.

***Without you, we can do little. With you, we can continue to achieve change.***

If you want to get involved in my campaign, click [here](#).

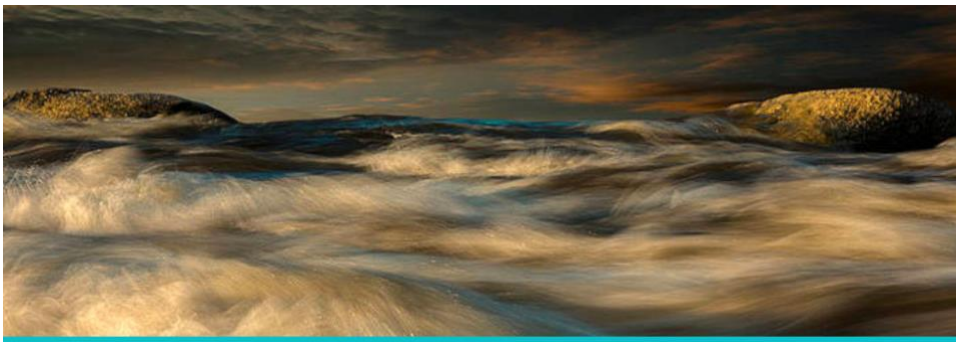


## Hold our beers, we've got this

The nation is abuzz, the hunger for change undeniable, and the celebration of leadership from the ground up, from the community, once an almost derided term, is palpable.

The defeated government, despite being told for years of their 'women problem', did nothing except say they really, really do support women. Led by women, Australia said yeah, nah, hold our beers, we've got this. The result is red-hot history, and points to further historic change.

There is, too, fear and loathing of change, misplaced I believe. There's some despair over power lost from the top down, and there's an epic reassessment and regrouping underway within the former federal government's parliamentary and community ranks.



## Did you feel the earth move?

There is talk of a ``tectonic shift'' in politics.

It is true. Since the middle of the last century, the vote of the two dominant

sides of politics has fallen from almost 100 per cent to less than two-thirds. Both sides went backwards this election.

It will take time for things to settle. But Australians can be reassured that legislative gridlock is unlikely to follow the people's clear repudiation of blood-sport politics. On the contrary.

Whether we have a period of collaborative, rational lawmaking, of proper legislative scrutiny, will depend on the performance of all, but particularly the massively expanded and hugely talented crossbench in the House of Representatives and the exercise of the balance of power in the Senate.



## Truly the people's house

Victoria's state equivalent of the Senate, the Legislative Council, where I have sat since 2014, can give succour to the sceptical or anxious. In the 40-seat chamber, the ALP Government holds 16 seats, the Liberal Party 10, and independents and minor parties 14.

Such configurations since 2014 have facilitated some of the most beneficial, celebrated public policy in the state's history, indeed that of the nation.

We have negotiated change in many areas. A few examples.

In 2015, I initiated the 'End Of Life Choices Inquiry', which went on to recommend that Victoria legislate voluntary assisted dying. We did so in 2017. This policy has now been emulated across the nation, bringing the relief of choice and agency to so many in an uncontrollable crescendo of suffering at the end of life, and to their loved ones. The importance of that alone is monumental.

Together, we have championed transparency and accountability, a core issue powering the teal wave, by forcing the government to abandon rolling state of emergency powers and introduce pandemic-specific legislation that finally allows the people to see the data and deliberations behind public health decisions.



## Yeah, nah

The pandemic legislation was widely misrepresented to the point that I and others were threatened with rape, violence, assassination, lynching and subjected to vile and relentless abuse. Before the teal wave came a filthy brown wave that revealed the very worst of Australian political discourse.

Together, we have introduced a safe-injecting space trial to reduce the harm caused by drugs. That is saving lives, many of them young, pretty much daily. It's one of the busiest in the world, which is why another space is planned.

Together we have introduced further drug-law reform to shift problematic drug use from the court system to the health system. There is worldwide evidence and support for such policies.

We have finally decriminalised sex-work – not by imposing new laws, but by abolishing the legal block on sex-workers accessing the same workplace rights as every other Australian worker.

Safe access zones have been introduced around abortion clinics. We've secured funding for Australia's first endometriosis and pelvic pain clinic. We've elevated the massive economic and social problem of loneliness to a ministerial level.

The list goes on and there's a creative, careful agenda for more negotiated change.

The decline of the two-party system has been discernible for decades. But it has accelerated in the past several years.



## Been there, doing that

The genesis of the contemporary teal wave that broke some hearts and hegemonies coincides with the election of Cathy McGowan in the regional Victorian federal electorate of Indi, and of my election in Victoria the following year (#originalteal). The evolution is in all our hands.

Both Cathy and I can tell you the sky did not fall in. Again, on the contrary. It took on a rather happy hue, at least intermittently.

The reason the sky will continue to rise and shine, blue if not teal, is that most of the changes that have flowed from proper collaboration and scrutiny, of the buttress independents bring to accountability and transparency of executive government, can appeal across the board.

To fiscal conservatives because they save public funds by, for example, better allocating scarce public resources and reducing needless government intervention in individual's lives. To social progressives because the measures save lives and increase opportunity. Is it not the case both sides should, anyway, embrace both those principles?

Driving the tipping point is something that's been neglected in Australian politics for too long – the sweet spot, that huge space full of potential, where the values and interests of both sides, and now all sides, overlap.

That can be the nation's future. Up to us. Hold our beers. We've got this. Cheers.



## The odd couple

I've begun a fortnightly radio spot, 'The Odd Couple', with Bernie Finn, an upper house member expelled by the Liberal Party and with whom I share very few views, but whom I'm happy to debate in public in the interests of advancing

evidence-based, first-principle ideas for change.

It's a lively one! Listen [here](#).

## Housekeeping

The Federal Election fireworks may be over, but the daily work of politics continues. In the last sitting week of Parliament, I:

- Called on the government to hasten [anti-vilification reforms](#), highlighting face equality week
- Continued fighting for a [pill-testing trial](#), after a state coroner said it should be urgently introduced
- Spoke further on the [agricultural potential of hemp](#)
- Urged the Minister for Housing to improve [security at the North Richmond public housing towers](#)
- Urged the government to release a new [alcohol and other drug workforce strategy](#).

Until next time, go well,

**Fiona**