



# The Mallee has Spoken

## Issues important to the Mallee Electorate 2021-22

Voices For Mallee are proud to present for you, the voices and opinions of real local people over the past year.

Read what your fellow citizens of all ages, backgrounds and interests ask from our politicians, for our electorate, our nation and our world.

They have engaged in a careful and thorough process called Kitchen Table Conversations.

To learn more about the process and the Voices For Mallee group, visit our website at [VoicesForMallee.net](https://VoicesForMallee.net)

Voices For Mallee greatly appreciate the time and effort that individuals have given to participate in Kitchen Table Conversations. Your voices are important and we really value your contribution.

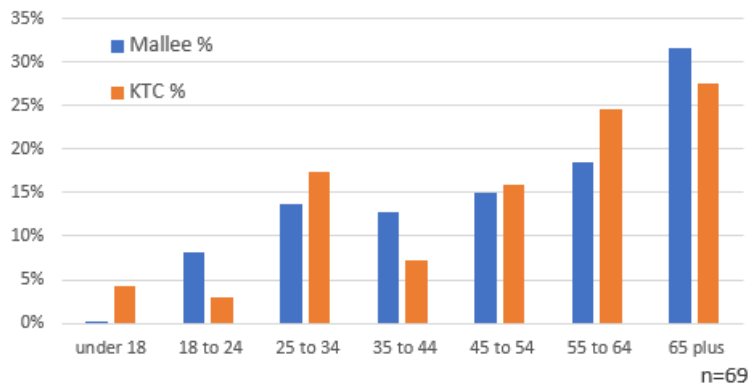
All candidates seeking election in Mallee will be invited to respond to this document. These responses will be published on our website so you can carefully evaluate how you wish to cast your vote on May 21st.

Every single vote is important.

Enjoy your opportunity to reflect carefully on your best representation in Canberra from our very special corner of the world.

KTC participants were asked to nominate the issues that were important in the Mallee electorate in the lead up to the next election, and the issues that were important beyond the Mallee in the longer term.

**Age bracket comparison**  
Mallee electorate and KTC participants

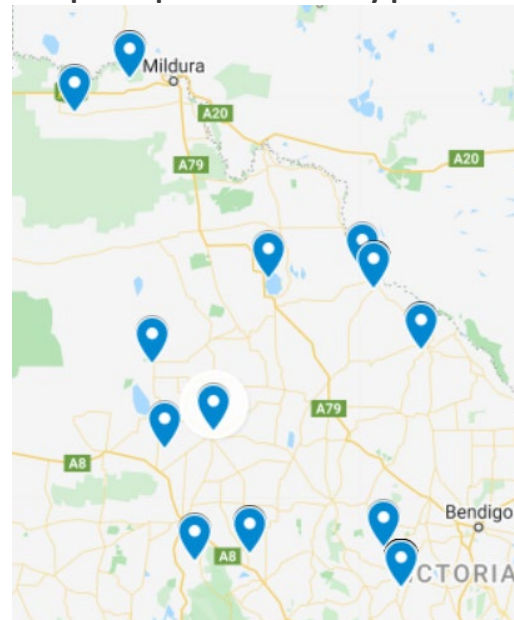


**Their responses demonstrated that most of the issues that are important to the people of Mallee are not specific to this region.**

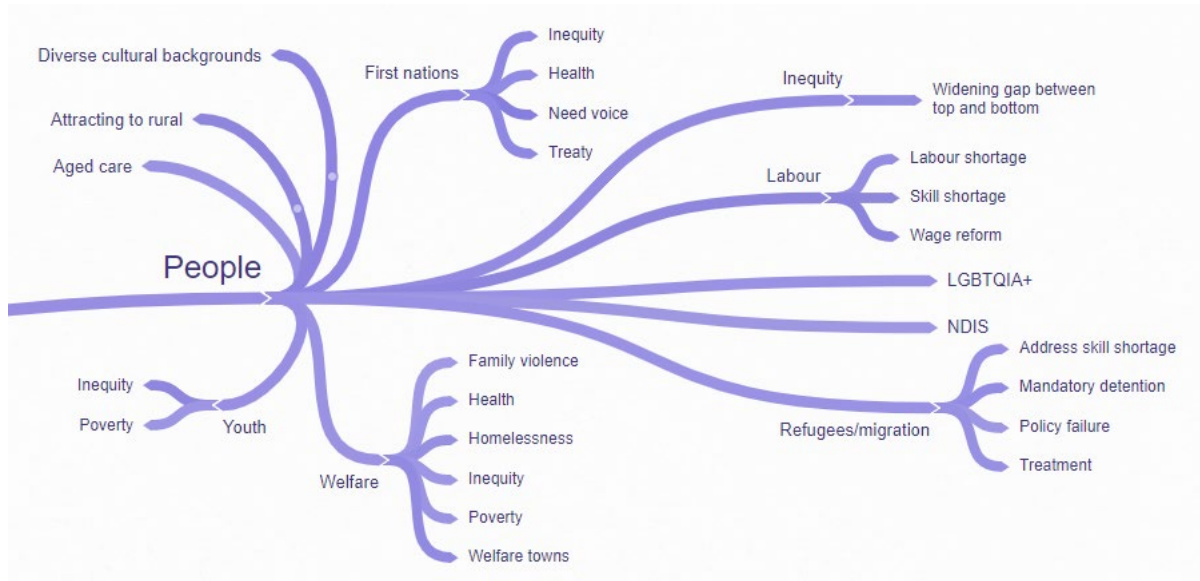
**They are important across rural and regional Australia, and a large proportion are equally important nationally and internationally.**

These issues have been summarised into eight key areas.

KTC participant locations by postcode



## People



**Mallee voters are people concerned about people. Supporting and providing for people’s needs should be first and foremost. Widening inequality is a big issue for Mallee. Specific groups need better services and support through welfare and policy reform including those living in poverty, aged care, First Nations, women, NDIS, LGBTQIA+, youth and refugees. Attracting and retaining skilled and other workers to our region is an important local priority.**

### Our Mallee Voices . . .

“We have a shortage of both housing and labour – that’s a chicken and egg situation. Coffee shops are shutting because they can’t get staff.”

