



News from John Forrest MP for the people of the Electorate of Mallee

June 2011

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Prince William and John Forrest at the Murrabit Recreation Grounds on March 21.

The Royal Visit was a great morale boost to flood victims at Kerang, Benjeroop and Murrabit.

There has been plenty of conjecture about John's conversation with Prince William, but the Prince, the second in line to the British throne, was especially saddened by the losses experienced by flood victims and full of praise for volunteers and local emergency service personnel.

Photo courtesy Bendigo Advertiser

Our Future

Research, innovation, infrastructure, trade training and creativity will be key elements driving Wimmera and Mallee communities as they move into recovery from the twin adversities of drought and flood.

Times have indeed been tough in the past 12 months but around Mallee Electorate, alongside the grief and disbelief, optimism is now acknowledging the worst might be over and that the seasons will settle into their usual post-drought patterns.

Whilst horticulture has been devastated, dryland farmers have the best stocks of sub-soil moisture for years and water storages are close to full for irrigated agriculture.

Many families are taking stock of their financial situation. Some have scraped through the trying times but many will need patience and consideration until they again become major economic contributors and reduce their accumulated debt.

Mallee people remain enterprising and want to make a quid, whether on the land or in towns and cities. The duty of a parliamentarian is to make representation on their behalf in a bid to make this happen.

Roads, bridges and rail infrastructure have taken a hit, alongside farm improvements and houses in eight Mallee and Wimmera municipalities.

The next few years will see regional priorities developing and it will be the duty of the people living in Mallee Electorate to provide input to this regional vision, capitalise on local work ethic and realise the full potential of young leaders.

Mallee Electorate can, and will, fight back from recent adversity, and everybody will have a role to play.

Nothing remains the same and this part of Victoria has some of the best farmers and horticulturists in the world to drive primary production forward in this new era the region is now entering.

Some commodities, including grain and meat, are starting to experience demand commensurate to effort and on-farm investment despite a high Australian dollar.

It is John's greatest wish that all commodity groups can look forward to fair and stable farm gate prices because it is profitability that enables investment and the fast adoption of new farming technology.

Economically healthy farm sectors and strong urban communities are the foundations that can be built on to ensure the future prosperity, infrastructure and services that should be the reward of continuing regional effort and enterprise.

OUT AND ABOUT IN MALLEE



Member for Gippsland Darren Chester and Member for Mallee John Forrest welcome new Victorian Nationals Senator Bridget McKenzie to Canberra.



When John visited Horsham Combined Probud the dress theme was "Aussie". John spoke of being a Federal Parliamentarian since 1993.

KOORIE DAYS OF SIGNIFICANCE

- 3 June** Mabo Day
- 3-11 July** National Aboriginal and Islander Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Week
- August 4** National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day

PICTURE CREDITS

The Stawell Times News, Bendigo Advertiser and Wimmera Mail Times.

Do Not Call Register.

More than 4.3 million home, mobile and VoIP numbers who want telemarketing calls blocked are currently on the Do Not Call register. The numbers must be used primarily for private or domestic purposes.

For more information, call 1300 792 958 or visit www.donotcall.gov.au.

Scams

Scams come in many forms and people can fall victim to on-line fraudsters.

Seniors are particularly vulnerable and are an attractive target due to the assets they have accumulated.

Beware the phone calls or scam emails asking for money, your credit card details, business opportunities, lottery wins, romance, inheritance and all the other ways of extracting money from the unsuspecting.

To check if you are being scammed, there is the Little Black Book of Scams available from John's offices or for the latest scams, visit the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission web site **www.scamwatch.gov.au**.

Additional information about rogue operators in telecommunications can be found at the Australian Communications and Media Authority web site **www.acma.gov.au**.

My First Speech competition.

Students in years 10,11 and 12 are being urged to write and video a three minute speech as if it were their first speech to the Federal House of Representatives in Canberra.

The winner will receive a cash prize of \$250 and their school \$500. The runner up will win \$100 and \$250 for their school.

Both students will be invited to Canberra to attend the opening of a public exhibition on first speeches in Parliament this July.

More details can be found at **www.aph.gov.au/myfirstspeech**. Entries close Thursday 16 June 2011.

