

ISSUE 1823

“In Support of Progress”

Newsletter

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By-Elections

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ByElections

On Saturday, there will be 5 federal byelections. Of those, two matter politically, because in those two, the result could go either way. One of those seats is Longman, in Queensland, the other is Braddon, in north west Tasmania.

The byelections are being held because certain sitting members were found to be ineligible to be MP's due to holding dual citizenship. The nature of citizenship has some history, and remains complex. In 1901, when the Constitution came into being, all Australians were deemed to be British citizens, and it was not until 1984 that Australians ceased to be British subjects.

Section 44 of the Constitution deals with eligibility. Section 44(i) states that a person is incapable of being elected to the Senate or the House of Representatives...if they are “a subject or a citizen or entitled to the rights or privileges of a subject or a citizen of a foreign power.” And that has been, and continues to be, open to a range of interpretations.

For example, a child born overseas to Australian parents who return to Australia to live, can in certain circumstances carry the citizenship of both Australia and the birth country, and thus be ineligible to stand for Federal parliament.

An Australian citizen does not need a visa to live, study or work in New Zealand. In other words we are all entitled to the rights and privileges of a subject of a foreign power.

It has been suggested that the doctor who played an integral part in the rescue of the boys from the flooded cave in Thailand could be awarded honorary citizenship of Thailand. In such a case he would be ineligible to stand for Parliament – which is absurd.

Persons from both sides of parliament have been caught up in this matter. Each member has had peculiar and separate circumstances, but no-one could say of any of those caught up in this imbroglio that there was any sense of dual “loyalty”

Frankly, if a person is eligible to vote then they should be eligible to stand for parliament, and the Constitution should be amended or an enabling explanatory Act passed to allow for this matter to be resolved.

The electors of Braddon must by now be bemused and be turned off by the way the major parties are conducting their campaigns. Telephone calls, robocalls and concentrated door-knocking techniques, lifted from the USA where the challenge has been to get people to vote at all, has become standard practice, and a real turnoff for voters.

Both parties are flying in their heavy artillery in the federal parliament to come to the coast to make announcements, to wander around in high vis vests, gumboots or raincoats, whatever the occasion demands, to praise themselves and denigrate their opponents.

The pork barreling has been extraordinary, with both sides making extravagant promises in a bid to lure voters. Cable ways, flood mitigation works (at last), roadworks, city improvements and a range of improvements to social services and sporting precincts have become standard fare, with both parties freely throwing the cash around.

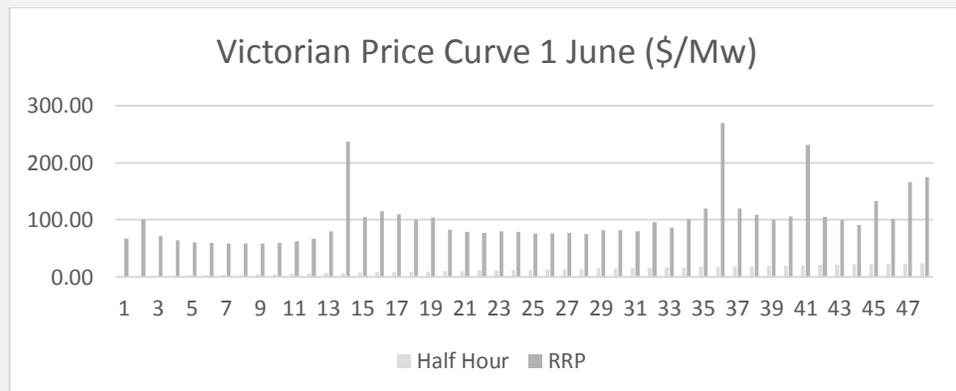
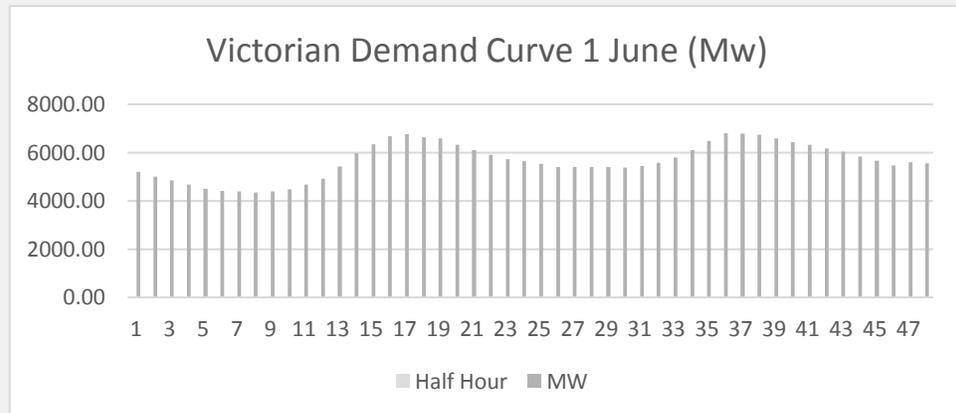
As far as the Opposition is concerned, why not make such promises, since it won't be in a position to deliver even if it wins. But for the government it is a different matter, as they will be bound to keep such promises even if they don't win. What happens with these deliverables after Saturday will be as interesting as what is being said about them before the election.