“Divide between the haves and have nots. People never able to buy a home.”

“Mental health and NDIS need over hauling - there’s a shoestring budget - this is not OK particularly in rural areas.”

“Attracting and retaining people in rural and regional areas. They are now wiping the HECS debt to keep doctors in rural areas – what about the entire work force. What can we do – what incentives can we offer.”

“People in crisis - family violence, mental health, low incomes, benefits below the poverty line.”

“Gender equity, pay equity need working on. Women need better support in their superannuation, the types of jobs they can do.”

“How easy it is for people to slip through the cracks of our social systems – fall into homelessness, be screwed by the system. No one to help them – been a long-term problem.”

“First nations – need real effort, commitment, not tokenism. Symbolism is important but needs to be backed by real action/outcomes.”

“Homeless, especially women over age of 50. It comes down to equality and considerations of domestic violence and legal aid. They have spent their whole lives in caring roles, get the guts up to leave abusive husbands and then are homeless.”

“Policy that stands up for and protects queer and trans people.”

“Kids want a drop-in centre where they can access wifi and feel safe. There is nowhere to go. Help parents of youth to access services. We have kids with responsibility for caring for parents. We did not have an active youth worker post COVID from March 2020.”

“Compassionate treatment of refugees is a must. We need an immigration policy that treats people with kindness and respect.”

“The pandemic has marginalised youth. We need a pathway for them out of unemployment, and depression after COVID lockdown.”

“Shortage of skilled workers, particularly the medical crisis.”

“Aged care packages - huge issue as there are no services for people to use their money on – this is largely a State issue but also Fed grants make a difference/also Medicare is Federal.”

Welfares system- health homelessness, poverty, education, public transport. ♦ Need to get skilled professional here – offer placements, Hong Kong, south Korea, they did a placement and enjoyed it. Give opportunities to experience ♦ Women's issues. ♦ International migration and refugee policy could address some of the issues we face. E.g. doctors in Warracknabeal who have come from other countries have addressed that GP shortage. ♦ Funding to help council apply for grants to support LGBTQIA+ issues. ♦ Increasing the rate of Job Seeker. ♦ Jobs are important but inequality and helping people to improve their situations/disadvantage needs to be addressed. ♦ Reconciliation. Need authenticity and integrity in processes but can't because processes not being adhered to. ♦ Dan Andrews has been progressive in indigenous area. Peter Walsh - lack of respect and not reaching out to own local indigenous community. ♦ First nations people ♦ The 'Indue' cashless card. The government says there's not enough money to raise the rate for job seekers. Pensioners have worked their whole life and get this. They can't choose how they spend their money. ♦ Towns that are practically just welfare havens. ♦ Dan Andrews doing a good job with Treaty but in other areas not so much e.g. sacred trees. Need to hear the indigenous voices more. ♦ Robodebt, people being pursued versus people on JobKeeper, to Harvey Norman – different rules for different people. ♦ Attract people with diverse skillsets. ♦ Discussion with First Nations about what they want in terms of a treaty and/or voice to parliament. ♦ Increasing demand could drive jobs and workers willing to invest in our communities and economies. We are too scared of rising wages. ♦ How to deal with negatives of parent and youth use of smartphones. ♦ NDIS ♦ But then there is that housing issue. ♦ First Nations equity regarding the health issue mentioned e.g. longevity. Atrocities have happened in the past. ♦ Want population growth but will either not come or only stay for a short time. ♦ Aged care ♦ Refugees and Integrity are up the top. ♦ Attracting and retaining people in rural and regional areas. They are now wiping the HECS debt to keep doctors in rural areas – what about the entire work force. ♦ Raising the rate of job seeker and doing away with mutual obligation requirements. ♦ Release refugees detained in mandatory detention. ♦ Women's issues. ♦ See some signs of growth, but also see the death of some towns – closed shops. There is no drive to bring people to the area. Some business owners want to do fun things but council processes provide huge barriers and there is no room for new ideas and growth. The same things have been done for years – it is why people leave and might only come back when they are retired. ♦ Welfares system- health homelessness, poverty, education, public transport. ♦ Welfare system needs an overhaul. \$50 increase was a joke - still below the poverty line. Providing for the needy, boosts the economy allowing it to grow. ♦ Need more opportunities for people from different cultural backgrounds. ♦ Welfares system- health homelessness, poverty, education, public transport. ♦ Good to grant Hong Kong refugees status ♦ Internet services need to be improved and access to the NDIS made easier. ♦ Aged care. ♦ Immigration system – it is currently expensive, stressful and time consuming for an educated person who chose to migrate. Must have a huge negative impact on people running for their lives. ♦ Making sure we continue to welcome refugees ♦ Need more support for artistic endeavours rather than just sport. ♦ Climate change is a big one for me, and there is no denying that there will be more refugees as a result of a changing climate. ♦ LGBTQIA+ support. For instance, we don't have local support specialising in hormone replacement, or sexual health screening. ♦ Opening borders to more refugees and processing applications in a timely and just manner. No refugee incarceration. Extending social welfare and healthcare to people with temporary visas. ♦ Need to attract professionals out to rural areas. Multi-faceted approach to change the trend of being city centric. We need to attract people to our areas. ♦ Workforce ♦ Equity – in a country like ours I don't believe we should have sectors of the community lagging so far behind – we who are doing well should be more generous ♦ Skilled migration to regional areas. ♦

## Health



**Health is a huge issue for Mallee. Health outcomes are worse in regional areas, and while the larger centres have some very good facilities, they struggle to attract and retain skilled professional staff. Many people rely on public transport and find it difficult to get to their regional centre for treatment and even more difficult and disruptive to travel to capital cities for treatment. Stable long-term funding to support mental health is required and more needs to be spent on prevention.**

### Our Mallee Voices . . .

“Health – poor health services. Cannot access in a timely manner. Amazed at how long it takes to get a health appointment.”

“Health facilities access, mental health, hospital upgrades and incentives for doctors to move to the Mallee.”

“Lack of mental health support or short-term funding for that.”

“Drugs and alcohol are a very big local issue that needs more attention.”

