

Politicians commit to hard work

By **PETER BRADY**

KENDALL Jackson's eyes light up when she talks about the job ahead.

The 37-year-old mother of four and publican of the Flinders Rest Hotel at Warnertown – which she runs with her husband Lee – exudes enthusiasm.

But she is deadly serious about making Frome a Liberal seat and committed to the wider community in the electorate where she grew up.

As the date of the state election – March 15 – looms, sitting members and candidates in the vast, far-flung northern and eastern electorates, despite their political differences, embrace their constituencies with a commitment that only comes with a closeness to rural and regional communities.

The intrigues of North Terrace are not on their collective radar.

Jackson's 'taste' for politics started when she attended the launch of a Liberal Party agricultural policy at her grandfather's (the late Jack Tiller) farm. Liberal elders Rob Kerin and Dean Brown were there. As a rural journalist with the ABC's Country Hour, she saw "how things tick".

"I guess I started becoming frustrated that I could see things happening, but couldn't follow them through ... or do something about it," Jackson said.

If elected, she will focus on policies that help reduce farm debt, costs and impediments.

"I come across (a lot of) farmers struggling financially on a daily basis in areas of the electorate," Jackson said. "My aim is to be a voice for rural people

– and most people who know me realise that I will be a very loud voice."

To pursue the issues adversely impacting her community – poor school bus services, the issue of cancer compensation for CFS volunteers and the spiraling cost of water included on a long list – she must slash the 7.5 per cent margin held by Geoff Brock, the Independent sitting member.

He shares his main opponent's passion for Frome, consistently covering between 80,000 kilometres and 100,000km a year traversing the electorate.

Since winning the by-election from the Liberals in 2009 – when former Premier Rob Kerin retired – Brock has made a point of involving the community in politics.

"If I am to visit a government minister in Adelaide, I always take along people from that section of the community whom I am going there to represent," he said.

In the case of the Bute to Kulpara Road (identified as one of the 10 worst roads in SA), for instance, Brock worked with the District Council of Barunga West mayor Dean Dolling and Steven Griffiths, the Liberal Member for Goyder.

"Now it's on the agenda and you can start gathering more support," he said.

"It's how you approach things ... I am very apolitical in these matters."

Marcus Connelly, Labor's candidate, believes that all country people are at a disadvantage when it comes to services taken for granted in the city.

He says that while the tyranny of distance can present hurdles, it should not be used to deny regional SA equal healthcare,

education and access to markets.

And in entering a three-way tussle for the seat of Frome, he is under no illusions about the task before him, and supports

Labor's strategy of directing preferences away from Liberal – which could deny it another country seat.

In Giles, geographically the biggest electorate in SA, bounded by the lower EP electorate of Flinders and the WA and NT borders, Eddie Hughes aspires to fill some very big shoes as incumbent Lyn Breuer exits the job. She was elected in 1997 and became the SA parliament's first female speaker in 2010.

From his Whyalla base – and with a comfortable margin – he is taking nothing for granted.

Pre-selected in August, Hughes comes to state politics with an impressive CV in local government: a city councillor for 21 years, including two terms as deputy mayor.

He was also active in regional development for 10 years.

Hughes worked in the steel and shipbuilding industries before studying social policy at the University of SA's Whyalla campus.

With a varied career, including correctional services, he believes he knows the community and its expectations.

Hughes gets to the point very quickly, outlining the major issues confronting the people of Giles – the only regional Labor seat.

The over-riding problem was "the incredibly metro-centric" basis on which the political system in SA operated.

"And because of that, rural people don't get a fair go," Hughes said. Power and water in remote areas,

as an example, did not get the benefit of a level playing field.

While the gap had to be closed between the city and country to create more equality – which could include more funding for regional areas – Hughes believed continual assessment and application of technology would offer greater advantages.

“Coober Pedy, for instance, is still powered by diesel,” he

KeyPoints

- Intrigues of North Terrace not on collective radar
- Tyranny of distance no excuse for rural inequality
- Employment key to regional sustainability

EP equals agriculture

WATER is a major issue on the Eyre Peninsula, with 80 per cent of the region’s supply from southern basins and the remainder supplied by the River Murray.



“There are community concerns about how we should manage the resource and supplement it ... by 2022,” Member for Flinders Peter Treloar (pictured) said. “But as a government, we will have the ability to address this.”

He said the trade-off between mining and farming, or any potential conflict – including access to water – was a matter of following protocol. Treloar says agriculture and seafood, however, will remain the mainstay of Eyre Peninsula and that state government must ensure that these businesses remain profitable.

Opportunities abound

THE diversity within Giles – including tourism, farming, mining, opportunities for power generation and industrial expansion – has the potential to make it a ‘go to’ destination with Whyalla as its hub, says Liberal candidate for Giles Bernadette Abraham (pictured).

“If you create the opportunities and jobs, people will follow,” she said.

Abraham wants to deconstruct the “perception” that Whyalla is just another industrial city. “We have so much more and our facilities are excellent, including an upgraded hospital, tafeSA and university campus – there should be no boundaries.”

Like her Labor opponent, Abraham says city-centric

attitudes that focus attention on Adelaide and the southern regions must be countered.