Care Leavers Australia Network (CLAN)

Care Leavers is a network offering support for people who grew up in Australia's orphanages, children's homes or in foster care.

Many of the 500,000 recent Australians brought up in "care" still carry the burden of unresolved issues from the past, the loss of parents, brothers, sisters and extended family, the loss of identity, stigma or feeling like an outsider. There are some members of CLAN in Mallee Electorate and the best starting point for those wanting to make contact is to call **1800 008 774**.

Don't be a disease, pest or weed spreader.



Victorians travelling interstate can do their bit to stop the spread of plant pests and diseases by ensuring they do not bring home plant cuttings or other plant material.

And if something is found that doesn't look right, report it to Biosecurity Victoria or other appropriate authority.

Of great concern is the recent outbreak of Myrtle Rust which has already spread into parts of NSW and Queensland and could have an enormous impact on national parks and home gardens across the nation.

The rust or fungal disease affects plants in the Myrtaceae family including the Australian natives lillipillies, bottle brush, ti tree and eucalypts.

Nobody knows from where or how this disease came into Australia but its large number of spores can be easily spread by wind, human activity and animals.

Weeds, pests and diseases can all have an environmental and economic cost if they are introduced by the unwary traveller. The constant battle against fruit fly in horticulture along the Murray is a good example.

Mallee grows some more

Another redistribution of boundaries makes the Federal electoral division of Mallee even larger and now it includes the whole of Northern Grampians Shire.

The change comes due to a revision of electoral boundaries driven by growth in Victoria's more densely populated areas where electorates are getting smaller geographically.

In country Victoria the opposite is happening and in our case, the Division of Mallee has grown from 70,694 sq km to 73,879 sq km and now includes the Northern Grampians Shire townships of Stawell, Hall's Gap, Glenloth, Deep Lead, Concongella, Great Western, Marnoo and Glenorchy.

Mallee is already a huge electorate, bordered by the Murray River in the north, the South Australian border in the west, the division of Wannon in the south, and the divisions of Bendigo and Murray in the east.

At the next Federal Election, Mallee will have seven additional polling booths which were formerly part of the Division of Wannon. These include Stawell, Stawell West, Concongella, Glenorchy, Great Western, Halls Gap and Marnoo.

All of Northern Grampians Shire is now in Mallee, making nine municipalities including Horsham, Mildura and Swan Hill Rural Cities and Hindmarsh, West Wimmera, Yarriambiack, Buloke and Gannawarra Shires.



Worldskills Competition

Mallee constituents will be barracking for Stawell Engineering employee Mathew Hall who is set to compete in the 2011 WorldSkills International Competition in London.



Member for Wannon Dan Tehan, Australian Skillaroos team member Mathew Hall, Stawell Engineering manager Darren Egan and Member for Mallee John Forrest.

Mathew is a fitter and turner, studied his trade at the University of Ballarat and is training for the early October event with the assistance of industry experts, TAFE teachers and personal mentors.

He's one of a team of 30 representing Australia in 27 skill categories and will compete in the Manufacturing Team Challenge. To qualify, he's come up through the ranks, winning the Regional WorldSkills Competition in 2009, and then taking second place in the May 2010 WorldSkills National Competition in Brisbane.

WorldSkills seeks the best young tradies and apprentices aged 16 to 23, and the 41st WorldSkills International Competition will field 1000 competitors from 54 nations across 45 skill areas.

Mathew and fellow Australian team members will be defending, and hoping to improve on Australia's current fifth international ranking gained in Canada in 2009.

Best wishes to Mathew and congratulations to Stawell Engineering, Skillaroos team Australia and WorldSkills Australia for fostering excellence in the trades sector.

Mallee electorate facts:

First proclaimed in 1948/49 the Mallee Electorate at 73,879 sq km is the largest geographical electorate in Victoria with only 11 larger electorates Nation wide.

The region is noted for a variety of industries including tourism, services, manufacturing, dried fruit, citrus, stone fruit, almonds, olives, pistachio and other nuts, bee-keeping and pollination, wheat and other cereals, wool, sheep, vegetables, forestry, wine grapes, table grapes, dairying, beef cattle, meat works, sand mining and now gold.