“Local community health issue e.g. alcohol, obesity. Preventative health measures. Boredom equals obesity.”

“Mental health and NDIS needs over hauling - there’s a shoestring budget - this is not OK particularly in rural areas.”

“Health a massive issue. Under-resourced. Unsafe. Lack of specialist care locally.”

“Rural health workforce issues. Schemes to bring doctors in. I’m not comfortable with robbing third world countries of their talent. We could train our own and systematically rotate them through country areas using a national rural workforce scheme. This applies to all rural workforce sectors not just health.”

“Access to doctors in our area is difficult, have to drive for quite basic needs.”

“Access to health care and reducing the burden of travel for families - which leads to less testing, diagnosis, treatment and poorer outcomes and high expense.”

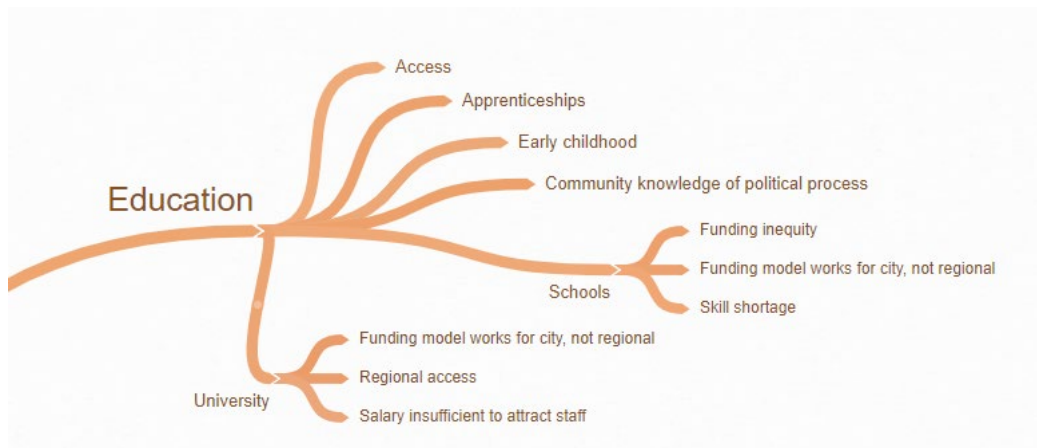
“With life expectancy, there’s inequity between rural and urban based people.”

“Getting Doctors, specialists & interns and graduate nurses to stick around.”

“Pensioners medical needs locally, need to travel to cities for geriatric treatment (none locally), which removes them from their support base.”

Health for all. ♦ Access to city for medical -public transport. ♦ Mental Health D&A Rehab. Suicide prevention -young men. ♦ Our health needs need to be prioritised. Measure of health and happiness, like Bhutan. ♦ Health ♦ Young people thrust into the adult world, everything is important – it's overwhelming, mental health, making huge decisions about the future and the planet. ♦ GP shortage ♦ Mental health services being inadequate puts load on Police. ♦ Better services – doctors, medical specialists in rural areas. ♦ We are a large area prioritising of services and centralising them is a problem for rural towns. Investment is not there we are burning out our healthcare workers. We here are ok as we can access Bendigo or Ballarat, though is a day off work to do so. ♦ Health and well-being plans should focus more on health promotion, belonging, social inclusion, participation particularly in rural situations. Addressing the causes of problems at the root rather than mopping up after the problem has happened. Social determinants rather than medical model, more wholistic approach. ♦ Attracting doctors to live in the community ♦ Our health care needs to keep pace with the growing population, we have no specialist dermatologist for example ♦ Better funding for mental health and doctors – we need to get them to stay longer as the current workforce is too transient. There is not enough support for the community. ♦ Health ♦ Health services and social networks ♦ Healthcare – With the ongoing regionalisation of healthcare providers and organisations there needs to be a way of better understanding and supporting smaller communities. ♦ International migration and refugee policy could address some of the issues we face. E.g., doctors in Warracknabeal who have come from other countries have addressed that GP shortage. ♦ People in crisis - family violence, mental health, low incomes, benefits below the poverty line. ♦ Healthcare a big one. It ties in with attracting people to the area. Important to have access to different kinds of healthcare (e.g. mental health, dental, telehealth). ♦ More medical specialists in general would be good and rural medical or doctor programs. ♦ Public housing, education, health - not every service has to be profitable. Public welfare is sufficient return. ♦ Health ♦ Why don't we have specialist medical equipment here? Have to go to Bendigo. Money going out of the region. ♦

## Education



**We have some great schools in the Wimmera, but limited choice and funding inequity are an issue. Access to early childhood, pre-school and after school care services is limited, which has a flow on effect for learning and parents’ ability to work. Further education opportunities are limited and the funding model does not work well outside of cities meaning young people need to leave the region. Limitations in the understanding of politics and political process is limiting democracy.**

### Our Mallee Voices . . .

“Schools – shortage of teachers and lack of opportunities.”

“School funding equity. Private schools get more than public. How on earth is that acceptable? It might be OK to say you can choose, it’s great for Melbourne people and high-income people, but there’s no option to send to private schools because there are none an hour and half away. In rural areas who’s got the money? Our kids have got a double disadvantage. Why is this in the best interests of Australia?”

“Education – why can’t we do more with Fed Uni – it isn’t able to offer much. What are the students able to study here? Want them to offer more at a regional level. If Uni’s could invest in the region that would improve the electorate. Uni is a too centralised and focused on international students in Melbourne. Uni is screwing foreign students for cash. Why not attract and service students up here?”

“More services especially children’s education.”

“Childcare, or the lack of in our particular area. Families having to drive 40 minutes each way or go without a second income.”

