

Enter Mike Hast

247. I met Mike Hast at The Briars Community Forest dog park in late 2022. He said he was a retired journalist who now worked as a book editor to assist authors to self-publish books. He also said he would be happy to do some pro bono writing and editing for progressive causes.
248. More than two years later, a Northcote friend had written a book about her dog, Larry. She asked if I knew anyone who could help her produce the book. I introduced her to Hast.
249. I completed my report: *Community Independent Movement in Flinders: lessons from the 2025 federal election* in mid-May. I recalled Hast's offer to edit "for progressive causes".
250. I asked Hast if he would edit my report. In my career as a writer, he was by far the best editor with whom I have worked.
251. After the report was finished, I contacted Heijden (I4F), Holmes à Court and Byron Fay (Climate 200) – to offer to meet with them to share my analysis of the Flinders election campaign, which had been compiled from feedback from members of both I4F and Progressives of the Peninsula.
252. I also contacted several people in the community independent movement *in confidence*, including Kim Wingerei¹ at Michael West Media, who I knew had an interest in community independents. After reading my report, Wingerei replied:
- Thanks Sarah,
Very comprehensive, giving me a great picture of what transpired. The important questions, as I see it, are:
- What amount of funding did Ben Smith receive from C200?
- Why did C200 and Simon get so heavily involved at every stage? How did this involvement demonstrably differ from his involvement in other electorates with a good chance of a win?
- It is obvious – but impossible to assert – that Ben Smith was not the right type of candidate and that a better candidate would've had a better chance of winning ... but the lack of transparency on many fronts [is] deeply concerning.*
253. Hast contacted me in June. He said he would like to write a "commentary piece" about the election in Flinders. He told me he wanted to start a conversation about the direction of the community independent movement.
254. Although he was not writing for the media on a regular basis, Hast told me he had closely followed election campaigns in Flinders for over 50 years. He told me that there was clearly an appetite for a community independent in Flinders.

¹ Wingerei is the author of "*Why democracy is broken: A blue print for change*".

He thought Smith's campaign misread the electorate (older, conservative etc). Flinders is not Kooyong.

255. Being a long-time peninsula resident who grew up in Mornington, Hast has been following Flinders since starting a career in journalism in 1971, albeit with far more interest since returning from Melbourne to live on the peninsula in 1996 and returning to local newspaper journalism in 1999.
256. Hast's CV is impressive:
- Former editor *Mornington and Southern Peninsula Mail* (2006–10), *Peninsula Weekly* (2010) and *Mornington News* (2010–15).
 - Former journalist on the Mornington Peninsula with Standard Newspapers (1970s), Independent News Group (1999–2006), Fairfax Community News (2006–2010), and Mornington Peninsula News Group (2010–15, 2017).
 - Former journalist and sub-editor in Melbourne in the 1970s, '80s and '90s with *Sunday Observer*, *Sunday Press*, *The Herald*, *The Sun*, *Sunday Herald Sun*.
 - Former associate publisher general books division Macmillan Australia (1983–88).
 - Broadcaster and producer RPP FM (Radio Port Phillip) 2006–2014, 2025–
257. I considered Hast a much better option than the journalists at *The Age* and *The Guardian* who had spoken with me about the election result in Flinders.
258. I suggested opinion editors at The Age, The Guardian and Michael West Media may interested in Hast's reflections. Patrick O'Neil (The Age), Svetlana Stankovic (The Guardian) and Michael West regularly published my work. After some discussion, I introduced Hast to Wingerei at Michael West Media.
259. Both Wingerie and I attended the Community Independent Project debrief on 25 June 2025. At this online meeting, a member of the Independent 4 Flinders organising team claimed: "We won on the night – it was the postal votes that sank us." This statement was quite bizarre and untrue.
260. Wingerei told me he had been to a Climate 200 debrief. He asked how much Climate 200 donated. The reply was a brusque: "*Wait for the AEC.*"
261. On 8 July 2025, I shared my emails to Climate 200 with Heijden.

Hi Gerard, I hope you are well.

With my commitment to transparency, I am sharing my emails with Simon and Byron.

Although I disengaged from Ben's campaign, I was inundated with emails, texts, screenshots from social media/WhatsApp, personal messages before and during Ben's campaign. After the disappointing loss, I thematically analysed this data. I did this because I want the community movement in Flinders to learn from our mistakes.

Many so-called "community leaders" have read my 60-page report and agree with my analysis.

262. Disappointingly, Heijden showed no interest in reading the report.