

ISSUE 1808

“In Support of Progress”

Newsletter

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The State Election

A final word?

Ouch

I have to admit to a classic oversight, in that previous editions of this newsletter this year have carried the date 2017. I am indebted to those vigilant readers who have advised me thus.

Just as “sceptre” should have read “spectre” in the last edition.

The State Election

I did not think I would be writing yet another newsletter on the election, but the fact that policies are still being released – Labor with its Agriculture Policy, the Liberals with an Arts Policy, and with grant money still being thrown around like confetti, it seems appropriate to make some last-minute observations.

Money

There is no requirement under State law to advise how much money has been spent by or on behalf of a candidate or political party, and there is no limit on how much can be spent by a candidate or a political party.

There is a requirement under Federal law for a registered organisation like the Liberal Party or the ALP to disclose sources of income on an annual basis, but such disclosure does not require where and on what the money was spent.

In this campaign, several organisations have entered the fray to promote their own cause. They are not required to divulge how much was spent.

Concern has now been expressed by the Greens regarding the nature and the amount that is being spent by the gaming lobby. I share that concern. But in so noting, it also needs to be stated that previous election campaigns have involved large sums of money being spent on causes closely aligned with “Green” values. I was concerned then also,

Posters

There is no state law that limits signage. This is very much a local government matter, and councils have different bylaws concerning sites and size. I believe there have been a number of instances where Councils have turned a blind eye to breaches of these by-laws, or have been tardy in enforcing them.

Charities

The Charities Act allows for certain entities to be declared charities, thus providing them with a range of tax advantages including deductibility for sums paid by donors. Charitable organisations (including those deemed to be charitable) are allowed under this Act to campaign for a cause, but are not allowed to mention the name of a candidate, nor a political party.

The Wilderness Society would appear to be in breach, in mentioning the Premier by name, and the Bob Brown Foundation has similarly and flagrantly disobeyed the law, advising electors to vote for the Greens. I understand formal complaints have been lodged.

Being “morally pure” is no substitute for complying with the law.

False and misleading statements

A series of interpretations are being made concerning "jobs at risk" in the pokies debate. It is a long bow to suggest over 5000 jobs would be lost if pokies were banned from clubs and pubs – more likely this is the total number of people employed in those establishments. But even this is disputed.

The campaign around the Tarkine acreage is another example where hyperbole has ruled the roost, a technique well known to these groups. False facts can easily become accepted truths, without challenge.

Jobs

In the same level of generality, so many candidates promise "jobs jobs jobs". It is a mantra that is trotted out each election time. But it is a mantra without any meaning or understanding.

The reality is that jobs are a by-product of investment, and for investment to occur, the economic conditions need to be suitable. Investors invest for profit. If it becomes too problematic, the investment will go elsewhere.

Promising jobs needs to be connected to an economic narrative. Without it such promises are empty. So many businesses are suffering from high charges for water and electricity, but grasping that nettle and providing an immediate lowering of charges seems to be a bridge too far.

Many promises have been made to individual companies or enterprises. For every suggestion of financial support, one needs also to consider the unintended consequence of that support. For example, a decision to help one retailer could harm other retailers. Support for one brewery could weaken the viability of other breweries. Support for one sawmill could harm the market for other sawmills. And so it goes.

So for every candidate that promises jobs, the response should be "What jobs?, Where will be the investment?, and What are your policies to attract that investment?"

Promises

It is bemusing that, after the parties have made their election pitches, they continue to release policies, even into the last week. Catch-up, or panic?

A Liberal Arts Policy, a Labor Agriculture Policy, a Greens Climate Policy are all tumbling out, as are Liberal statements of support for the Cascades Brewery – a grant, an Edith Creek milk factory – payroll tax relief, and an indoor Sports Centre at Glenorchy, and Labor statements of support for helicopter training, a soccer development at Glenorchy and community men's sheds.

And still with two days to go.....

The Media

Have you noticed how the media have entered the realm of prediction, rather than the realm of reporting. It's almost as though they are trying to promote a particular result by encouraging voters to vote in a particular way. Not good....

MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT THIS SATURDAY!

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