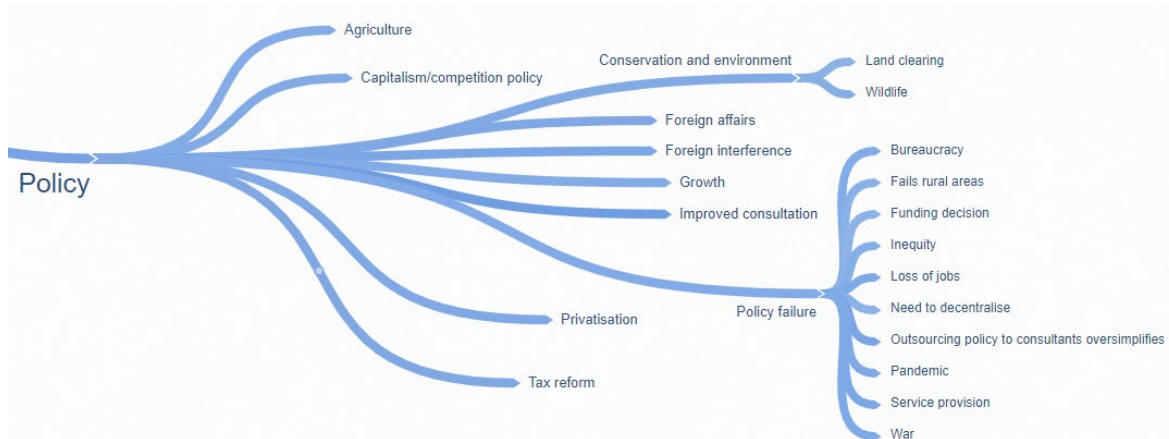
“Apprenticeships. How many are there today? We have a skill shortage and are getting in people from overseas. Bring back the policy where there had to be a certain number of apprentices. And watch the Mallee flourish.”

“There is a dismal lack of political education and civic responsibility in Australia.”

It would be good to attract university research too, so people don't have to move away for a university degree. ♦ Education. ♦ After school and preschool care does not exist in Maryborough. It was cut due to low numbers but kids at risk still exist and parents need the service running to consider work opportunities. ♦ Public housing, education, health. Not every service has to be profitable. Public welfare is sufficient return. ♦ Childcare. ♦ Education and schools. ♦ Feel like I don't know enough about politics, we need more education about how the political system works, and how voting works. Give students basic understanding of parliament. People don't realise how it can impact on them. If you don't know how the system works you feel a sense of imposter syndrome, don't know what to ask for. ♦ Other countries can't believe how much \$\$\$\$ we pour into our elite schools. ♦ Welfares system- health homelessness, poverty, education, public transport. ♦ Need to see Mildura as a hub, need a university sector supported here, forward thinking. ♦ University funding. No international students but need nurses and teachers. ♦ The money offered to teach at the Uni here is ridiculously low. ♦ Fed Uni is dictated by Govt policy – which misses the mark for the Wimmera, because it is aimed at international market. That works well for city but not for us. ♦



## Policy



**There is a strong belief that government policy is not serving the people. The rise of capitalism, competition policy, globalisation and bureaucracy has eroded meaningful policy centred on people and wellbeing. Many believe that policy decisions do not align with our values and fail to address the issues they target. This is deeply connected to the issue of integrity and representation.**

### Our Mallee Voices . . .

“Federal government has messed up and been incompetent in so many issues.”

“Can work with bad policy, but policy vacuum is a problem.”

“Govt debt is not the issue; it is not how we spend but what we spend it on.”

“Services don’t necessarily need to provide a profit.”

“Not saying don’t have private health and education but not to the detriment of public provision.”

“Interesting that in COVID times, some aspects come to screeching halt and it has highlighted affordability of housing, shortage of teachers, health care, skills – this is a time of change which we should be capitalising on and not letting it be a missed opportunity.”

“Management plans for future pandemics.”

“We should make the sustainable thing the easy thing rather than prioritising profit.”

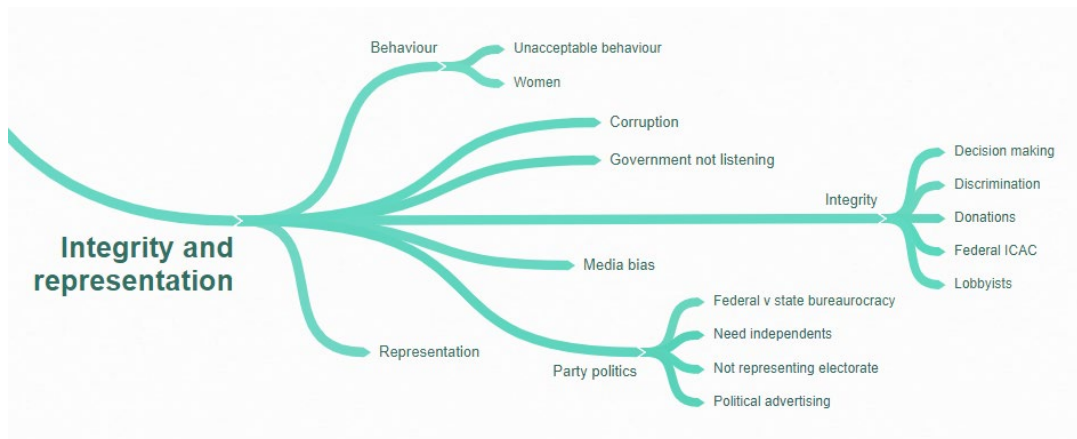
“Policy in this country is blind to the unintended consequences of what they do. We have destroyed the ability to fund the grass roots of the country which should be our first obligation. Example is Uni funding model that favours city and fails country, and water sold to highest value use.”

“Foreign ownership as an issue. Selling of Australia, land and water.”

“Foreign interference in the broad sense. We have been naïve around how we’ve set ourselves up with our reliance on overseas students. Need a reset about how we position ourselves.”

