

ISSUE 1724

“In Support of Progress”

Newsletter

Date: 25 September 2017

Cabinet

Cabinet

The decision by the Minister for State Growth, Matthew Groom, to resign immediately from Cabinet and to not contest the next election has significant ramifications for the government.

I want to be charitable to the Minister, and to his family, and believe his story, but this is really one out of the box. Why did it really have to be so immediate? The Minister and his family will understand full well what this means for the government, which is now in a bit of a pickle.

The Minister has been in Parliament for 8 years. He follows in his father's footsteps, who was a federal Minister and a State Premier. He knew when he entered Parliament what the pressures would be. He knew when he took on the job of Minister what the pressures would be. He was no neophyte.

There are many in Parliament that have to play the balance between private and public life. Imagine for example what pressures government personnel have been placing on the Opposition leader at this time. It has been hardball. It isn't easy. But nor is it easy elsewhere. When you aim high, you live with the consequences. You don't fold just because things aren't hunky dory.

If he really wants to spend time with the family, why right now? Why so immediately right now? Why not a year ago, or in 6 month's time. Why now?

To put it quite frankly this is a most selfish move. By his decision right now he is displaying no interest in those who voted for him, the fortune of his colleagues, the fortunes of the Government, nor for the welfare of the State.

Nor for any policy positions he has been involved in. The power debate nationally and locally is far from being resolved, the development of facilities in National Parks remains a bone of contention, the Mac Pt development is simply farcical, the position and actions of the Co-Ordinator General is outside of any serious review, and issues within Justice are at a crisis point.

There are no accolades for his actions while being a Minister. He did oversee a power crisis in this State, but it was not caused by him, and it was not fixed by him. He simply "sought advice".

His decision dooms his government to a period of turmoil not 6 months out from the next election. It places the Premier in a difficult position regarding his replacement, and puts away any campaign strategy the Premier might have had.

The government argument of "stable government" is now in ashes. This is now the fourth Minister that no longer sits around the Cabinet table. Brooks, Harris, Goodwin and now Groom. Four out of 10 does not suggest any sense of "stable government". Four out of 10 suggests significant "churn". And with two Ministers (Health, Community Services) struggling in their portfolios, the options for the Premier are extremely limited.

His immediate departure would suggest that those portfolio responsibilities will now be in limbo until after the next election. State Growth, including Energy, Environment, National Parks, Justice. Quite a list of non-action from this point on.

And the politics of labelling the Opposition Leader with L plates, always a risky strategy in that it gave her profile, is now shot down in flames. On two counts:

- The first is that she has obviously been able to stand the heat while the Minister has wilted
- And two, one can imagine the Opposition now walking into Parliament and displaying L plates every time a Minister gets up to speak. I recall a backbench member for Bass attempting to lampoon the Opposition leader as an L. Pity be it if she is now chosen to be (one of) the next Minister.

The government has now been placed in a most invidious position. With the economy strengthening, and with "some" real scores on the board, the last thing the government needed is an accusation of instability. Yet that is what it now has, in spades.

Meanwhile, the 'former " Minister says he will continue to serve on the back bench, warning a seat and being a time server, with no interest or commitment in being an MP or in the outcome of the coming election. Just collecting his pay cheque and serving time. Which only adds to the Premier's difficulties, as he needs every one of his team actively promoting its continuance.

He has thrown the strategy for his seat and for he election into disarray, with various folk such as mayors now scrambling around for support to fill his shoes.

So, I make this call to the Minister, which is this: that you do the honourable thing and resign from Parliament immediately. It would enable you to spend a lot more time with your family – immediately – which is what you say you need to do, and If you really care for the cause, this action would bring on a recount and enable a new and active member to be out there fighting for the seat. Because you won't be!

I am saddened to have to write in this way, but my interest is not with the person or his family – important that they are – but for the good of the state. A government in disarray does no-one any good.

While on this topic, it is obvious that the Attorney-General won't be returning to Cabinet any time soon. I don't believe she should continue to hold a Cabinet position, or be paid to hold it. As much as we all sympathise with her situation, government demands active Ministers, and it is in the interests of the state that the Cabinet is a fully functional one.

There is concern in the wider community that this distraction could derail the government. An unstable government helps no-one, and voices are calling out for the matter to be resolved asap. If the government is to have any chance at the next election, Cabinet instability needs to be resolved, and quickly.

The Premier has two matters to resolve, both of which require him to take action against personal friends. Politics is never easy, but good governance demands these actions be taken. After all, that is leadership, and that is his job.

This newsletter is supported by **Tasman Management Services**.
Further information is provided at www.julianamos.com.au.