

# Elect an Independent to the Senate – Now is the time.

By Tony Lane for the *Community Independents Project* <https://communityindependents.com.au>

Updated 5 Dec 2021: For those who prefer a shorter read, the following 415 words is just for you.

If you have been disappointed or even angered by the poor leadership coming from major political parties in recent years, some hope now exists as independent MPs on the cross bench take the lead on important issues such as the Integrity Commission (Helen Haines) and Climate Change (Zali Steggall).

The announcement of more independent candidates running in Lower House seats in the next election is also encouraging as communities step up to seek better representation through “Voices” groups.

There is also an option to have a community based independent elected to the Senate through a small ‘p’ political party, where candidates run their own campaign and are not even required to be a member of the party. It is only possible to be successful by being above the line on the Ballot paper in a political party. However, creating a political party requires 1,500 people to sign up which is the big challenge. You can support an Independent getting elected to the Senate via “Independent Voices 4 the Senate”

<https://independentvoices4senate.org/sign-up>

In Victoria, there are 6 Senate seats to be contested next year and Susan Benedyka is running as an independent candidate aiming to win the 6<sup>th</sup> seat. Electing a community candidate to the Senate also builds on the momentum in several Lower House electorates where “Voices” candidates are running.

Susan Benedyka is a very successful business operator in Victoria for over 20 year and was also a foundation member of Voices for Indi. She is already out on the road across Victoria with her campaign so get involved now and ***Support Susan for the Senate***.

Visit the website <https://susanbenedyka.com> and hit the SUBSCRIBE button.

Got it? Now visit the above two websites and make it possible for an independent candidate to win the 6th Senate seat in Victoria.

The alternative outcome, based on the 2019 Election result, is that someone who is listed 3<sup>rd</sup> on the Liberal / National Party shared Senate ticket is elected to the 6<sup>th</sup> seat. This candidate is Greg Mirabella of the Liberal Party who is 3<sup>rd</sup> on the Liberal / Nation Party ticket behind Sarah Henderson (LP) and Bridget McKenzie (National Party). And yes, Bridget McKenzie is actually a Senator elected to represent Victoria, although this was not apparent due to her vocal support for coal mines in Queensland when the Prime Minister was desperately seeking a Coalition policy to take to Glasgow.

The need to ***Support Susan for the Senate*** should now be very clear. So hit those links.

For those with time for a longer read:

A refreshing new approach to political engagement is occurring across communities who have formed Voices groups. In Victoria there are 38 lower house electorates and in the next federal election there are potentially 6 or more electorates where “Voices” groups will support independent candidates.

However, what is the story with Independents being elected to the Senate?

The voting system for the Senate is very different and Independent Candidates are at a significant disadvantage compared to the Lower House. In recent years, Independent Senators have usually got their start on a party ticket and later break away to be an Independent or form a party in their own name. While many "Voices" groups have been emerging in recent months, more good news is that a pathway has also been developed for genuine Independent Candidate to be competitive for a Senate seat.

But first a quick detour on how the Senate voting works, using Victoria as the example. Victoria is allocated 12 Senators who are elected for 6-year terms and every 3 years there are 6 seats to be filled. The Liberal Party and National Party chose to be in one group on the Senate ticket due to their coalition agreement, but all other political parties usually stand alone.

In the 2019 election there were around 3.7 million ballot papers and after the first 4 counts, the Liberal / National Party group had sufficient votes for 2 seats and the Labor Party also had sufficient votes for 2 seats. After many more counts and the allocation of preferences, the Greens gained sufficient votes to pick up the 5<sup>th</sup> seat. There are no surprises at this point as the first 5 seats fall this way in most Senate elections.

Sufficient votes for a Candidate to win Senate seat is known as a "Quota" and in 2019 the Quota was 534,207 votes. This number is calculated by the Australian Electoral Commission and is one seventh (14.3%) of the total number of Victorians enrolled to vote.