Neo-liberalism. ♦ World heritage listing would be a game changer for CG Shire. ♦ Region has aging population and tend to be comfortable with the way things are. It would be helpful to support conversations to bridge the gap between generations. ♦ Stable foreign affairs policy. Chinese in particular. Not the aggressive China politics. Words have consequences. The power struggle between the China and the US is rubbish. We live in southern Asia, that's where our focus should be. ♦ Lack of resources. I'm seeing a lot of illegal land clearing where local councils don't have the resources to prosecute. I see it in my job. It needs a specific taskforce and more money. ♦ They should stop focussing on per capita for decision making. Look at things like the diversity of employment. Comparing exports gives a different distribution. We miss out. The per capita days are gone and funding hasn't kept up. ♦ Economic growth. ♦ The environment. There's a growing list of endangered species. Management of this is needed so it's not just about someone being fined for shooting 40 eagles. ♦ Discussion on Neighbourhood renewal versus GO Goldfields programs. Had the investment worked? Response; that it takes longer to tackle institutional disadvantage is what has been learnt. ♦ Government lack of ability to see the unintended consequences of policy. Outsourced the back-room policy development to private consulting firms. Whichever firm gets the job provides their cookie-cutter approach. Decisions should be made within departments. ♦ Environment and climate change. ♦ Massive issue with Competition Policy. They think it is two people fighting over the last dollar. They don't look at exit costs of industry – at the fear of investment. Policy driving nearly every economic decision is not well thought out. ♦ Duck shooting. The Government grovels to the duck shooting lobby. ♦ Need to sort out a process to manage current COVID situation much better. Especially the ongoing impact of COVID now – shortages, pressure on health care system that will impact long into the future as staff are burnt out. ♦ Goods and services why should we pay more for fuel. Why not subsidize fuel in regional areas. Everything costs us more. Need to decentralise. ♦ Don't like privatisation (schools, utilities, aged care etc) and undermining of the public service. Degrades the idea of paying taxes and role of government. ♦ More interest in rural areas not favouring city. ♦ Rampant capitalism dilutes other values, less structures that keep putting ethics in front of us. ♦ Maintain our resources for us, not others. Need a healthy country for living. ♦ Suddenly with COVID, funding was more flexible and money could be shifted around. My dream would be a shift in budget allocation thinking and how that would look along the lines of such areas as integrity, climate etc. ♦ Effective environmental and nature laws. ♦ China - strange that non-Australians can buy land, this is as risk to us as citizens. ♦ Need a rural taskforce to focus on things other than health too. ♦ People lose jobs through govt handling of China and French deals. ♦ Tax reform – not enough economic reform. Happy to pay fair share. Gap between the haves and have nots growing exponentially. ♦ I abhor the thought of war. Better ways needed. I thought it was out of date. ♦ Integrity and good policy. ♦ Need to have solidarity with oppressed people. Considers currently in danger from the oppressor – e.g. immigration system and refugee rights, disability rights, animal welfare. Concerned that we must maintain rights at a humane standard. ♦ Moving forward, we need to look after each other. The government needs to get out of our way for this. I don't feel the government improves how our society runs and I don't feel like government has done that in a long time. ♦

## Integrity and representation



**Many believe that integrity and honesty are missing from our political landscape. They are concerned about political donations, transparency, corruption, misinformation, bullying and bad behaviour. Politicians represent the party, not the electorate and listen only to lobbyists and those who donate large sums of money.**

### Our Mallee Voices . . .

“The government is not listening.”

“\$13,800 is the limit on what can be donated to political campaigns, and it is only revealed a year later. We don’t know who is funding and what they expect in return. It’s not OK.”

“Political honesty, integrity and transparency. Set behavioural standards in parliament and transparency standards on donations and decisions.”

“We have moved from politicians with vision, to politicians who look at polling and create plans to get elected in 3 to 4 years’ time. There are so many things in Australia to be completely reformed. They are so afraid of public opinion, they can’t make meaningful policy, particularly afraid of the media.”

“The failure to implement the Jenkins’ Respect @ Work report in full and handling of the Brittany Higgins rape allegations, expose the Federal Government lack of care for the safety of women in the workplace.”

“Lack of communication/consultation, lack of transparency/direct feedback through to decision making.”

“Nationals only worry about the next election – corruption around how they are funded.”

“There’s no truth in the advertising in political campaigns - they can get away with saying pretty well anything.”

“We need to tackle our media as an institution. The constant bias is not OK. It’s doing a disservice to Australians. Politicians are afraid of them (Rupert M etc).”

“It is reported that there are currently 3 lobbyists to every Parliamentarian in Government House. Who are these people? They must be removed from Parliament, as they have a major influence on out politicians with their self-centred agenda and donations. There is no place for lobbyists in Parliament. Whistle-blowers must be protected, not prosecuted.”

"The Need to address corruption in the Federal Parliament, with the current blatant use of taxpayer's funds, for their own political party advantage. The many "grants and funding for mates" also needs to be addressed."

"We need more independent candidates in the federal government to hold the government to account on these matters. We need a well-hung government."

