

VOICES OF BEROWRA

Be Heard, Be Represented

Cleaning Up Australian Politics: A Free Public Event

Ivonne, did you know that favoured lobbyists can get an "orange card" that gives them unfettered 24/7 access to Federal Parliament?

And that over 2000 lobbyists can wander unescorted into the corridors where MPs have their offices?

And that there hasn't even been a register of who gets an orange card, let alone an effort to curb the influence of big money?

And that 80% of lobbyists are not bound by even the weak code of conduct that currently exists?

Community Independents have been fighting for a cleaner, fairer, more transparent Parliament, and have had a recent win on this front, ending "decades of secrecy."

Join us to learn about the problem, the recent victory, and the work that remains to be done to clean up Australian politics.

Address available on registration. Register [here](#).

CLEANING UP AUSTRALIAN POLITICS

Join Voices of Berowra as we talk with Zali Steggall MP and Corporate Influence expert Dr Lindy Edwards about the fight to protect our democracy from the undue influence of dark money, corporate lobbyists and vested interest groups

Venue within walking distance of Hornsby Station and will be made available on registration
**Thursday 6th August, 2026
7:00-8:30pm**



Zali Steggall MP
Community Independents
Westmead



Lindy Edwards
National Experts
Corporate Influence

WWW.voicesofberowra.org
Voices of Berowra

Authorised by M. Higgs, 9 Berowra Road, Mt Colah
For Voices of Berowra Inc - NSW Fair Trading Reg. No. INC2101084

FOCAL POINT

A Better Australia

A reflection from one of our volunteers, Selina

If we want a better Australia, are we willing to build it ourselves, or just complain that the people who are doing the building are the "wrong" sort of people?

Famously, after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, an American founding father made the remark: "a republic, if you can keep it". Some people will see the phrase "if you can keep it" as the insistence that one must police its boundaries, excluding those who - by inference of behaviour or nature based on skin, appearance, or cultural connection - are considered risky propositions.

But maybe it's something bigger - something that requires more work than merely rejecting people different from ourselves. Maybe the 'you' in "if you can keep it" is a reminder that community and collective identity take work by all the people involved. 'You' - both the individual and the collective - must make the effort to 'keep' - to maintain or tend - the culture that we have.

Sadly, we've been watching the American republic gradually fall - the walls of liberty, justice, and freedom being dismantled by those who want only the "good sort" of people to have rights. We don't want that to happen here.

One of the reasons for the existence of Voices of Berowra is to collect people who want to build a better Australia. One that more accurately represents the people in the electorate of Berowra, rather than the interests of the corporations, businesses, or money-men who own the major parties.

This is not an easy thing. We are here to do the hard yards of understanding our neighbours even when our neighbours may not want to understand us. We are here to do the work of a better Australia.

An Australian democracy, if you can keep it.

Are you willing to help build that better Australia? If so, come and [join our team](#) of volunteers.



News from Parliament

The Government's Tax Reform No. 1 package in the recent Federal budget saw a welcome return to the idea that governments should be capable of reforming systems that are no longer fit for purpose. It is widely agreed that our tax system needs reform, but in recent years governments have been rendered timid by the loud voices of lobby groups and the media. Whether or not you agree with these tax changes, the recent process shines a light on the valuable role played by Community Independents in the Parliament.

First – they are not bound by restrictive party lines or hung up on “opposing” for opposing’s sake. So they can assess legislation on its merits and argue for improvements.

The legislation passed the House of Representatives in early June after a debate that highlighted the different approaches taken by independent MPs. While the major parties largely voted along party lines, independents examined the legislation in detail and proposed a range of amendments aimed at improving the package. Monique Ryan argued that the eligibility thresholds for small business capital gains tax concessions should be increased to better reflect modern business conditions, while Allegra Spender, Zali Steggall and Sophie Scamps raised concerns that the proposed capital gains tax changes extended too broadly beyond housing into areas such as startups, small businesses, shares and other productive investments. Several independents also argued that legislation of this scale deserved greater scrutiny and consultation before being finalised.

But hang on – don't independents always vote the same way? Nup. That's a myth.

The independent crossbench did not vote as a bloc. Monique Ryan, Helen Haines and Andrew Wilkie ultimately supported the legislation, while Nicolette Boele, Kate Chaney, Andrew Gee, Dai Le, Sophie Scamps, Allegra Spender and Zali Steggall voted against the final package after their proposed changes were unsuccessful.

But it didn't end there. The Government later announced a series of concessions, including increasing the small business turnover threshold from \$2 million to \$10 million, exempting innovative startups from aspects of the new CGT regime, and carving out testamentary trusts from the proposed minimum tax rate. These changes closely reflect concerns raised by independent MPs during the House debate and illustrate the role independents can play in scrutinising legislation, advocating for their communities and helping shape policy outcomes, even when their amendments are not immediately adopted.

Wow! Big things afoot on the Community Independents front!

You've probably heard that Community Independents Zali Steggall and Allegra Spender have just announced that they will form a new centrist political party - Community Strong Australia. It will be an alliance rather than a traditional party and it aims to offer a viable option for those who have been left "politically homeless" by the Liberal Party's drift to the right and its abandonment of a serious climate policy. It may also attract those who are unhappy at the ALP's approval of new fossil fuel projects, or those who feel that the duopoly system doesn't serve us well.

Independents who join this alliance will continue to vote in alignment with their community, the evidence, and their conscience, unlike members of the major parties, who are often hamstrung by the demands of party unity and opposing for opposing's sake.

We noted above that community independents are not clones. They have all consulted with the community that elected them, and many have opted not to join the alliance.

Watch this space. There is sure to be plenty more to say in future newsletters.

Have your say

We'd like to know what you love about living in the Berowra electorate; what matters to you; and which issues you think don't receive the attention they deserve.

Have your say using our brand-new community [survey](#).

And why not join in our new **Weekend Weigh-In** convo each Friday on Facebook? It's a chance to hear different opinions on issues of the week and to have your say.



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Voices Of Berowra - Australia
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