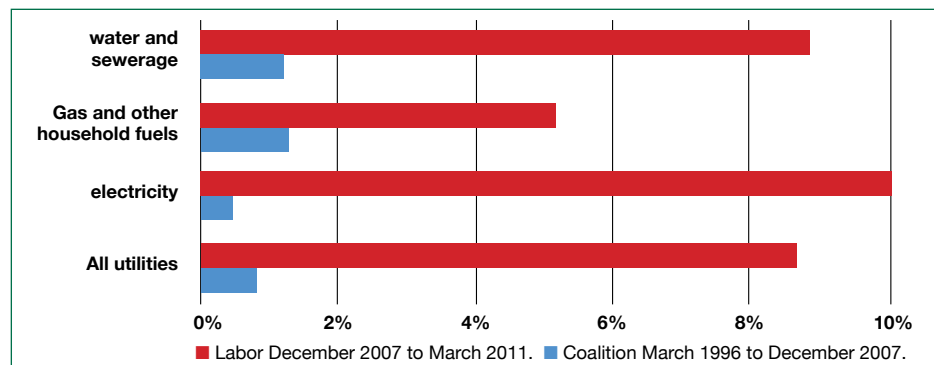
To give an idea of the size of Mallee, the total area of England, Scotland and Wales is 219,000 square kilometres, or equivalent to just 2.8 Mallee electorates.

England at 130,395 sq kms is 1.67 times the size of Mallee; Scotland 78,772 sq kms is about the same size, and Mallee is 3.75 times bigger than Wales.

----- Old boundary
 ————— New boundary

Essential family and industry costs spinning out of control?

Changes in utility prices inflation adjusted



Source: ASS 6401.0 Consumer Price Index Australia Table 7.

Consumer price index figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that utility price increases are accelerating, not slowing.

Good honest hard working people are struggling with the fundamentals of life because electricity prices have gone up by over 50 percent in not much more than 3 years. That is a bigger total increase than the previous 11 years to December 2007 under a Coalition government.

In addition, water prices have gone up by 46 percent and gas prices have gone up by 30 percent.

A carbon tax will push up electricity bills by another \$200 a year at least.

Even after adjusting for inflation:

- Electricity prices have been going up 10 percent a year under Labor, compared to 1 percent a year under the previous Coalition government.
- Water prices have gone up by nine percent a year under Labor compared to 1 percent a year under the previous Coalition government.
- And gas prices have gone up by 5 percent a year under Labor compared to 1 percent a year under the previous Coalition government.

What is happening with our national economy?

It begs the question why Australia is running massive deficits at a time when our terms of trade are at their best ever.

Unemployment is below five percent, the economy is exporting record levels of minerals and energy, banks are making unbelievable profits and yet we have a Government that is running at an unbelievable loss, a massive deficit.

How does this happen in such a short period since the 2007 Federal Election when there was no debt and \$50 billion in savings. In 2011 Australia is nearing its borrowing covenants and this means a hefty interest bill in every budget until the nation is back in surplus. Every family knows how hard it is to repay debts which can so easily incurred.

That's Australia's big challenge – winding back debt is always hard but if you don't, interest on the money owed has priority over spending on hospitals, education and the new infrastructure needed to make Australia competitive by world standards..

The hard yards must be done to get the budget back to surplus and ease the pressure on families, particularly through reducing their costs of living.

Labor cannot keep handing out money and hoping one day that no-one will notice that they've never delivered a surplus.

There are real people in Mallee Electorate, family farmers battling rising costs, households fearing the cost of essential groceries every time they go shopping, and those who are worried they might lose their job if their regional processing plant closes.

Net Government debt has climbed to a record \$107 billion in 2011-12 and is forecast to remain above \$100 billion across the forward estimates. This amounts to \$4700 for every Australian.

That means the Government has to spend around \$20 million a day every day for the next four years on interest payments.