Disenfranchised voters. ♦ Party members seem to represent their party more so than their electorate – needs may not coincide. ♦ Planning for future pandemics to better support border communities to manage. ♦ Photo opportunity politicians (e.g. Stan Grant). ♦ Govt corruption e.g. Helen Haines Australian Federal Integrity Commission bill. ♦ Drift into unacceptable behaviour– need to have a conversation about what is acceptable behaviour for politicians, public servants, planners etc – an example is about the acceptance of money and other things. ♦ Refugees and integrity are up the top. ♦ I am also irritated every day by the political donation issue and how much impact this is having. It's disappointing and disheartening. ♦ Corruption ICAC - if we want adequate services, we need an ICAC to deal with why we so disadvantaged. ♦ The Nats say they are for the bush and farmers. Put your money where your mouth is and help us. Climate and Agriculture. ♦ Misinformation and disinformation needs to be dealt with. ♦ People don't realise how powerful democracy is – that we can make change through participation. Mildura is not a safe seat, swinging. Swan Hill is changing though, hope that changing is enough but we are running out of time in terms of climate change. ♦ Capped election campaign spending. ♦ This is all a part of the Federal LNP Government's severe lack of transparency over its lifetime. The constant failure of the FOI rules to reveal requested documentation, is also a part of the lack of transparency, that has been covering up so much graft and greed from the public. We need a Royal Commission into the Liberal Party of Australia, starting with how Scott Morrison was preselected in the seat of Cook. Corruption starts at the root, while the fish rots from the head. ♦ Political honesty, integrity and transparency. Set behavioural standards in parliament and transparency standards on donations and decisions. ♦ Integrity Commission. ♦ Elected representatives seem to be falling short of setting any kind of example about decency, equality, integrity – even an ICAC is not going to have an effect if people continue to find ways to get around it. Becoming a cultural thing – going into an election – I don't think much of any of our elected representatives at the moment. ♦ Corruption within government. ♦ There's a state/federal divide that covid has shown up and people are more aware of now. Issues bouncing between the prime minister one week and the premiers the next week during covid. There are huge divisions and I hadn't realised how complicated it is and how much this has an impact on us. All workforce sectors struggle in the bush, I think this a huge issue for every industry. For example in health, acute care is state and aged care is federal. The bureaucracy is overwhelming and cumbersome. Pandemics will show this up. ♦ Integrity in political system. ♦ If Religious Discrimination Bill passes will want to know from any candidate for the next election whether they will support Labor to get rid of it. ♦ Barnaby is a dickhead. ♦ I am worried about Australia's international reputation. We are a bit of a laughing stock internationally. ♦ Recognise that it's important to appreciate different world views – no good to be in an echo-chamber either. ♦ Many elected representatives are career politicians – lived a charmed life, don't have experience of trauma/crisis. ♦ Solution to the integrity issues – a federal ICAC – so complex it can be a little bit overwhelming. ♦ Reshift back to public service for public good. ♦ Get out of the Mallee and be more local represented. ♦ Integrity type issues – disappointed in political leaders. Australian culture – seems to be a lack of decency in the people leading our country – used West Wing as an example of what integrity really looks like. Lack of integrity spills down into a whole lot of other things – becomes a cultural thing. Normalises. there are so many people who are representing us that don't seem to care about Australia and our values – becoming a cultural thing. Integrity and respectful treatment of people– have seen shadows of it Australia in the past, but if it is missing it is very disheartening. ♦ Meekness of electorate – feel as though their voice isn't heard. ♦ Integrity – not just in politics but also the public service – in the political sphere - in the way we make decisions – seems we can't rely on people to make good decisions without guidelines/rules. ♦ Integrity and good policy. ♦ More collective groups re issues. ♦ Our political system fosters corruption – cover ups, imbalance in justice. No accountability from corporations receiving government money to provide services. ♦ Expose the corruption, payola and the boys club attitude endemic in the National Party. ♦ This is also to do with ICAC. ♦ Australia is at a crossroads in how our political system works. The influence of American style democracy & divisive tribalism is real and very scary. ♦

## Industry and infrastructure



**People need industry for jobs and infrastructure to support life and work. Centralisation, globalisation and the shift of manufacturing means local services are in decline and we increasingly depend on roads and transport. COVID has made the downside of this clear. An acute lack of housing is impacting on Australia and limiting growth in the Mallee. Housing is now less affordable than ever, and government supported services are in decline.**

### Our Mallee Voices . . .

“Housing is a big problem everywhere. Before COVID it wasn’t a small country town problem. Now it’s everyone’s problem. There just doesn’t seem to be enough houses for people to rent.”

“Housing prices – all the incentives didn’t work – they just bumped the price up. Our kids may never own a home. Should they revisit negative gearing – could grandfather the rules to protect those already invested.”

“Shortage of housing, particularly short-term or contract workers and families on low incomes.”

“Housing for professionals willing to work in smaller communities - links to social housing. Health, housing and transport interlinked and connected or impacting on each other.”

“We have a shortage of both housing and labour – that’s a chicken and egg situation. Coffee shops are shutting because they can’t get staff.”

“This social housing needs energy efficient design. And sustainability for the long term. Especially in the Mallee where there are high temperatures anyway. What will climate change going to bring?”

“Rural roads that are dangerous.”

“Lack of passenger rail in the NW is a big issue, that could be supported by a Federal Government.”

“We need infrastructure and transport within the Mallee that link to other areas. Rail (fast rail would be even better!) connecting major hubs to regional areas. Connecting the region, making it more accessible. This would attract people with diverse skillsets.”

“It all comes back to infrastructure in the Mallee - this creates jobs, well paid jobs and all the support around them. Not relying on international workers. The apprentice spends at local hairdresser. It all flows on.”

“Things could improve if we put more emphasis on our own manufacturing etc – not opposed to globalization as such – but COVID could have presented us an opportunity to do manufacturing ourselves. An example benefit would be having employment for unskilled workers in Mallee towns.”

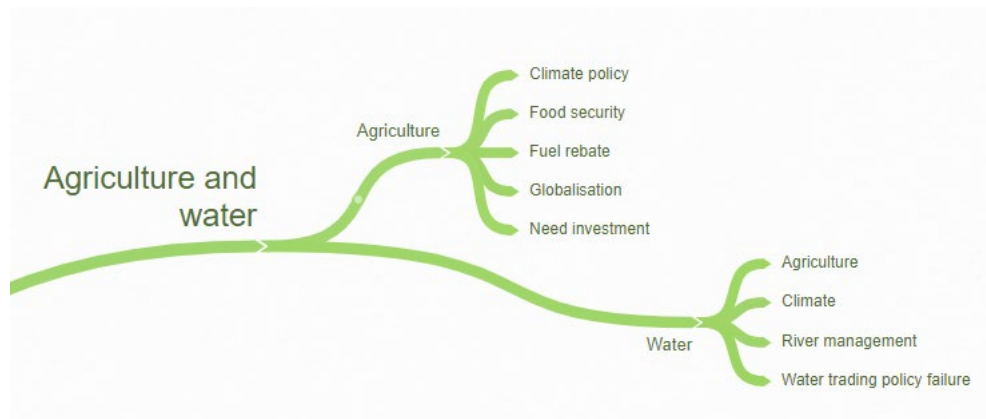
“Internet services need to be improved and access to the NDIS made easier.”

“Need to manage our waste/recycling, need to educate more around these issues.”

“ABC and Bureau of Meteorology – regional communities really depend on these organisations. Seems they are suddenly being gradually undermined/underfunded over time.”

