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The Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party

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The Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party (AMEP) is a Senate-only independent party. The AMEP formed as a Federal party on 11 May 2013 in Queensland and is currently in the process of establishing Federal State Councils in every state.

At the 2013 Federal election, Ricky Muir of the AMEP was elected as Senator for Victoria. Ricky Muir will form part of a group of independent Senators who will hold the balance of power in the Upper House from mid-2014.

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Platform

The AMEP seeks to preserve ‘Australian family values’ and the ‘Motoring Enthusiast lifestyle’ whilst encouraging a sense of community and personal responsibility. The party’s platform states that members take pride in our vehicles, pride in our Nation, and promote the notion of a “fair go for all”.

The party’s core values form the underpinning of its policy, actions and objectives.

A full list of the party’s core values is available [here](#).

2013 Federal election

The AMEP was part of a loose coalition of micro parties, coordinated by Glen Drury, who swapped preferences at the 2013 Federal election in order to maximise the chances that one of those micro parties would be elected.

Ricky Muir represented AMEP in Victoria at the 2013 Federal election and won on a record-low primary vote of 0.51 per cent, or 17 122 first preferences. Despite coming 13th out of 34 groups, Muir achieved the 14.3 per cent quota from 23 group ticket party preferences from other micro parties. Nine of these parties polled more votes than the Australian Motoring Enthusiast Party.

The other party which formed part of this grouping was the Australian Sports Party, who won a Senate seat in Western Australia after the AEC Recount of the Western Australian Senate Results. While they are currently elected, this is subject to a matter in front of the Court of Disputed Returns.

A list of the parties whose preferences flowed to the AMEP in the Victorian Senate count is available [here](#).

The AMEP itself preferenced 'radical extremist parties last', The Australian Greens second last and via multiple group voting tickets, split its votes equally between the ALP and the Liberal Party at third last. As such, the AMEP preferenced up to 50 other small parties ahead of the major parties across the states.

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on the 2013 Senate election results is available [here](#).

Since the 2013 election, there has been public discussion about whether the voting system for the Senate may require change to make it more difficult for micro parties to be elected. The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters is likely to examine this issue in the 44th Parliament. Additionally, Senator Nick Xenophon has proposed the *Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Above the Line Voting) Bill 2013*, which has been referred to Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters for inquiry.

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on current Parliamentary Inquiries is available [here](#).

Key personnel

Ricky Muir

Ricky Muir was elected Senator for Victoria at the 2013 Federal election. Muir describes himself as an "ordinary, everyday Australian". He has lived in the Gippsland region his entire life and previously worked as a sawmill manager. About four months before the 2013 election, he discovered the AMEP on social networking sites and was subsequently preselected for the AMEP's Victorian Senate ticket.

Alliance with the Palmer United Party

On 6 October 2013 the AMEP signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Palmer United Party. The Memorandum states that each of the parties "intends to work together and where it is practicable vote together in the Senate", but also that neither party is "required to vote for legislation that is against his or her party's policies and principles, or against their conscience".

The Memorandum of Understanding is available [here](#).

As a consequence of the deal, Mr Palmer will oversee a voting bloc of at least three senators. Prime Minister the Hon Tony Abbott MP will therefore need to negotiate with the Palmer United Party in order to pass legislation from July 2014 when the new Senate sits.

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on the Palmer United Party is available [here](#).

Senate Commitments

The AMEP has outlined that its primary role in the Senate will be the review of proposed legislation by other parties, rather than the pursuit of its own legislative agenda. As such, the AMEP has not announced a position on many areas of public policy, and has instead provided a list of 'Senate Commitments' that it will use to make decisions on proposed legislation that passes from the House of Representatives to the Senate.