THE PERIL IN THE DETAIL

Here are some Budget facts:

- Grocery prices are up 14 percent, education and health costs up by about 20 percent, and there have been seven interest rate rises in a row increasing average mortgage repayments by over \$500 a month.
- The Government will strip \$2 billion from families by freezing the indexation of key family tax payments and income thresholds for the next three years.
- This is the first Budget in eight years that has not provided tax cuts for everyday Australians. Instead, Australian families and the economy face more than \$6 billion in new and higher taxes.
- Plans to means test the private health insurance rebate will also hurt families.
- Wasteful spending has resulted in the Budget deficit soaring to \$49.4 billion this financial year. The expected deficit for 2011-12 has blown out by \$9.6 billion to \$22.6 billion.
- This financial year the Australian Government will borrow \$135 million a day.
- Failure to control our borders has increased the cost of offshore asylum seeker management by \$1.75 billion since last year's Budget, and the proposed "Malaysian solution" will cost \$292.3 million.
- The Computers in Schools program has blown out by a further \$200 million taking it to \$1.4 billion.
- Another \$11.6 million is to be spent to clean up the Building the Education Revolution mess.
- The Government has committed to introducing a Carbon Tax from July 1, 2012 but have provided no detail in the Budget, adding further uncertainty for Australian families and businesses.
- Under the Carbon Tax, average power bills will rise a further \$300 a year, petrol prices will increase by 6.5 cents a litre and grocery prices will increase by five percent at a carbon price of \$26 a tonne.

BLOKES TAKE NOTE



John Forrest, Justin Grogan and Ron Dudley attending a "Blokies Night Out".

If there is going to be a Men's Health night in your area, all menfolk should attend and become conversant with potential health hazards, particularly those that increase with age and which could lead to an early death.

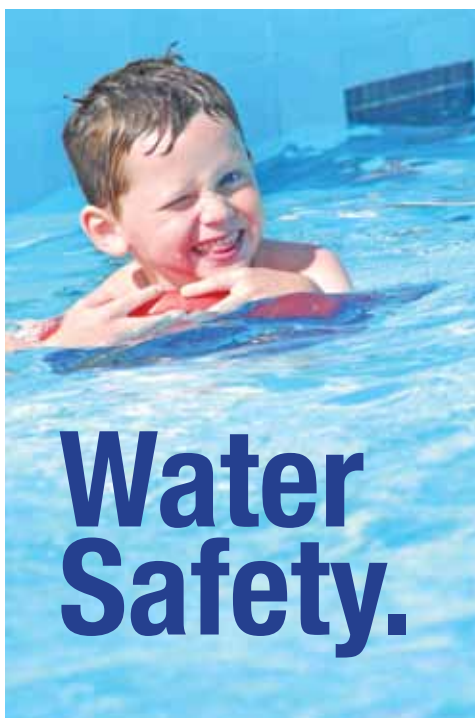
Back in 1997, John chaired a Parliamentary Family and Community Affairs Standing Committee Inquiry into Men's Health. It was revealing and brought into perspective the need for blokes to be pro-active if they suspected a health problem was looming.

Instead of seeking formal evidence, the Committee conducted seminars which brought forward the information it was seeking and it was in that process that John first met men's health campaigner Bernard Denner. Bernard has conducted many Men's Health nights around the nation, including in remote communities, since he developed the concept in 1994.

Mainstream issues identified by the inquiry highlighted early examination gave a high percentage cure rate for prostate cancer, and that lifestyle, including levels of alcohol consumed, had an impact on a person's longevity.

Conditions leading to fatality as life progressed include heart disease, lung cancer, lung and pulmonary disease, diabetes, stress (high blood pressure), vascular disease and colon/rectal cancer. Mental health conditions also need addressing.

Too many friends have been buried who, if they had attended one of these nights and sought treatment earlier, might still be here.



ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY has developed a number of handy fact sheets on water safety issues in Australia.

A visit to www.keepwatch.com.au shows ways to help prevent drowning deaths of children under 5 years of age in all aquatic locations. John was pleased to see Irymple Secondary and other schools taking note of the Royal Life Saving 2010 National Drowning Report which indicates the numbers of drowning deaths are the highest they've been at any time in the last seven years.

There were 314 drowning deaths in Australian waterways between 1 July 2009 and 30 June 2010 an increase of close to 21 percent. Parents are being asked to help promote learning to swim and developing swimming and survival skills as essential aspects of a child's education.

