

ISSUE 1816

“In Support of Progress”

Newsletter

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A busy busy week!

In Entertainment

In Politics

In Culture

In Sport

What a week it has been. Busy busy busy!

Entertainment

At the outset, allow me to confess to watching two international events over the last week. The first was Eurovision, an event involving an extraordinary amount of glitz and glam. The second was the Royal Wedding, again surrounded by its usual amount of pomp and panoply. One could argue that both are equally absurd – and in the main game perhaps they are.

And yet I was struck by the similarity between the two. Both showed a degree of flair and flamboyance, both showed a warmth in cultural interchange, both were conducted with efficiency and enthusiasm, both brought joy to millions and both showed the power that can come from uniting in a common purpose, irrelevant as that purpose might be.

I think all who watched them enjoyed the experience.

International politics

On a more serious note, but in a similar vein, I was thrilled to see, again by different cultures uniting in a common purpose, the ousting by democratic means of an arrogant and corrupt Malaysian regime, and the release from jail of Anwar Ibrahim. A tremendous weight now falls on his shoulders to maintain a united political front and bring about the reforms so necessary to reshape his country, a country that is so important in and for our own region. I hope Australia can wish him well.

Thus buoyed by hope, one can then only wonder at the hatred that fuels the madness that is the fate of the Middle East, and in America the madness that has led to the 99th mass shooting this year. Unarmed. School kids. Terrible.

National Politics

The week also saw political heavyweights descend on Braddon, a seat in the north west of the state facing a by-election in the wake of yet another round of the ongoing dual citizenship fiasco. It is an issue that continues to feed off itself, with continuing lack of clarity around the definition of citizenship. It has now descended to debating the relevance of the nationality of grandparents. Crazy stuff.

The Prime Minister proudly announced a \$30 million grant to match the State government's commitment to a cable accessway at Cradle Mountain National Park, sponsored by the State's Parks Service. Asked whether this was a blatant act of pork-barreling the PM denied the claim, stating that the project was an important and timely one for the state. OK!

Which leads one to wonder why the devastation that occurred in the south of the state from the torrential downpour - and the declaration of it being a national disaster - was not important and timely enough to be on the PM's agenda, or for that matter any other federal heavyweight, of either party. Pretty poor form, really.

State politics

I note that a public project for a cableway - which still requires final tickoff - is given favoured treatment, while a private project with a similar purpose is being given short shrift. I support the idea of both. What I find of interest is that for the southern project to proceed, it needs to determine a proper starting point. However, to do so it needs to provide detailed plans, which requires access to government land, which the government believes it cannot give until it has detailed plans. Is this another Catch 22 situation, or just different strokes for different folks?

Talking infrastructure, the new Minister for Infrastructure has been quite busy. He recently led a business delegation to the USA, and I hope he can report on that when parliament resumes. It seemed to be a smart thing to do, and I hope it was successful.

He has also just released the report regarding a buslane extension to the Southern Outlet. The report is dated January 2017, so it is of more than passing interest why the previous Minister did not release it earlier. Maybe it had something to do with an election?

The plans are complex and the development will be disruptive - however an extra lane on the Southern Outlet to resolve traffic problems in Macquarie and Davey Streets would appear on the surface to be overkill, and I suspect improvements to those two roads would be a sensible first move.

Of course, the argument is all about getting people on buses - well, best of luck with that one! A lot of money to prove a hypothetical, when growth in the southern suburbs will ensure the continuing use of private transport. It would be far better to spend the money on increased carparking in town, particularly as car spaces will be removed by the "improvements" to the two thoroughfares.

The plan is notable for NOT having an underground bus mall in the centre of town (remember that election promise?), as well as developing an underpass at the Davey Street - Southern Outlet intersection. If you think traffic is bad now, then that WILL cause a significant disruption to traffic - just imagine the Southern Outlet being closed or restricted for some months. The plan is also quiet on the ability to link up with a city bypass, which is a shame, as it will be needed eventually.

While on infrastructure, the Federal budget left a range of Hobart-centric developments to be covered by the Hobart City Deal, with announcements planned for later in the year. Call me cynical if you will, but my guess is that the State Minister will have to get very busy indeed if anything is to come out of that. Certainly there is no allocation in the federal budget.

While the government continues to chant the mantra "getting the balance right" and "taking Tasmania to the next level", both meaningless phrases, the Minister for Housing has been tackling the housing crisis by doing - well what exactly? Not much by the look of it, as people are still under canvas. Maybe he can make an announcement to Parliament this week regarding the initiatives he has taken to resolve the short-term issue, in keeping with his leader's promises.

The State Minister for Primary Industries has also been very busy over the last week, freezing trout licences. Now that IS a story. As for the fruit fly scourge - not a word, the death of polo ponies - not a word, her stand on live sheep exports - not a word, of floods and fire - not a word, the growth in agricultural exports - not a word, premium produce winning awards - not a word. She has been very busy being silent. Maybe this week it will all change! We live in hope.

A new MP has been elected for Prosser, the Leg Co seat in the southeast of the state. The new member happens to live in Battery Point, which is some distance from the electorate. When asked whether she would be able to properly serve her electorate she responded with the comment "I can serve "those people" just as well from Hobart". It's good times ahead for "those people".

Culture?

A suggestion has been made by an aboriginal person that indigenous groups should be seeking exemptions from various laws to enable the hunting of seals. The suggestion is similar to the argument for hunting dugongs in Moreton Bay, or turtles in the Northern Territory.

The argument goes that this should be seen as a legitimate cultural activity to enable aboriginal people to connect with their heritage. However there is no suggestion that traditional methods be used. No, this time it would be with non-traditional techniques such as rifles and motor boats.

If animals are to be protected, for whatever reason, then they should also be protected from "cultural pursuits" as well. This is a nonsense argument and should be called out for what it is - a rort.

And to top it all off, Design Tasmania received a grant of over \$300,000 last week from a philanthropic organisation. The Board Chair, thrilled to announce this "paradigm-changing" grant, said "The funds will help meet an urgent need to build Design Tasmania's capacity for deepening our engagement with community and stakeholders; nurturing an innovative design ecosystem locally and nationally; and forging a diversified and more secure financial foundation for the organisation."

Now that IS taking us to "the next level". An "innovative design ecology" indeed. I wonder what the "measurables" will be. Certainly an innovative use of language for starters. I suspect it really means more staff and more gear.

Sport

The debate continues to rage about the future of football in the state. Football in Tasmania has not been graced with great leadership from the AFL for some time now, and the present imbroglio surrounding the future of the Tasmania State League (TSL) bears stark testament to that fact.

The AFL continues to confuse "talent" with "engagement", and by its actions is only interested in "talent". And that for AFL teams. However, for the game to maintain its relevance and to survive, kids need to get engaged. Talent will shine through, but only within an environment of fun and engagement.

The TSL is the premium league and is best placed to foster talent – it provides the so-called "talent" pathway. The regional leagues do not foster "talent" to the same extent. Their training regimes are less, their skill requirement is less. They simply enjoy playing the game, as they should. AFL talent scouts will go to watch a Clarence – Kingborough game, but I doubt they would go to a Dodges Ferry – Pt Cygnet game. And yet, the suggestion is that the TSL might be closed down altogether. Now that is stupid. There is a lot more to come with this story.

As for the crowds, the rollup to the North Melbourne - GWS game says it all really.

What a week!