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Council shake-up

By Damien Madigan

Blue Mountains voters will go to the polls this Saturday to elect a new council in what is tipped to be one of the most unpredictable races in recent years.

With four councillors not seeking re-election — including the long-standing Labor mayor Jim Angel — the complexion of the council is guaranteed to change even if there isn't a major realignment of its political make-up.

But with a slew of independent candidates mak-

ing a concerted attack against the major parties, the new council could see a break from the past four years of a loose Labor/Liberal alliance.

Dampening the hopes of these two big players, the Greens have slighted them in favour of preferring independent candidates across the Mountains.

"We believe this is the best way to ensure a fair and sustainable council," said Blue Mountains Greens convenor Eleanor Gibbs.

Ward 1 is arguably the most fiercely contested in the Mountains with the voters from Leura to Mt

Victoria and out to Mt Wilson having a choice of eight main candidates on Saturday. The Ward 1 outcome is also one of the hardest to predict with most candidates waiving preferences and two of its sitting councillors — Labor's Jim Angel and the Greens' Kerrin O'Grady — not standing again.

High profile Ward 1 independent candidate Janet Mays is encouraging her voters to give their number two preferences to the Greens while they in turn are formally preferring Ms Mays.

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Greg has final word

In Brisbane's northern suburbs, Club Pine Rivers echoed with rhythm recently as rhymesters took to the stage for the Australian Championship of Bush Poetry.

Flexing his poetic prowess was Linden's Greg North, who after finishing runner-up in 2007, pulled out all the stops this year to be crowned Australian male champion.

Outclassing a field of 37 poets, he won first place in three sections to take home the winner's trophy.

It's another feather in the cap for a man who has won numerous awards around the country since his initial foray into performance poetry just five years ago.

Since then he has been named overall winner at the Man From Snowy River Festival three times, and his rendition of Banjo's famous poem — performed in 14 different accents with a hat for each one — has become a crowd favourite wherever he goes.

Greg was introduced to the traditions of bush poetry as a student at Katoomba Primary School and those seeds took nearly 30 years to bear fruit. It was the experience of watching poets Denis Kevans, Milton Taylor and Terry Regan recite at Katoomba's monthly Parakeet Poets gatherings that spurred him on to take the plunge. Greg now travels widely reciting his own poetry as well as the classics.

With all his hard work paying off, Greg will compete in the State finals of the poetry slam at the State Library in November and is always on the look out for more opportunities to spread a great tradition of rhyming verse.



Rhyme and reason: Linden resident and champion bush poet Greg North.

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