Export the noodles

LABOR candidate for Frome Marcus Connelly (pictured) believes value-adding to the raw materials and agricultural produce of the region must be paramount and promises to represent this in parliament if elected.



“We should be shipping noodles to markets, not the wheat,” he said.

“The diversity in Frome is immense – we need to promote ourselves more.

“Wool is a case in point. There’s no reason processing cannot be undertaken here.”



MEDIA SAVVY: Kendall Jackson says that while cold-calling and door-knocking keeps her busy, she is adept at using social media to reach voters. While “it won’t win me the election”, it’s another tool. “Twitter, Facebook and Instagram are a natural part of my life – and my supporters (especially the younger ones) appreciate it – and I can also have conversations with them.”

VOTES in regional SA

◀ said. "But we must look ahead. While it's probably locked into contracts, we have the ability to harness new power sources.

"I was very vocal when the Australian Renewable Energy Agency pulled the plug on the renewable energy demonstration fund."

Preselected in May last year, Bernadette Abraham is a self-confessed political tragic.

Having worked for the late Jeannie Ferris and Barry Wakelin and a long-standing member of the Liberal Party, she runs a successful real estate agency in Whyalla.

While Abraham believes opportunities are being created in Giles, she says Liberal policies set under the leadership of Steven Marshall will create the environment to accelerate them.

"It's time for a change – and I think the community appreciates that."

Abraham says the federal government's intention to repeal the carbon and mining taxes and cut red (and green) tape fits neatly with her vision for the electorate.

"That's why Steven Marshall has directed his efforts to elevating his focus on regional SA," she said.

"I am going into this election with a different set of eyes and I believe people are warming to that."

Dan van Holst Pellekaan towers over most people, standing more than 2 metres tall, and casts a long shadow over the electorate of Stuart – stretching from about 70 kilometres north of Adelaide to the Qld, NSW and Vic borders.

For the next month, the Liberal sitting member can

tell you his exact schedule as he covers huge distances to speak to voters.

"Country MPs are more visible than their city counterparts. If you come to town, everyone knows ... your reputation is determined by the work you do," he said.

"I park in the main street wherever I am and make myself accessible.

"With 45pc of the electorate's population in Port Augusta and the remainder on properties and in 30 towns, I have to remain focused.

"Access to services, such as health, education and roads, and the ability to communicate and safely travel in Stuart are vital ... and you can't have one without the other."

But if people weren't meaningfully employed, the problems manifest.

Success, says van Holst Pellekaan, breeds success.

"If we are good enough to get into government, we need to identify businesses that are excelling and those which are struggling, assess the strengths and weaknesses, and help them facilitate stronger and

progressive companies to employ more people," he said.

"And that's the key. If you don't have successful businesses, you won't have secure employment in SA."

The environment sustains primary production – farming and seafood – in the electorate of Flinders.

"That's something I learnt as a farmer for more than 30 years," said Peter Treloar, who holds the seat with a 25.9pc margin.

"And I don't shy away from that: the environment should be ours to use, but

we must care for it to maintain production."

In the 58,300-square kilometre seat of Flinders – bordered by the electorate of Giles to the north and having the Great Australian Bight as its southern boundary – Treloar entered state politics after Liz Penfold retired as the sitting member.

He says that if a Liberal government is elected, it will refocus policy to address years of Labor neglect in regional SA.

"Labor has been pitiful – state debt has spiraled and debt climb has withdrawn to the confines of city. They have failed to realise the contribution that regions make," Treloar said.



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Time for real vision, not 'mind-numbing' orthodoxy

EDDIE Hughes (pictured) says the expansion of wind farms, geothermal and solar projects could be an integral part of regional development in Giles.

"There are lots of creative options we could take," he said.

Hughes refuses to be a 'policy passenger'. "I will continue to speak for the whole community and lobby for basic services – educational attainment, school bus services, health and road improvements," he said.

The provision of adequate general practitioners in the electorate should be addressed immediately.

"At the end of the day, it's about equitable treatment and what you can do to bring it closer (to a reality)," he said.

Hughes believes renewables can unlock huge potential for the electorate with Whyalla benefiting from major engineering and fabrication contracts.

"If the grid on Eyre Peninsula is unlocked, we could have a significant injection into the community," he said.

"What we need from all politicians is real vision – a need for more verve and a move away from mind-numbing orthodoxies."



Independent rural 'cred' keeps Geoff in the middle

WHEN Geoff Brock (pictured) lobbied the government about widening the Allford to Wallaroo Road, he forwarded the minister responsible a photograph of two trucks lined up on the road with little room to spare.

"It showed them how important it was – far better than just sending a letter," he said.

Brock, the Independent Member for Frome, cemented his rural credentials after he chaired the *Select Committee on Grain Handling* with members of both major political parties – Adrian Pederick (Liberal), Tim Whetsone (Liberal), Leon Bignell (Labor) and Tony Piccolo (Labor).

Brock later criticised the government for

not implementing many of the committee's recommendations.

He won the 2009 by-election by just 300 votes, but was returned with a comfortable majority in 2010.

"People thought I would join one side or the other after that, but I've never been a member of any political party," he said.

And he does not envisage anything changing.

