

# “In Support of Progress” Newsletter

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### **The Sixth Senate seat**

Well, it's official. Jacqui Lambie, from the Palmer United Party, has won the 6<sup>th</sup> Senate seat in Tasmania. Senator-elect Lambie will take up her position in July next year, and will hold that position for 6 years. If during that time she chooses to stand down, it will be incumbent on the State Parliament to replace her with a nominee from that party.

In other words, The PUP is here to stay. Much to the Greens' chagrin, the PUP is the new party on the block. Suddenly, the mantra chanted by Christine Milne regarding the “old parties” suddenly sounds somewhat hollow, as the Greens will now be regarded in the same light.

### **The rise of the PUP**

A number of readers have challenged me about my prediction (see#1326 and 1327) that the PUP could hold the balance of power in the next State election, due in March 2014, citing the relatively low vote gained by the PUP (the highest Senate vote for the PUP was 10% in Braddon and 8% in Lyons) and the requirement that the quota to gain a seat is upwards of 16%.

However, I believe there is a trend and I stand by that prediction.

Palmer received that vote, coming from nowhere in that campaign. He has now won a House of Reps seat and two senate seats. That legitimizes his position and gives him a platform from which to run a strong campaign in Tasmania. With the balance of power in his sights there is no doubt he will run a strong campaign. Note that in order to get the balance of power, and noting the polls do not favour the government, he will need to ensure the Liberals do not get a majority. Thus his target will be directed against the Liberals, and not so much the government.

### **The new Federal Government**

We still await some clarity from the new government regarding their policy position on a number of areas.

### **NBN**

The rollout of the NBN could well be affected by the decision of the government to seek the resignation of the NBN Board and to conduct a review of operations.

### **Carbon tax**

The government is obviously moving ahead with plans to repeal the present arrangements and to move to its “direct action” policy, a policy which will require some meat on the bones. And what will be the nature of any compensation to Tasmania for its decision to remove some \$60m a year from the Hydro's bottom line?

**The Boats**

What is disturbing is the decision by the government to control the flow of information regarding boat arrivals and the treatment of those who are on them. The argument that this is a military operation does not stand scrutiny. The public do have a right to know – they will find out anyway – so the move to curtail will only leave the impression that the government is generally being secretive, and be to their detriment.

**Secondary boycotts**

I welcome the announcement by Senator Colbeck and others that the government will move to ensure all players in the market place are subject to the same rules. For too long, conservation groups have had free rein in damaging market opportunities for Tasmanian products within Australia and offshore by denigrating individual companies.

Secondary boycott restrictions apply to everyone else, such as business competitors, unions fighting for workers rights and every day operators trying to employ people and create economic wealth.

The Greens have attacked this decision as an attack on free speech. What a load of cobblers! If groups like Markets for Change are to continue with their antics, they will need to play by the rules that others have to abide by and be truthful in their commentary. Is that such a bad thing? This may be a novelty for them, but it is long overdue.

**World Heritage**

The government has announced it intends to move ahead with its plans to withdraw areas of ground that have recently been declared areas of world heritage. The declaration was made on the basis that it was a minor adjustment to the existing boundary and had no effect on existing values. If that is the case, then the opposite must also hold true.

Whatever the case, it will not affect the status of the land, which is the subject of state legislation, passed by both houses of parliament. The parliament has determined that any change in status will be the result of further durability reports. Durability of supply, and durability of peace. And so it should now be!

I was a critic of the process, and remain so. Acts of appeasement are not the basis of a sound and lasting solution. However, unilateral action to revoke the reserve status for no other purpose than that it should be so revoked is simply a provocative act, and one that could precipitate protest action for no real gain.

**The new Federal Opposition**

While the government is busily going about the business of remoulding the country, Labor continues to tear itself apart with a continuing public debate about its leadership. Shorten and Albanese are seeking rank and file support for their candidacy to be leader, and in the process emphasising the difference between them. This may seem to be a sound and democratic process, but all it is doing is harming the eventual leadership.

A likely result will be that one gains rank and file support, while the other gains parliamentary support (each constituency having a 50% weighting). What a muddle that will be. And what an extraordinary gift for the government!

### ***The new “old party”.***

The Greens are in a state of self-delusion and are rapidly moving into the political wilderness. It is interesting to hear at both a State and a Federal level the protestations that they have been a good force for government, and that in the social economy they have been the instigators of reform. Notwithstanding the cherry-picking nature of such an argument (all the good things were a result of us, all the bad things were the actions of the other mob), they will not recognize that they have done immense damage to investor confidence throughout the country and that their demands to decouple resource utilisation from economic wellbeing has been roundly rejected by the electorate.

### ***The Tarkine***

Following on from that is the news today that the appeal by the Tarkine National Coalition (what a misnomer) against the Venture Minerals mine proposal to be developed in north west Tasmania has been rejected by the Resources Management and planning Appeals Tribunal. The group has now announced they will appeal once again to a federal court against former Environment Minister Butler's decision to allow the mine to proceed. As a spokesperson for the group said today – we will do everything we can to stop this mine.

This is something for the new government to look at is how to ensure decisions made can be implemented without this endless round of appeals. It should be a priority for the State government to have those discussions with their federal counterparts.

### ***Education***

#### ***Literacy and numeracy***

A recent report has exposed the fact that literacy and numeracy is at an appallingly low figure in Tasmania. The report suggests that the state has the lowest level of Year 12 achievement of all the states and territories and the highest rate of students who leave school in Year 10. One in two Tasmanians aged 15 to 74 are functionally illiterate, and more than half are functionally innumerate.

It is an indictment on the Minister and of his advisors that after so much has been poured into school improvements, reduced class sizes, special needs and the like that we can end up with such an appalling result. Education bureaucrats must accept some accountability for this, and it suggests a major overhaul is due.

#### ***Bullying***

It is every parent's nightmare, that harm can come to their child. Recent media has covered the story of a girl driven to suicide through bullying, and it is obvious that cyber-bullying has become endemic. All the more reason then that there be a change of policy within our education system. I have recently read of the “Leader in Me” program that was implemented in a US elementary school with outstanding results. For those interested, it is worth a Google.

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