

MEDIA RELEASE

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AUSTRALIAN DEMOCRATS ARE BACK

The Australian Democrats party has been registered by the Australian Electoral Commission this week, just in time to contest the upcoming federal election.

The party has not had Parliamentary representation since 2008 and officially lost its registration status in 2015 due to declining numbers. However, increasing frustration with the direction of politics prompted remaining Democrats as well as new members to pull together and rebuild.

Party President Elisa Resce remembers that when she first joined, at her very first meeting there was a motion to wind up the Party. "Everyone considered this for a while, but then said the same thing - they can't see any other group representing what the Australian Democrats stood for, that voice is missing, that voice is needed.

"That sentiment has only grown stronger in recent years when we've seen such incredible disillusionment with the major parties due to internal fighting, leadership challenges, obstructionist and dishonest game-playing, and more generally, a growing us vs. them culture in political conversation which is causing real damage," says Ms Resce.

"That's what has driven us, more and more - watching all this and thinking, look at what's missing, we have to do something."

Ms Resce says the Party is run entirely by volunteers - the new leadership team is made up of teachers, lawyers, farmers, and accountants, from both 'left' and 'right' of the political spectrum - but more and more people are jumping on board, because they want to see change. While Ms Resce is based in South Australia, the leadership team is made up of members from QLD, NSW and VIC, who work together using phone link-ups. Members in WA have recently connected and are forming an active branch, and the leadership team hopes to support members in NT, ACT and TAS to do the same.

"We come from different backgrounds and in some cases have different views," says Ms Resce, "but what unites us is the common goal - we want to see respect, integrity, and ethics in Parliament. We want to see Parliamentarians looking at the evidence and finding the best solutions possible. We want Parliament to model that different perspectives can and must be talked through to be able to get to an outcome - we have to work together."

The Party has undergone a complete restructure, including broadening its focus to purposefully bridge the urban / rural divide both in culture and in practice by merging with rural focus party CountryMinded in November 2018.

Learning lessons from the Democrats' past, the overhaul has been driven by a commitment to the best possible internal governance and procedures to ensure it genuinely offers a better political alternative for the Australian people. "We have to walk the talk," says Ms Resce.

Pete Mailler, Deputy President and former head of CountryMinded, echoed Ms Resce's comments. "The Australian Democrats is a values-based party grounded in policy pragmatism and fairness. Our commitment is to provide a stable and credible political alternative that is committed to pursuing the truth in the political discourse."

"Whether we live in the bush or the heart of a capital city, we are all Australians and we all need better political service. To this end and to this end alone, the Australian Democrats are back and better than before."

The Democrats have already undertaken a rigorous candidate recruitment process through a commercial HR firm and expect to announce a campaign team shortly. They have foreshadowed a strong campaign on energy, climate and political accountability.

See Media Pack for contact details