We need better transport, trains. ♦ Housing affordability, rent is increasing – harder to make ends meet. ♦ Youth homelessness. ♦ More housing. ♦ The internet in rural areas is not equitable. ♦ To drive local prosperity e.g. a growth corridor from Ballarat to Maryborough. ♦ Getting people out here and staying. ♦ The St. Arnaud to Mildura railway cost \$600m and is a disaster. On the roads there are two trucks to every car. It’s not common sense. ♦ Welfares system- health homelessness, poverty, education, public transport. ♦ Housing. It’s all about investment rather than necessity. Houses should be available for people to live in. ♦ So much of the country’s wealth is tied up in bricks and mortar. Real dollars are tied up – could be used for another housing estate. ♦ There is the housing problem to address as well. ♦ Passenger rail to Mildura, Horsham, Hamilton – never wanted it shut down. Would make a huge difference to LGBTQIA+ people if they could get to Melbourne by train. Also, people who require transport for health care and for business and industry to attract skilled workers. Would benefit everyone in the region. ♦ Incentives for home owners to share their home with seasonal workers to alleviate the labour issues to allow prosperity to flourish again in Mallee. ♦ COVID has demonstrated the need for local manufacturing and processing industries. Classic example is that we don’t even process our own recycled materials, rather than send it overseas. ♦ Manufacturing to take advantage of our natural resources – e.g. lithium mining – make our own batteries, solar panels etc. Crazy that we export so much – should use them here. Huge environmental cost to do this as well. ♦ Fully funded ABC. ♦ Roads obviously. ♦ Social Housing is a HUGE issue across Australia but especially in regional and rural areas. Absolutely critical that this is addressed (alongside all the associated welfare, Medicare and social justice issues that go with it) by our representatives. The Mallee needs investment in a range of social justice housing options and opportunities. ♦ Affordable housing. ♦ People can’t afford to buy houses – need housing that people can buy. ♦ Infrastructure – general condition. ♦ Transport network, train lines, our freight train lines will support the growth of Mallee moving forward. Don’t leave it till they are breaking down. They need to be maintained so we can compete with more built-up areas. ♦ Investment in tech and science. ♦ Housing issues to attract people. ♦ Used to work in tertiary education sector – would like to see governments stop interfering in research funding – has been increasing over time - govts of both persuasions have put higher and higher requirements on reporting, and now they require specific grants to be funded – governments seem to shut down freedom of expression while advocating for it. Govt needs to get out of controlling research funding. Also to put more money into research. ♦ Develop tourism. ♦ Transport (especially air transfers/commute) for specialists and professionals moving around the electorate and beyond. ♦ Infrastructure, build it and they will come. ♦ Public housing, education, health. Not every service has to be profitable. Public welfare is sufficient return. ♦ Need an overhaul of taxation system for both fuel rebate and road funding. They are both intertwined, and neither is fit for purpose. Our road funding model is broken. Fix both problems. Massive issue for our local industries and our infrastructure is declining badly in front of us. ♦ Social housing needs to be completely overhauled particularly in the regional areas. The waiting list can be for 20 years. ♦ When COVID started I thought and said it would reset people’s heads a bit – refocus on what really matters – wanted Australia to be less dependent on global trade – but after 2 years we are still importing large amounts of stuff that could be produced in Australia – our politicians seem to just accept that. Why are we so dependent on overseas trade? It seems our decision makers haven’t done a great deal about that. Seem to import simple stuff. ♦ Bureau of Meteorology – need to have their funding restored. BOM should not stop undertaking research for fossil fuel companies but should not allow these companies to influence reports and messaging coming out of BOM. ♦ Need to make things ourselves again, local manufacturing needs to be supported and rebuilt and this will give young people more opportunities. ♦ We need more support for local roads. ♦ We should be developing a national road system. ♦

## Agriculture and water



**Water allocation and trading remain a contentious issue. Already highly vulnerable to fluctuations in rainfall, water and global markets, the agricultural industry is caught in the crossfire between climate change and policy indecision. Clear policy directions on climate, energy and international trade are needed to ensure the future of the industry. The threat to food security should be a higher priority.**

### Our Mallee Voices . . .

“Food Security – this is intertwined with Climate Change and will be an issue going forward. Need to value farming communities.”

“Need an overhaul of taxation system for both fuel rebate and road funding. They are both intertwined, and neither is fit for purpose. Overseas they consider an Australian farmer is subsidised because of the fuel rebate. This is not a subsidy.”

“Self sufficiency e.g. fuel and knock on effects on producing food and energy security.”

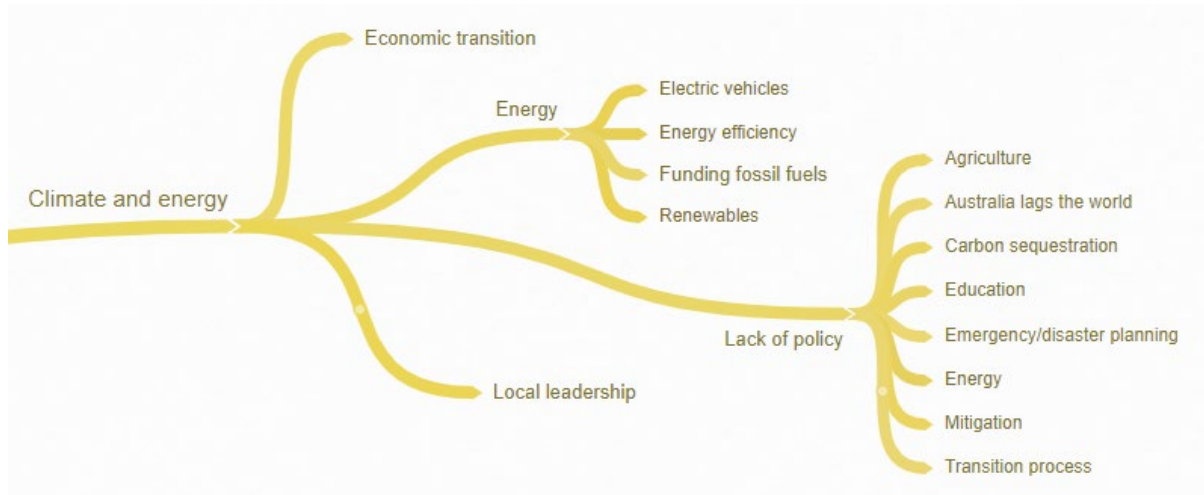
“Water policy, water trading reform/regulation of the market needed.”