Water Information

The Bureau of Meteorology is constantly improving its web site www.bom.gov.au/water to provide wide ranging flood, rainfall and river flow data, allowing snapshots of water availability in storages across the nation and the situation in individual States.

'Swap It Don't Stop It'

The "Swap It Don't Stop It" campaign is promoting easy, small but healthy lifestyle changes to reduce weight and the risk of illness and disease.

You can swap a big portion of food for a small one, swap the escalator for the stairs, swap unhealthy snacks for fresh fruit and nuts, or even swap watching sport to playing sport.

There's a wealth of ideas to reduce weight and increase fitness and "thinking like a swapper" can become a rewarding pastime, opening new frontiers in your life.

Resources towards a healthier lifestyle can be found at www.australia.gov.au/swapit.



Bits & Pieces

Congratulatory messages

Congratulatory messages for Golden and Diamond wedding anniversaries and for 90th and 100th birthdays are available from the Prime Minister and John. For Diamond, wedding and 100th birthday celebrations, a message from the Queen can also be arranged.

Flags

As the local Federal Member of Parliament, John is pleased to provide and present the National Flag to local schools, not-for-profit organisations and individuals.

School visits to Canberra

John enjoys meeting the many schools which visit Parliament House when Parliament is sitting. A highlight of these trips is being able to act out a session in the House of Representatives, where John sits, and seeing parliamentarians at work in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Schools considering a visit to Canberra and Parliament House can contact John's office on 1300 131 620.

Representation

John's role is to represent the people of Mallee in the Federal Parliament so if there is an issue that needs his attention please contact either of John's offices or visit his web site at **www.jforrest.com** and complete the email contact form.



Useful Websites

- Telecommunications Industry Ombudsman** - www.tio.com.au
- Families Australia** - www.familiesaustralia.org.au
- The Essential Handbook for Independent Contractors** www.business.gov.au/contractors
- Australian Communications and Media Authority** - www.acma.gov.au
- Scams** - www.scamwatch.gov.au
- Switchover to digital television** - www.digitalready.gov.au
- A general one-stop site for Federal Government information** - www.australia.gov.au
- Keep Kids Safe on the Net at** - www.thinkuknow.org.au/site/report.asp
- Apprenticeship report** - www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au/FAQ/Publications.asp
- Wimmera Southern Mallee Skilled Migration Program** - www.wda.org.au/skilled-migration
- Sexual Offences Against Children brochures on** www.afp.gov.au/AFP-Homepage/policing/child-protection-operations.aspx
- Beginning a Life in Australia** - www.immi.gov.au/living-in-australia/settle-in-australia/beginning-life/_pdf/eng.pdf
- Royal Life Saving fact sheets** - www.keepwatch.com.au
- Required Federal petition format** - www.aph.gov.au/house/work/petitions.htm <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/petitions/petitions.htm>
- Safe Learning Network for kids** - www.superclubsplus.com.au
- Cyber safety tips** - www.childnet-int.org/www.cybersmart.gov.au
- Access to Justice** - www.accesstojustice.gov.au
- National Library search** - www.trove.nla.gov.au

Grant Websites

John is always happy to support funding applications in the Mallee Electorate. The following are some useful funding web sites:

- State Grants** – www.grants.dvc.vic.gov.au.
- Proceeds of Crime** – www.crimeprevention.gov.au.
- Health and Ageing** – www.health.gov.au.
- ABB Grain Community Fund** – www.abb.com.au.
- Government Community Grants** – www.grantslink.gov.au.
- Agriculture** – www.daff.gov.au.
- Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal** – www.frrr.org.au.
- Sport and Recreation Victoria** – www.sport.vic.gov.au
- Australian Institute of Sport (Ausport)** - www.ausport.gov.au/ais.
- Telstra Seniors** – www.telstraseniors.com.au/how-grants-work.aspx.
- More on Government grants** - www.australiangovernmentgrants.org/
- Victorian Scholarships** - www.education.vic.gov.au/scholarships/
- Viterra Community Fund** - www.viterra.com.au

John's offices can be contacted on 1300 131 620 or:

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