



NEWS

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Bennelong 2020

‘People want this kind of civic engagement - I’m giving them what they want’

Maxine McKew

Thinking big at McKew’s summit

CHARIS CHANG

ALMOST 200 people crammed into West Ryde Hall for the Bennelong 2020 Summit last week.

There were 19 registered speakers for Maxine McKew’s forum, which she titled Think Big for Bennelong.

The Bennelong Federal Labor MP also arranged for fellow summit members Senator John Faulkner and Eastwood resident and law professor Julian Disney from the University of NSW to attend.

Speakers touched on a wide range of topics, including social inclusion, environment, youth, health, education, governance and creative arts.

There was no time for open discussion because many speakers overran the three-minute allocation.

Those who did get heard were positive about the night.

West Ryde resident Ross Venner likened the summit to democracy “in the style of Athens”.

“The Agora Athenians would gather to discuss their problems, you would get 1000 of

them together, or 300 on a rainy day – and they could pass laws,” he said.

“If you get people to express their passions and ideas, that passion is what is really necessary for a healthy democracy,” Mr Venner said.

Ms McKew said she was thrilled by the “positive, lively exchange” at the meeting.

“And the conversation continued well after with people hanging around in the hall and outside for quite some time,” she said.

“The next day there were emails exchanged back and forth and we got a lot of positive comments at our office.”

Ms McKew said the forum helped people to network and it would inform her thinking when talking to caucus and ministers.

“Some facile people can dismiss it as a talkfest and I also had forums last year that they dismissed,” she said.

“But people responded so positively that we made history in Bennelong.

“People want this kind of civic engagement - I’m giving them what they want.”

A full transcript of the night will be posted soon on Ms McKew’s website at maxinemckew.alp.org.au



Intellectually disabled

Jenny Pollo

Member of Ryde Area Supported Accommodation for Intellectually Disabled

“We are all parents in our 50s, 60s and 70s and approaching 80s and we are still looking after our intellectually disabled children at home – we have to face that, many of us, for another 40 years.”

Wants: Supported accommodation with a similar set-up to purpose-built communities for the elderly so they support each other and interact.

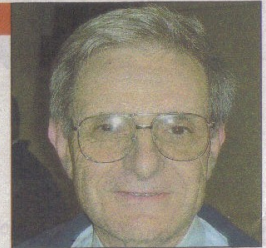
Unemployment

Ross Venner

Resident of West Ryde

“Reducing employment puts costs back on the community – sounds like lack of imagination to me.”

Wants: An employment measure that rewards businesses for hanging on to employees especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.



Affordable housing

Dominic O’Brien

Chairman of Ryde Hunters Hill Community Housing Co-Op

“The co-op manages about 200 houses in Ryde – the sad news is the waiting list is 900.”

Wants: To lobby local councils through their websites for affordable housing to be included in their planning instruments.