“Water trading needs to be discussed everywhere – should you be able to trade water if you are not a primary producer?”

“Certainly more leadership on CO2 emissions for agriculture. We need a long-term vision. We should improve practices now rather than when we have to.”

Climate change and extremes of weather and effect on farming. ♦ Management of our water resources as part of the Murray Darling Basin plan. Exploitation of water by the rich and powerful. ♦ Stop defunding agricultural sciences. ♦ The issue of water, the over planting of water intensive crops, with climate change looming a threat to humanity, brings this very starkly into focus. ♦ Water. ♦ Agriculture. ♦ The Nats say they are for the bush and farmers. Put your money where your mouth is and help us. Climate and Agriculture. ♦ Been reading the book by Gabrielle Chan the impact of big picture decision making and how it affects grass roots farming. ♦ There should be considerable funding available to change our long-term farming systems to build up our farms diminishing soil organic carbon. ♦ Water, make it an important issue, transparency around water management, see it as an opportunity not just an insurmountable challenge. ♦ Control of water, not large allocations to inappropriate thirsty crops. The grey line with state and federal makes it difficult. ♦ Water. ♦ Not knowing enough about MDBP, need more education around the issues/problems. ♦ Murray Darling Basin Authority – shifted water to the highest value end user and then wondered why we are suddenly growing almonds everywhere. ♦ Need our politicians to be fairer in the spending of Gov funding. Nationals list 194 projects funded for Mallee – \$2 Billion spent but I can only see a couple of projects directly related to farming. Should be the other way around and major funding to assist farming. ♦

## Climate and energy



**Mallee voters are concerned that Australia lags the world on climate and energy policy. They want to see the government take decisive action to invest in a carbon neutral future. A key part of this builds on our local strengths in being able to generate renewable energy, better planning and response to natural disasters and to secure our ability to produce food in a changing climate.**

### Our Mallee Voices . . .

“Climate change and extremes of weather and effect on farming.”

“Economic reform will deliver technology to deal with climate change.”

“The poor implement of climate change measures, including the funding of existing and fossil fuelled power stations is, and will have a negative impact long into the earth's future.”

“Certainly more leadership on CO2 emissions for agriculture. We need a long-term vision. We should improve practices now rather than when we have to.”

“Climate policy – where we sit compared to the rest of the world. We should do something rather than lag behind.”

“Climate change and action on climate change – there is an impact on Mallee.”

“Climate change and the transition to more sustainable farming practices is critical for the future of the Mallee. We need federal support to transition. We are uniquely positioned to move into this next phase and be the leaders in Australia in this space and around the world. It needs funding, education and support. We need to be ready to embrace the change. People can't do it if politicians are holding back.”

“Need to talk about scenario planning and future proofing communities re inevitability of natural disasters. Worried too divisive for any politician to tackle it.”

“The big one that's connected to climate is invest in infrastructure. We need electricity grids to modernise towards renewal.”

“Personally feel, sense of existential dread, what if things don't get better with climate change – I'm still on the fence about whether to have a family. Need to see more working towards a more positive outlook.”

“Climate change is a big one for me, and there is no denying that there will be more refugees as a result of a changing climate.”



“Climate change-drier rivers MDBA. No water no community.”

“We could reduce our emissions with more renewables, electric cars etc - people want to but they cannot invest without policy certainty.”

“Community building to make more energy more efficient as we move towards higher temperatures.”

“Climate change. Focus on renewable energy as this is the biggest thing we have facing us.”

Climate change. ◆ Building community, coming together and creating the vehicle for change to happen for the planet. Australia looks like a laggard when it comes to emissions reductions and climate change, compared to the rest of the world. Where’s the strategies, action plans and measures/evaluation and accountability? ◆ Climate change. We need to be carbon neutral well before 2050. At the moment, it seems to be a patchwork approach with governments not being serious about it and not acknowledging that we are one of the world’s biggest polluters. ◆ Shift our economy to exporting hydrogen. ◆ Climate change again. ◆ Take more decisive action on climate change by offering real incentives for soil carbon sequestration. ◆ Climate Change – mitigation, work on community understanding, transition to renewables. ◆ Support farmers who do want to do environmental work to combat climate change e.g. plant trees. ◆ Inflows to Murray Darling reducing, biggest issue is climate. There are so many vested interests, it needs to come from the people to make change. Nothing can happen in Lower House, the only hope is in the Senate for Independents in this electorate. If coalition get back in – things are hopeless. ◆ Climate change in this vulnerable mallee landscape ◆ Climate is the number one issue. Economics is only being held back by a policy vacuum. If we make good long-term strategic decisions on how to handle our climate responsibilities and set up a transitional structure, then there is no need for the transition to be a problem. ◆ Climate change – general consensus. ◆ Net zero to be a focus ◆ Starting to see climate change as a policy at a state level, need to see more at the federal level ◆ Local action on climate. There’s ongoing soil degradation. The majority of farmers are traditional - they are offered more of the stick than the carrot. ◆ Climate, need better leadership (Peter Walsh/Council) are we preparing for climate change e.g. tree planting. Nothing being done about being prepared for climate emergency at council level. ◆ Young people thrust into the adult world, everything is important – it’s overwhelming, mental health, making huge decisions about the future and the planet. ◆ Renewable energy. ◆ Nationally we won’t meet our emissions targets. ◆ Climate - need to take real action. It’s a battlefield for candidates – how can they get in and survive beyond one term. ◆ Climate change. ◆ Leadership our council needs to be seen to be leading. Doing so with climate collaboration would be great ◆ Climate Change – mitigation, work on community understanding, transition to renewables. ◆ Environment and climate change ◆ Climate change. This is the year of the climate election. ◆ Electric vehicles – would be good to have a policy on them to make them cheaper or at least get certainty on where we are going. ◆ Electric vehicles – we could have an incredible multi benefit from a strong EV manufacturing industry. ◆ Energy policy in general. ◆ Climate change – mitigation, work on community understanding, transition to renewables. ◆ Policy that encourages renewable energy. ◆