

Gong spurs 'political shift'

By VERONICA APAP

WOLLONGONG could be the catalyst for political change across the country, according to anti-corruption activist and former South Coast MP John Hatton.

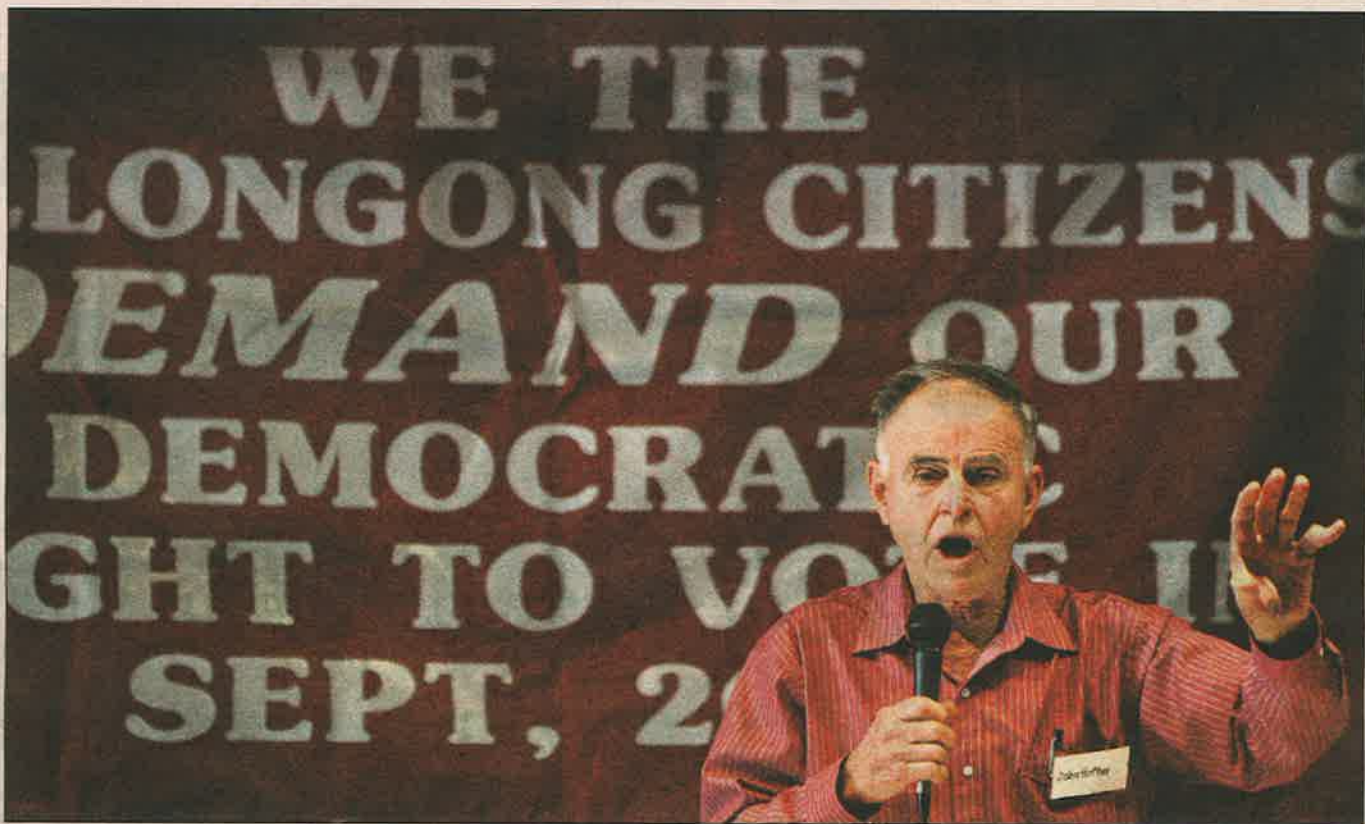
"What's happening is very exciting," he said. "There is huge disaffection right across Australia and it's centred on NSW because the State Government is seen to be corrupt."

"They've got no relationship whatsoever to founding principles of the Labor Party."

"Corruption has been exposed and seen to be centred in local government in Wollongong. Wollongong is the catalyst for a state-wide political shift."

Mr Hatton was among the speakers at Wollongong Against Corruption's Making Community Democracy Work conference on Saturday. Former union leader and social activist Jack Munday, and former ICAC commissioner and planner John Mant also spoke.

Mr Hatton said disaffected voters wanted an alternative to the major parties to be a



Catalyst: Former MP and anti-corruption campaigner John Hatton told Wollongong Against Corruption's Making Community Democracy Work conference that he is excited about political change in the Illawarra.

Picture: WAYNE VENABLES

third force in politics. "Voters are saying 'Hey, the system is not serving our community'," he said. "Planning decisions are being made and

we're being totally sidelined." The electorate wanted a greater role in decision making, Mr Hatton said. "Huge grassroots

movements are coming through and the ALP (and Liberal Party) don't see that this political shift is going to be quite dramatic. "Unless we dramati-

cally change the preselection process, the way members interact within the community to become true community voices, unless Parliament stops

being a badly-behaved boys' club, the grassroots movements coming through - particularly in Wollongong - are going to eventually form a third voice."

Healthy tick for doctors

AUSTRALIANS trust their family doctor, approve of the Medicare system and overwhelmingly favour healthcare funded by the public purse, a survey shows.

A new study of Australian attitudes towards the health system has ranked GPs as the most trusted, followed by specialist doctors, with naturopaths and other alternative health care workers trailing far behind.

Australians trusted private hospitals more but generally favoured a public approach to healthcare.

"The sample had greater trust in private compared with public hospitals, but greater trust in public (Medicare) than private (health insurers) systems," said the lead author Elizabeth Hardie from Swinburne University in Melbourne.

"This may reflect Australians' historical support for a public health care system, combined with an awareness of the long waiting lists and strained resources currently experienced by Australia's public hospitals."

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