The remaining 6<sup>th</sup> seat then became a contest between Liberal & National Parties, the Derryn Hinch Justice Party and One Nation as all other small parties and were excluded in earlier counts and their preferences were already distributed. In 2019, the 3<sup>rd</sup> candidate on the Liberal & National party ticket won the 6<sup>th</sup> seat after receiving 1,658 first votes and then progressively gathered 495,566 preferences. This outcome demonstrates the importance of preferences in determining which party wins the 6<sup>th</sup> seat.

It is by focusing on the 6<sup>th</sup> seat that a community based independent candidate can be competitive and successful. However, campaigning across the State is a big task and Voices groups where they exist are already busy with their own campaigns and Lower House candidates. This points to the opportunity for voters living in all the other electorates across Victoria to put their hand up and participate in a community campaign to elect an independent to the Senate. As people associated with Voices groups know, participating in a campaign based on values and integrity is a positive experience and this is now available to all voters in Victoria. Imagine winning the 6<sup>th</sup> Seat and then being able to do it all again three years later, resulting in 2 Independent Senators representing Victoria. If the success of Lower House Independent Candidates can be mirrored in the Senate, the quality of political representation will certainly improve.

In Victoria, Susan Benedyka is already up and running as an Independent in the upcoming federal election and is clearly focused on winning the 6th Senate seat. You are invited to join with others as part of her state-wide campaign. Have a look here and hit SUBSCRIBE: [www.susanbenedyka.com](http://www.susanbenedyka.com)

Now I will get back to outlining a new pathway to the Senate for Independent candidates.



It takes some effort to understand the two voting options of “above the line” and “below the line”. However over 90% of people chose the fastest way to get the job done and vote “above the line” when confronted by the enormous size of the Senate ballot paper. A handful of Independents who are below the line on the ballot paper are barely noticed. It is only possible to win a seat by being above the line and that usually means being supported by a political party. This is a very different voting process to that of the Lower House where there is a level playing field for independent candidates.

In recent time a new group has been formed to provide a vehicle for Independent candidates to be above the line [www.independentvoices4senate.org](http://www.independentvoices4senate.org) (IV4S)

The IV4S group is currently gathering the required 1,500 supporters (potential members) and will then apply to the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) to be recognised as a political party. The final name of the party may be modified to fit with the AEC requirements. But don't mistake them for a highly controlled traditional political party. This party will be based on values that are common to many Voices groups and Independent Candidates will remain fully responsible for their own political campaigns and key policy areas. In fact, candidates are not even required to join the party and will always remain Independent. I will just pause.....and state that again, “candidates are not even required to join the party and will always remain Independent”. Just imagine that.

Some members of major parties have been looking at the growing Voices movement and falsely calling them a de facto political party. But there is nothing traditional about the approach of IV4S which is aiming to fit within AEC requirements while supporting independent candidates for the Senate. IV4S is now reaching out with some urgency to gather more supporters so that they can take the field in the May 2022 Election after meeting the AEC requirements. <https://independentvoices4senate.org/sign-up>

The Labor Party candidates are not yet confirmed, but the Liberal and National parties announced their grouped Victorian Senate Ticket. Those candidates in the order they will appear on the ballot paper are:

Sarah Henderson (Liberal Party)  
Bridget McKenzie (National Party)  
Greg Mirabella (Liberal Party)

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-02-12/bridget-mckenzie-appears-sports-grants-inquiry-controversy/13147626>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-07-22/pmc-boss-defends-interviewing-2-people-sports-grants-mckenzie/12480102>

If you are deeply concerned by the present government's record on integrity and climate change, it is essential to use your preferences well when voting for the Senate.

**Take action and support the election of a community Independent into Senate.**

In Victoria:        ***Support Susan for the Senate***        [www.susanbenedyka.com](http://www.susanbenedyka.com)

Tony Lane  
Wangaratta  
[alaneway@optusnet.com.au](mailto:alaneway@optusnet.com.au)

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