

ISSUE 1714

“In Support of Progress”

Newsletter

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The State Budget – The Responses

Labor's response

In an effective response to the Budget, Labor has accepted the general thrust of the document, endeavouring to expose and highlight a slightly different list of priorities. Just as the government received a generally positive response to its budget, Labor has also received a positive response to its proposals. It has concentrated on health as being its primary target, and has already received significant support for doing so.

What makes it difficult for the Treasurer (who delivered a good budget overall) to criticise is the fact that much of the Labor document accepts his overall position, and therefore arguments about whether Labor can balance the books exposes the fact that he also manipulated the figures to suit (see #1713).

The Green's response

The Greens' leader has emphasised health and housing affordability as being priorities for her party going forward. Apart from the fact that an environmental protest party, renowned for putting people out of work, has thrown up a wish list - all care no responsibility – I was intrigued to note that the traditional environmental issues took a back seat this time.

It could be argued that the Greens want to gain credibility and votes by joining the mainstream – it is certainly taking on board the social issues that matter. It could equally be argued that they no longer know what they stand for. Their point of difference is becoming harder to find.

Health

By now, the budget is fading into the recesses of the mind as other issues begin to dominate. As predicted, Health will become a focus - in fact THE focus - over the coming months. All three parties have featured it as being the issue in the coming election.

Make no mistake, hospitals are suffering from a lack of resources (and I suspect a vacuum in sound and effective management), and the pressure is now on the Minister to steer the policy ship away from the shoals of cheap political banter, and come to grips with the real issues confronting the hospitals. It's only taken him three years so far, and still he seems to be out of his depth.

This Minister, having stated on budget day that he was the “happiest Health Minister in Australia”, and then happy to whack Labor over the ears for “being unable to interpret the health budget” then had to admit through a spokesperson that he also did not know how the money allocated was going to be spent.

The AMA was one of the first out of the blocks to praise the budget, but now finds itself needing to backtrack as new information comes to light. What is remarkable is the fact that the Minister is only now beginning to have discussions with hospital staff as to what needs to be done to resolve some chronic issues. I would have thought he would have been far better prepared than this.

Two positions

Both Labor and the Greens have stated that they would abolish the positions of Co-ordinator General and Infrastructure Tasmania if they had the chance. It really would be an act of kindness to do so.

These positions were created by the present government to reinvent a wheel, and have been embroiled in controversy ever since. I mean, what do they do? By its actions so far, the government would appear to concur, because in their defence, from the lips of the Minister for State Growth and the Minister for Infrastructure – the two Ministers responsible for these positions - has come - complete silence!

TAFE

It's obvious the organisation is in crisis. Numbers are down, the CEO has resigned under a cloud of suspicion, it is said that nepotism is rife, and the place is in turmoil. Industry has condemned it as being out of touch, being too focused on "numbers" and not focused enough on industry needs, and the tourism sector has even gone so far as to call for the establishment of a separate industry-specific institute that will cater for its own specific requirements. What has gone wrong?

TAFE is run by a Board. It is beyond obvious that the Board has been asleep at the wheel. One obvious thing that must happen straight away is that the chairman must resign or be sacked. There can be no excuses.

TAFE is, or rather should be, an integral part of post-secondary education. While TAFE is having problems, others in the training sector are collapsing altogether. Such problems also present opportunities, and now is the time to bring in the necessary reforms to re-establish the institution as a relevant place of learning.

The world is changing and TAFE must change with it. It must deliver to industry needs, and to changing industry needs, and therefore must have a close association with industry. The Minister needs to act immediately!

A Planning matter

The old Odeon theatre in Liverpool Street is in the spotlight. What to do with it?

Having already received a planning permit under the former planning scheme (since replaced by the Hobart interim planning scheme, which may now be superseded by the yet-to-be-approved statewide planning scheme), a developer has sought a 2-year extension to the permit in order that certain internal matters can be resolved, which will enable the theatre to be kept and not knocked down.

The Hobart City Council has a Planning Committee, which makes recommendations to full Council on planning matters. The Planning Committee has rejected the request for an extension. So, one option for the developer is to proceed to demolish the building, which he says he doesn't want to do.

A Planning Officer has now recommended the developer submit a new development application, together with:

- a conservation management plan
- a heritage report
- an architectural statement
- an urban design statement
- shadow diagrams, and
- a statement of archaeological potential

Seriously! With a Council acting like this, why would you bother?

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