There has been a tendency to play the man rather than play the ball. It is gutter politics, it is cheap, it is dirty pool, and it is a total turn-off. The leaders call each other liars quite freely, backed up by their various acolytes. However, the personal attack on one of the minor candidates has rebounded spectacularly, as they nearly always do, with allegations of impropriety now leveled at the accuser's candidate.

Muckraking begets muckraking. Give, and you shall receive. The old political adage holds true but is nearly always forgotten – never make an enemy out of someone who could one day be your ally.

Energy

As a follow-up to the last newsletter, an explanation as to the difference between base load and peak load can be shown in the accompanying diagrams.



A baseload in the vicinity of 4000 MW, with peaks in the morning and evening, attracting a price almost double that of baseload. Price tends to follow the demand curve, as explained in the previous commentary about the bid stack. The spikes suggest an "incident" had occurred.

Thermal power stations are best suited to provide base load, as it is better for such plant to operate continually and at a constant load. Hydro can do both, as it can switch on and off quickly without detriment to its operation.

A connector between two such markets (e.g. Victoria and Tasmania) can allow for the supply of baseload and peak load across it. And so, for example, baseload can be provided from Victoria to Tasmania by BassLink, and peakload supplied from Tasmania to Victoria, subject to the limitations of the connector. Tasmania would not be disadvantaged as it would benefit from getting a higher price for its power, and so can use less water to get the same return.

If the supply of baseload falls away in Victoria (the closure of thermal plant), Tasmania could also provide base load, but the obvious constraint is water. To do so effectively would require more water in dams and a further interconnector. And it is in this scenario that pumped hydro makes sense. Wind and solar, unlike with thermal stations, complements hydro, as hydropower can act as their "battery". The additional power from wind and solar will allow for greater storage, by direct use and by pumping water back into storages.

Which power source to use?

The Australian Energy Market Operator recently released a report on the nation's future electricity supply situation. The response was interesting.

Some said the report emphasized the cheapest way to replace the existing coal generators was not with more coal generators but with renewables – solar, wind and storage, and maybe some gas.

Others said the report emphasized that coal would be with us for some time yet.

Actually the report said both, so it very much depends on one's predispositions and inclinations as to how to interpret the report.

The report recognized that decisions need to be taken now if Australia is to prevent an electricity supply crisis. What the report also recognized was the need for "energy storage to increase the flexibility and reliability of supply", which actually couches the fact that renewables cannot yet deliver the essential requirement of reliable storage.

And that is worrying.

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