

ISSUE 1732

“In Support of Progress”

# Newsletter

Date: 20 December 2017

**Government's fortunes –  
cont**

**Macquarie Point**

**End-of-year**

## ***The fortunes of a Health Minister***

The Minister for Health says he is being truthful when he says he was not briefed on “a Report” until last Monday (11 Dec). He probably is being truthful, in his own way. Why doubt him? Well, simply because he has allowed this matter to develop into a political crisis due to his obfuscation and lack of clarity.

This saga commenced in June 2017, when the government established a “New Beds Implementation Team”, or NBIT, to provide additional beds in hospitals. The Premier stated at the time that the membership of the NBIT was yet to be finalized, and that “regular public communiques will be released as the NBIT delivers its important work”.

For starters, I have been unable to source any “regular public communiques”. In fact on 22 November the Minister said a report he had received from the NBIT was cabinet-in-confidence, and therefore not for public release.

So, what has been going on behind the scenes?

On appointment, the NBIT did a number of things, one of which was to commission Deloitte to review the leadership and direction within the Tasmanian Health Service (THS).

The (THS) Tasmanian Health Service provides health services – which includes hospital services - and acts as a contractor to its client, the Department of Health Services. It has a board, named the Governing Council, and an Executive Team, led by a CEO. This client contractor-relationship was brought in with great fanfare by the government soon after it was elected.

Deloitte then conducted a survey of people within the Health Services area. The obvious question to ask here is why did the NBIT consider it necessary to review the leadership of the THS, and engage Deloitte to do so? This fundamental question remains unanswered.

One presumes Deloitte would, at the conclusion of its activity, present a report of its findings to its client, the NBIT. In fact, I have not come across an instance where a consultant does not provide a report to its client, whatever the format. One also presumes that Deloitte has now done that, given the words of the Minister.

On 22 November the Minister said that “the Report is cabinet-in-confidence and cabinet-in-confidence documents are not released. Yet on the 29 November he said “There is no report from Deloitte because the NBIT’s work hasn’t finished, it is ongoing”.

On the 12 December (a Tuesday) he again said, this time to a parliamentary committee that there was no report, and yet he has said he was briefed on the report on the 11 December, a Monday.

So here are two examples where the stars do not seem to be in alignment.

The Minister has said "there is no report by Deloitte sitting on my desk" or "in my office". He was probably right, as Deloitte was not commissioned by him. However, it was presumably in the hands of the NBIT. And it would be surprising, to say the least, if he had not been made aware in some manner by the NBIT of Deloitte's findings. In fact, it would be surprising if the NBIT had not kept the Minister informed as to its progress over the last few months.

He says he received a briefing by NBIT, but not until some time after a Cabinet Subcommittee had received "a report". Since then, it seems that the Minister was provided with a verbal briefing by Deloitte on the Monday, and one can only presume in the company of the NBIT, its client.

Is a verbal briefing a report? This is simply semantics, and playing these word games is what has got the Minister into his present pickle.

So now we have progress reports by the NBIT, a Deloitte survey, a verbal "report" by Deloitte, presumably a Deloitte report to the NBIT, which may or may not be completed, and a report still to be written by the NBIT. The government has also asked the NBIT to release an update "report", which it did last Sunday.

The government has, as a result of the Deloitte "survey", decided to sack the THS Governing Council and CEO, and have the THS now report directly to the Department. But not until after the next election! This will only create an extraordinary hiatus in the meantime. In response the chairman of the THS has advised that nothing has changed and that everything is to remain as it was. Dream on.

What it really means is that the much-vaunted-at-the-time client-contractor relationship is now at an end. Who will now be responsible for hospital management? What will be the lines of reporting? And what is the future role for the THS? More question that require answers.

Why did it take the NBIT to initiate this action? What was so compelling that the government felt it had to act immediately? And why did the government act to disband the existing THS structure without an alternative ready to roll?

It all seems like policy on the run. What a muddle! What a mess!

### **Macquarie Point**

I have kept away from this topic simply because nothing has been happening. Which is why I am keeping away from it now. But only for now.

### **Christmas**

The festive season is upon us. A time to be with friends and family. It is a happy time for many – but for some of us, maybe not so joyous a time. Let us endeavor to bring as much cheer as we can to those around us this time of year. May this time be a safe and rewarding one for you. Be fire-ready. Fire is an ever-present danger

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