

ISSUE 1805

“In Support of Progress”

# Newsletter

Date: 7 February 2017

## The State Election

### Promises, promises

## Third Party Players

## Football

### **The State Election**

The election is now in full swing, and announcements are coming thick and fast. I suspect as things progress, the two major parties will begin to coalesce on issues, such as road-works, while maintaining a difference on their more “principled” positions.

The recent announcement by Labor of its health policy is a winner, as is the announcement by the Liberals to exit the NEM (and in doing so lower power prices) also a winner. Both come with caveats: for Labor, the government has said where is the money coming from, whereas for the Liberals, Labor is saying the plan lacks detail.

### **Health and Education**

Labor is promoting its credentials and its concerns in health and education, promising more money (some \$560m over 6 years) and more people (some 500 health professionals) for health and more money also for education (some \$63m) and 300 extra teachers. And there is the rub. Money is in fact the lesser issue - finding the people to fill those positions is the greater issue.

Labor would also appear to be backing away from a full high school to year 12 policy, in favour of existing secondary colleges, and it remains unclear what direction will be taken here. Certainly the results of the government's existing program to extend high school to year 12 has been difficult. However, the nexus between Year 10 and leaving school altogether has to be broken, and Labor needs to show much more commitment to this task.

### **Energy**

the promise to exit from the National Energy Market (NEM) by 2021 is an interesting proposition. The government says it is doing so because it is committed to lowering power prices, and as such will move to exit the NEM, while still retaining a trading function over BassLink. However it is not that simple. For example, windfarmers will be concerned as to a dispatch price (presently they dispatch at a \$0 bid price, relying on the bid stack for market pricing), and others are even suggesting that the monopoly of the Hydro be broken.

Quite frankly our entry into the NEM was to encourage competition, but it has essentially remained illusory, and a move back from complex financial arrangements to a simpler contractual arrangement is to be encouraged. As such the move is supported strongly.

The pressure of course will then be on the Hydro to deliver cheaper power, and the argument for breaking it up (which is a silly idea) is all about creating some real competition in the Tasmanian market.

However, if the government was serious about lowering power prices, it could cap them now – it doesn't have to wait until 2021 to do so. In fact, why wait for an election to just announce it – they could have done so anytime.

### **The Hobart City Deal**

The Hobart City Deal has now become an election issue, with both sides in broad support. However, it is not a deal yet, and it relies on Federal funding for it to have any chance of success. Projects which are linked to the deal will also be dependent on Federal involvement. (I recall a state election – in 1979 - where the State Government campaigned against Federal involvement (interference) in the State. Now we are welcoming it! How times have changed.

The University's STEM project has got another publicity run, as has the Northern Suburbs Light Rail project. Our perennial favourite, the Macquarie Point Development Corporation, which actually does nothing, is also in the mix, front page and all, this time considering an Antarctic precinct and an interim peace park. I will give them this – they are very good at being very busy doing nothing.

Whatever the City Deal is, it isn't a deal of substance because there is no funding. It is essentially a three-card trick, a smoke and mirrors exercise to enable our political leaders to sound committed without being committed while ducking for cover on all these issues. Rather sad, really

And then, out of the blue, an underground bus mall joins the mix. This one hadn't even been discussed with the Federal government, so the mention of this by the government during an election is confusing. They mentioned money (\$100m), just not their money. What exactly is their commitment? To talk about it?

### **Other promises so far**

Meanwhile the government has announced that it had decided in its dying days to offer a \$13m grant and a \$30m loan to Hermel, to establish a hardwood facility in Burnie. Which is an interesting take (double flip?) on their previous commitment to no longer subsidise the industry. If they are that keen on that one, why not announce some support for the Southwood Fibre proposal in the Huon while they are about it – in fact what is their position on that proposal? Mine is one of full support.

As readers would know, I am a fan of providing infrastructure, but I am not so keen on providing support for individual players.

The government now talks of a fifth lane on the Southern Outlet (\$35m), and has trotted out that old perennial, the Bridgewater Bridge. Meanwhile Labor has promised a new high school in Hobart, and a new police station at New Norfolk, while the ABC, wanting to play its part, is promoting an upgrade of the Dover road. No doubt more to come from both (all) sides.

### **Third party players**

The campaign has also seen the entry of third parties into the advertising fray, and the AHA has been at the forefront with its LOL campaign. I am always nervous when this sort of thing happens, because essentially these campaigns are "single issue" and promote a particular "vested interest".

When GetUp ran its campaign against endorsed Liberal candidates at the last Federal election, the Liberals – rightly – cried foul. GetUp ran a strong campaign against the Liberal incumbents because of the Liberal's approach to environmental issues. No other issue mattered.

Interestingly, now that the shoe is on the other foot, and a concerted campaign is underway overtly promoting the present government and condemning the Opposition through an advertising blitz, the Liberals are quiet on the matter. No doubt other forces will enter the fray to attack the attackers.

The role of lobby groups such as GetUp and the AHA is to enunciate a policy position and push for its acceptance by political parties and the broader electorate prior to an election being called. Once an election is called, advising the electorate of its preference is also a realistic thing to do.

However, openly entering into the campaign itself in support of one side raises a number of issues. Before everyone calls me naïve, let me explain further.

- There is a single-issue campaign. Even though people may well vote on a single issue, elections are about a comprehensive approach to policy, and should cover a wide range of issues. So my call to the AHA now, as it was to Get-Up then, is this: What is your policy position on health, or education, or prisons, or roads? The generic answer of course is that they don't care about such issues. Only one issue matters. Well, they should care, particularly as they are endeavouring to influence the outcome of the election.
- Entering the fray so openly in support of a particular party - and if they have backed the eventual winner - actually compromises the winner in all of its future dealings with them.
- Entering the fray so openly in support of a particular party – which is unsuccessful – only compromises their own position in their future dealings with the government.

No doubt they have gone into this with their eyes wide open. Anyway, the die is cast and the campaign continues.

### **Football**

The resignation of the head of AFL in Tasmania has once again turned the spotlight on football in Tasmania. The TSL (the Statewide league) has been a disaster – Burnie and Devonport have quit, the Hobart-North Hobart merger was a failure, and the loss of South Launceston just added fuel to the fire.

It was originally conceived with the idea that it be a premium league from which the AFL could find elite players for the AFL competition. However, in doing so, it showed scant interest in the survival of clubs, and they are now reaping that reward across the state. Players are not interested in the travel, supporters are definitely not interested in the travel, and clubs find it difficult to maintain enthusiasm within their own organisations. A far better resolution would be to return to 3 regional competitions - the sooner the better.

The AFL is living in fantasy-land if it thinks the TSL will have people flock to its games. They won't. Interest in the TSL is waning, and other sports and football codes are capturing the interest of youth and spectators. Football's future depends on clubs, and of them becoming iconic within their districts for a range of activities – not just football. The TSL is un-resurrectable. The sooner it is laid to rest the better.

I find it intriguing that the phantom of a state team keeps getting resurrected, phoenix-like, from the ashes of lost dreams. To live in the unreal world of promoting a state team (without club backing) which will spend half its time away simply defies geographic and demographic reality. Lay it to rest. RIP.

*(NB I once sat on the board of the Glenorchy Football club, but these views are my own)*

This newsletter is supported by **Tasman Management Services**.  
Further information can be found at [www.julianamos.com.au](http://www.julianamos.com.au).