

Ex-ALP mayor backs Cook poll bid

By Cam Lucadou-Wells

Former ALP member and Greater Dandenong mayor Peter Brown is getting behind independent Ian Cook's push for State Parliament.

Mr Cook, the owner of I Cook Foods, is running against Premier Daniel Andrews in Mulgrave District in the upcoming state election.

Spurred by his destroyed business in what's been labelled 'slug gate', Mr Cook's stated aim is primarily to hold Mr Andrews to "account" by ousting him from his seat.

Mr Brown says he's offered to support Mr Cook's self-described "anti-corruption" campaign.

Despite the seat being held by a safe 8 per cent margin, Mr Brown notes that former

Prime Minister John Howard also lost his blue-ribbon seat in 2007.

"(Mr Cook) has got the job in front of him but I don't say he can't win.

"I think he'd be a very good Member of State Parliament. The guy is absolutely honest as far as I can make out from my long discussions with him.

"What hurts him greatly is that 40 of his (I Cook Foods) staff lost their jobs, and he hired a number of people with disabilities to help them.

"I think he's been done wrong. Election campaigns are often to right a wrong and fight for change.

"As many independent people have stated, change is needed."

Mr Brown didn't renew his Labor Party

membership due to the 'red shirts' scandal.

After a State Ombudsman's inquiry, the ALP paid back \$388,000 in taxpayer funds misused on electorate office staff hired to help its 2014 state election campaign.

Mr Brown had also been aware of ALP branch-stacking – the subject of a joint IBAC and Ombudsman's probe.

When asked about Mr Cook's election tilt, Mr Andrews recently said "the people of Mulgrave will make their own judgements".

"I'm not here to make commentary about other candidates, I'd much rather talk about our positive plan, and there's a lot happening in the Mulgrave electorate and I'm very proud of that.

"But we've got a lot more that we have to do."

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