



Melissa LOWE and Sal NOONAN

Independent Candidates for the Southern Metropolitan Region

Media Statement

For Immediate Release, from 21 September 2026

Community Independents to contest seats in the Victorian Upper House

Melissa Lowe and Sal Noonan are candidates for Victoria's Upper House, offering supporters of the Community Independent movement a new choice on the ballot in November. They will partner as a Group and appear "Above The Line" in the Southern Metropolitan region. Engaging with Community Independent candidates and their supporters across the region, they intend to make history, becoming the first Independent candidates elected to the Upper House in 74 years.

Over 80,000 voters across the region awarded their first preferences to Community Independents in last year's Federal election. According to Lowe: "One of the most frequent questions I hear from our voters at polling centres is, 'How should I vote in the upper house?' We can finally answer that question."

An innovative campaign striving to create history

"The Victorian electoral system is still stacked against Independents and favoured parties, especially in the Upper House," says Lowe. "The last Independent was elected in 1952, but we can break that streak. We will work with Independent candidates for the Assembly, and engage with the tens of thousands of voters here who have voted 1 for Community Independents across the last 3 elections. Independents have won surprise elections all across Australia and are representing their communities today. We will surmount a new barrier for the movement in 2026 by electing Community Independent Melissa Lowe to Victoria's Legislative Council."

Melissa Lowe

Melissa Lowe ran for the Lower House district of Hawthorn in 2022, finishing third with 20 per cent of the vote. She was a plaintiff in the High Court case that successfully challenged Victoria's campaign finance laws earlier this year, when the Court found these laws hindered the free flow of political communication by giving the major parties an unfair advantage over independents and minor parties.

Melissa holds a Bachelors in Community Development and a Masters of Public Policy and Management from the University of Melbourne, and has over 25 years experience working in diversity Equity and inclusion across a number of Victorian Universities. Her teams have received an AFR award for work with people who have lived in out-of-home Care, and an Australian Good Design Award for Research into how best to support marginalised university students with Federal targeted funding. Most recently, Melissa has been employed by Reconciliation Victoria.

She is deeply committed to keeping politics transparent and honest, and determined to listen to everyday Victorians about contemporary issues including Integrity and transparency in Government, cost of living, climate action and mitigation, Treaty, criminal justice, health and education.

"I have opposed the unfair rules that the major parties have used in Victoria to favour their members and donors, and emerged victorious. I am challenging them again, this time in a historic campaign for a seat in the Upper House. I'm running for the Legislative Council so that the independents your community elects have someone to partner with in the upper house - the chamber where legislation is amended, delayed, improved, or stopped. Neither Labour nor the Coalition has had a majority in the upper house for the last 12 years, so the numbers are tight enough that one independent can force important amendments."

Sal Noonan

Sal Noonan is a community leader and former homelessness sector worker, a small business owner, and a mum. She isn't coming from a traditional political background. Her experience has been built through community leadership, people-focused careers, building a business and raising a family in Melbourne.

"I'm proud to be running alongside Mel because we share a deep belief that politics should be inclusive, compassionate and focused on people. I respect the way she combines fierce determination with genuine empathy, and her commitment to doing everything within her power to leave things better for the next generation. We align on so much, but most importantly, we share the courage to listen, act and speak up when something needs to change."

Southern Metropolitan voters support Independent candidates

Community Independent candidates generated tens of thousands of first preference votes in the Southern Metropolitan region across the Federal 2022 and 2025 elections, and in the last Victorian election. About 500,000 voters will submit ballots in the region, which extends from

Port Melbourne in the west to Glen Waverley in the east, from Kew and Balwyn North in the north to Beaumaris in the south.

The latest statewide polls show up to 48 percent of Victorian voters are planning to vote for a candidate outside Labor and the Coalition. Considering the strong support for local Independent candidates in this region, Lowe is confident she can be one of five candidates elected.

"Community independents are contesting lower house seats across the Southern Metropolitan region, and my goal is to help them win," says Lowe. "Local campaigns are knocking on doors across this region to convince their community to vote 1 for a community independent, and I plan to spend many hours supporting them. We will then ask them to number our group above the line on the Upper house ballot."

The demise of Group Ticket Voting

This year, Victorian voters have finally been given the right to rank their choices for representation in the Upper House. We now get to list at least five choices from 1 to 5 and direct our preferences ourselves. Under the old group voting tickets, a candidate could be dealt into a seat by preference arrangements negotiated between parties. Those tickets are now gone. "Nobody can deal me into the upper house and nobody can deal me out of it," says Lowe. "It is time for the voters to decide".

Above the Line

By partnering together, Melissa and Sal will appear on the Legislative Council ballot as a Group "Above the Line", with Melissa in position 1 and Sal in position 2. Unlike registered political parties, independents cannot have Group names. Lowe explains, "The ballot will show the voters the truth - we represent them and are accountable to them, while the other candidates are beholden to a party and their funders."

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