The AMEP will review any proposed legislation through a set of criteria to test it against the party's own core values and position on various issues. The guidelines are as follows:

1. The AMEP will seek to support 'balanced legislation' and will test that legislation against its [core values](#). The AMEP will actively work to moderate any 'extreme legislation' through negotiation and by the introduction of amendments. If these mechanisms do not ameliorate the proposed legislation, the AMEP will vote against that legislation.
2. The AMEP will seek promote unity and respect within Australian politics and the community at large. As such, the AMEP will not support legislation or public debate that is divisive or disrespectful. The AMEP will seek to be mindful of its diverse constituency in all its activity.
3. The AMEP will reject any proposed legislation that places the 'Australian Family Lifestyle' at risk, defined by the party as the 'average Australian family's right to modify and restore vehicles based upon their own freedom of expression' and the 'average Australian family's right to participate in activities on public land'. However, the AMEP does expect restorations to be safe and only supports 'safe, responsible and sustainable' activities such as Four Wheel Driving, Camping, Fishing and other recreational pursuits.
4. The AMEP believes in personal responsibility. It supports community education, believing the focus of enforcement activities should be on the minority who willingly choose to break the law rather than the law-abiding majority.
5. The AMEP further outlines they will not support proposed legislation that:
 - further marginalizes, disadvantages, isolates, or erodes the rights or way of life of the Motoring Enthusiast community or other groups;
 - is an 'extremist policy';
 - hurts the Australian way of life or penalises the law abiding for the sake of the irresponsible minority, thus making life harder for average Australian families or takes away the right to a "fair go";
 - damages the country financially or creates unnecessary sovereign risk;
 - is policy that should be taken to an election or referendum;
 - goes against advice from industry or experts in the field; or
 - is policy that the Party and Australian community strongly object to.

The AMEP has stated that it values its independence and has committed to keeping an open mind on proposed legislation that enters the Senate for review. The AMEP will not agree to resolutions or motions in the Senate that it believes will reduce the effectiveness of the role of the Senate in Australia's political system.

Key policies

The AMEP will also have the ability to introduce a Private Senator's Bill and has developed a set of policies, for the most part specific to the issues of Motoring Enthusiasts, to guide any legislative formation.

General policies

Minimal Government Interference

The AMEP believes individuals and businesses should assume personal responsibility of their lives without the need for government interference or regulation.

Environment

The AMEP's environment policy aims to balance both the survival of mankind and the unimpeded recreational use of the environment.

Education

The AMEP believes that an educated population is paramount to Australia's growth and prosperity and that every citizen has the right to receive an education of the highest standard through trade qualifications, up-skilling, early learning, primary, secondary or tertiary education. The AMEP also believes additional focus should be placed upon assisting those who are disadvantaged to fulfill their own individual potential.

Policies specific to motorists

Road Safety

The AMEP supports the enhanced education of drivers in all aspects of road safety, including personal responsibility, driving skills and habits, vehicle maintenance, the Fatal Five killers on Australian roads, and the right of every Australian to 'survive the drive'.

Driver Education

The AMEP supports education of younger drivers to improve their driving skills, and improve their respect for vehicles, and for the privilege of driving. More specifically, the AMEP supports the establishment of a 'best practice' method of driver education, and the introduction of specific driver education courses for repeat offenders to ensure they are safe and responsible on our roads.

Vehicle Maintenance

The AMEP will advocate for an increased focus on the safety and maintenance of vehicles. The AMEP supports further driver education about the importance of vehicle maintenance and the relationship between poor vehicle maintenance and road accidents.

Better Roads

The AMEP is committed to improving the condition of national roads and highways and will commit to ensuring that fuel, registration and vehicle-associated taxes collected as a road-maintenance component are actually distributed to road funding with the focus on improving the standard of our national road system.

Modification and Road Rule Harmony

We support harmonisation of road rules and vehicle modification policies. We believe that the legality of a motor vehicle and the road-rules adhered to whilst driving that vehicle should not vary from State to State. This represents a commitment on the part of the AMEP to national government and Federal legislative power over infrastructure and transport.

Off-Road Vehicle Policy

The AMEP community consists of individuals and families that wish to use their motor vehicles in an off-road capacity on existing trails. Off-road includes, but is not limited to Four Wheel Drives, All Wheel Drives, Off-Road Quads and Trail Bikes. The AMEP passionately believes that this is a legitimate form of recreation, requiring safe, responsible, sustainable and equitable access to public land, although recognises that this access also needs to be balanced with the rights of other land users.

Further information

The AMEP website is available [here](#).

The Hawker Britton Occasional paper on the 2013 Senate election results is available [here](#).

A list of first preferences for Senate group tickets in the 2013 Federal election is available [here](#).

The Memorandum of Understanding between AMEP and the Palmer United Party is available [here](#).

The Hawker Britton Occasional Paper on the Palmer United Party is available [here](#).