

ISSUE 1811

“In Support of Progress”

Newsletter

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The State Election – a final roundup

The “Kristie Johnson” effect

Kristie Johnston is the mayor of Glenorchy. She is very well-known, very popular and has recently been re-elected to that position with a thumping majority. She did not stand at the state election.

Kristie Johnson is not the mayor of Glenorchy. She is not well-known, she stood as a member of the Liberal team for the seat of Denison in the recent state election, and she was not elected.

However, it would be a simple error for voters to vote for Johnson thinking they were voting for Johnston. So, what was the effect of her candidacy, and did it damage Labor’s chances of winning a third seat in Denison, which would have then denied the Liberals a majority in the Parliament?

Ms Johnson is not well known, but received a total of 3234 votes, most of which came from the northern suburbs of Glenorchy. So one could argue that her candidacy was a clever ploy by the Liberals to garner support and votes that otherwise may not have been forthcoming.

Compare that result with that of another Liberal candidate, Dean Young, also not well known but without a well-known name, who received 1260 votes, scattered evenly across the electorate. An argument could thus be mounted that Ms Johnson received approximately 2000 votes more than she would have otherwise received, simply because of her name.

In the event both the Labor and Liberal parties returned two members. The Liberals received 2.3 quotas in all, and Labor received 2.5. Even if one assumes that ALL of the 2000 “extra” votes gained by Ms Johnson were in fact Labor votes (which they would not have been), then the respective quotas would have been Labor 2.7, and Liberals 2.1. Each would still have returned two members. In other words, it made no difference to the final result. However, it has probably had an effect on Ms Johnson.

The 200 “secret” policies

The Premier on election eve announced there were some 200 policies that had not been publicised by him during the campaign. After the election he stated that he had a mandate to implement these policies even though they had not been publicised.

Mandate maybe, but if they involve the expenditure of public money, which I suspect they do, then I believe the premier is drawing a long bow.

The media has gone quiet on this, but it should not. If nothing else, I would be recommending to the Legislative Council that no monies be approved until such time as the full list of commitments is made available and tabled, together with a timeline for their execution. Nothing like open government.

The Premier says he wants a good relationship with the Legislative Council. This would be a good start.

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The new Cabinet

The Government has announced its new Cabinet. The Cabinet has been increased to 9, together with two parliamentary secretaries, a Speaker and a Chairman of Committees. All but one lowly backbencher wins a prize. And I suspect he will be made Whip, anyway.

If nothing else, this makes the case for an increase in the size of the Parliament. Because this government has NO backbench.

A couple of strange appointments, in that The Treasurer is the Minister for Local Government, while the Planning portfolio has been given to another (new) Minister. I would have thought it would have been more logical to have brought those groupings together under the one Minister.

Also, one Minister has been made responsible for Advanced Manufacturing, while another is responsible for Science and Technology.

The new Minister for Infrastructure is the Deputy Premier, and he may well bring some gravitas to the crying needs of the state in this domain. Traffic will be a big issue during the term of this government, and will require some immediate attention. And of course the Minister for Health remains in his position, which was ripe for a new approach.

Meanwhile the Premier takes on the very un-difficult portfolios of Tourism, Parks and Heritage. Maybe he could have also added Environment to this mix, taking it back to the very sensible administrative structure that he eschewed in 2014.

Still, let's wish them all well. I am sure there will be much to talk about as they settle into their Ministerial chairs

Housing

The present housing crisis has been caused by a housing shortage. There is a greater demand than there is a supply. Solution – increase supply! The "how" question occasioned the Premier to call a mini-summit to discuss the issue, which it did without any resolution.

Free up more land? Too long term, and there is not enough available land close to the city anyway. Force owners of investment properties to make available houses? Very draconian. Limit Air BandB's? How? And so it goes.

The Premier's solution – a new Minister for Housing. The new Minister, when asked what he was going to do to solve the problem, said he would need to be briefed by his department. Well, that didn't take long, did it!

Legislative Council elections

Two Leg Co seats are coming up for election – including the new seat of Prosser.

At the conclusion of this election we will have 16 Legislative Councillors. This is because the new seat of McIntyre – which will not be going to the polls for some years, will have two members because of the ridiculous decision of the Electoral Commissioners giving that seat to two existing members when the boundary redistribution occurred and leaving Prosser vacant. They should hang their collective heads in shame for making such a dumb decision.

Whatever their argument for doing so, the situation remains that it was a stupid thing to do. The previous parliament had the opportunity to fix it, but it seems were unwilling to do so because it may have upset the sensitivities of one of the two sitting members.

Now they are left with a right royal mess.

Other elections

Its election time! Two other elections have been held, each with interesting ramifications.

The South Australian election - Energy

In Tasmania the Liberals won with a vote in excess of 50% - a strong result - while Labor's was not quite 33%, and the Greens vote fell to just 10%. In the South Australian election the Liberals were successful, winning government with some 37% of the vote. Now I would not call that a ringing endorsement.

Still, a change of government in South Australia could well herald a new era in national energy policy. The outgoing Labor government was aiming for a 75% renewable energy target – a risky proposition at best – and that is now very much on the back burner. The new government will not be following that path.

Watch this space.

The Batman by-election in Victoria

Labor won this election for the inner-city seat of Batman in a contest which was predicted to be won by the Greens. The inner city "progressive" vote.

In all three elections, minor parties, including the Greens, have suffered a significant setback as voters have turned back to the major parties. In Tasmania the Green vote barely hit 10%, which suggests that the love affair may well be nearing an end. They now face their own long dark night of the soul.

I feel no sorrow, and I feel so simply because of the harm that has been wrought on the lives of so many working people in industries they do not approve of while playing to some higher "moral" purpose. There's nothing much moral about it.

This should not be read that there are not real issues that need to be addressed in the environment space.

The former Greens leader has suggested that the Greens won't be going anywhere anytime soon, and that they will continue to agitate on the issues that matter.

The onus remains on the majors to not deny the real issues that remain, otherwise we simply return to a world of protest and disruption. Which helps no-one.

Of Fire and Flood

The trail of devastation in NSW and Victoria, so late in the season, is a timely reminder that fire can hit at any time. Lightning strikes have been the cause of these recent fires, and lightning can strike anywhere, at any time.

Now I know I harp on it, but we live in a fire-prone environment - Fact. Tasmania would appear to have avoided any serious fire outbreak this season, but that should not allow complacency to set in.

Fuel reduction burns may be unpleasant, even frowned upon, but they are the only really effective measure to reduce the fuel load in a timely manner. I am hopeful the Fire Service and other agencies will be able to have a successful autumn of fuel reduction. The alternative does not bear thinking about.

Meanwhile, the flood season approaches. A task for a new Minister for Primary Industry and Water.

Football

The local paper has been running a campaign to get the head of the AFL to come down to Tasmania, and do "something" to arrest the decline in support for the game. The State-wide league is indeed in crisis, with clubs withdrawing from the competition due to a lack of players and/or a lack of willingness to travel.

Will money fix the problem? The paper says – "Bring cash when you come". Although it could help and would no doubt be welcomed, I argue that the model needs fixing first. Regional leagues should be promoted strongly, rather than being fixated on running a doomed state-wide league or even calling for a state team, which is simply pie in the sky.

Anyway, the CEO is now coming, to meet with certain people and to head a working group to review what can be done. He will be meeting the Premier – hopefully the Premier will be asking for the AFL to provide greater support, rather than offering greater financial support from the State. There are greater priorities than football.

Unfortunately, the CEO won't be meeting with the Clubs themselves, which just so happen to be the heartbeat of the game. So, my guess is that we will end up with a mirror committee (to look into it), and not much else.

The beat continues, as will the campaign.

Cable Car

The government has acted to enable the proponents to prepare a development application (DA) to give to the Hobart City Council for its consideration. Providing the approval on the last day of government, before moving off to an election, was not a good look, even though it was in the government's province to do so, and it has caused bad blood and a backlash.

Councillors are up in arms and are arguing that the process should be abandoned, even before they have seen the DA. Harm could be done, they say. How? Notwithstanding the ham-fisted nature of the government, which has attempted to kick an own-goal, harm is indeed being done, but to the Council's own reputation for their obfuscation and blindness. They could at least wait for the DA before saying NO!

"There are none so blind as those that will not see."