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"In Support of Progress" Newsletter

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Aftermath of an AG. *An aftermath*

The sun continues to set on the political career of the former Attorney General., but not it seems without a few parting shots, like suing the Premier (A fail) and proclaiming her capacity to win votes despite her former Party. On the latter point, maybe she will contest the next election as an Independent, thus putting her claim to the test. It would certainly give her a forum for continuing to bucket the Premier. She may continue to surprise.

The Referendum

Fire service Levy

TasPorts

Mac Point

The Referendum

The referendum is done and dusted. The public turned away from constitutional change to resolve issues surrounding indigenous disadvantage. It was a strategy and it failed. It should not be confused with the expressed objective of resolving intergenerational disadvantage. Slipping into "management speak", the STRATEGY chosen by the Government to achieve the OBJECTIVE was rejected. Not so the objective.

The result was extraordinary for a number of reasons:

The process was captured by the politics. The referendum became a battleground for the two major political parties, and the cause became a political one. It was not what you thought of the proposal as it was - Which side were you on?

However, the traditional voting support belied the position of the political parties. Traditional Liberal areas voted "Yes" and traditional Labor areas voted "No". This would suggest that the parties (not the Nationals) are somewhat out of touch with their electoral base. Best if they now reconnected with their base and concentrated on the bread and butter issues.

The inner city seats, once blue, have become teal, and I suspect the Teals are now here to stay. No longer can they be discounted as a one-off protest vote – they actually reflect a far more deep-reaching change in those electorates. They are here to stay.

The inner city voted YES, the rest voted NO. What is this divide? I suspect the main driver for the difference is those living in relative comfort and those struggling. Certainly cost of living pressures are biting deep and the referendum was seen as one almighty distraction from those issues that matter most. The Maslow "hierarchy of needs" triangle certainly comes into play here.

I suspect there was a deep disquiet about the presentation of the case in that the rhetoric was about providing an avenue of influence for a few, even within the indigenous community. For those in the rest of the Australian community who are hurting, and hurting bad, it all seemed a bit unfair. Thus their vote.

The media played an extraordinarily partisan role in the referendum campaign. No longer an impartial commentator but pushing hard to influence. Even when it was all over, there was no pause for reflection. Retribution was immediate - the blame game started, with the most banal of commentary and questioning. And that questioning came from media that were in favour, and those who were opposed, to the referendum. Vindication for some. Resentment for some. Disbelief for others.

The referendum was carried out with the best of intentions. However, the presentation of the case actually put a particular group in our community into the glare of the spotlights, with an emphasis on "them" versus "us". Most unfortunate!

It was not helpful.

For the indigenous community, there will be a sense of rejection, and this will not bode well for any continuing reasoned narrative. Claims for truth telling and treaty will now feature more prominently, and will meet with a similar response.

For the rest, the question will linger as to how we remain a united country and not fall into a social landscape of warring tribes. It won't be easy.

Our democracy depends on respect for the law. Of majorities ruling for all. Of respect for our institutions. There is some repair work needed.

Fire Service Levy

The government has proposed a change to the way funds are collected to pay for fire prevention and control. Presently, funds are presently collected from three different sources, being Councils, insurance companies and motor vehicle levies. It has proposed a simpler process based on property ownership - two options in fact, neither of which has received support.

The essential element behind the proposal is that a levy/tax be paid by property owners, and that there be a change in the level of that levy/tax to meet the increasing costs of providing this service. However, some estimates have shown an increase in payment of over 500%. Yes, 500%. And if that is to be net by landlords, then that will simply be passed on to tenants to pay.

For starters, there has been no announcement made by government as to what is already collected, how much is needed and how much coin these two options will generate. This would appear to be a glaring oversight.

The 2020 Blake Review into Fire Service Funding arrangements was tasked with analysing a solution that was amongst other things fair and equitable. There is not much that is fair and equitable in the options put forward so far. In fact, the idea that the fire service should be fully funded from a property-based fire levy is also open to question. Why is it that some government services be fully funded from the general tax pool while others target users of the service?

The Minister may wish to reflect on his approach and the impost he is suggesting be placed on property owners and their tenants, and to what extent this will flow over into the government's continuing support base before proceeding further with his proposed legislation.

TasPorts

There would appear to be trouble afoot at TasPorts. The relevant Minister may wish to make a statement sometime soon, in fact anytime from now would be good!

Mac Point

After such a long period of time, the government last weekend released its latest iteration of what might happen at Mac Point. Again, concept plans only, with the stadium – now without a roof - as a centrepiece, but no detail. It is a "draft plan" only, which according to the Premier will be used to "finalise the master plan". However detailed designs would take another 12 months and community engagement will continue. O dear, same ol', same ol'.

The CEO then went on radio and talked up the draft plan with language that would make a master town planner proud. Very technical – but very indecipherable for lay ears.

Two days later, a totally different concept from a private developer was released, utilising Regatta Point and in fact sheltering the Macquarie Point zone. Sorry, CEO, but, quite frankly, it smashes the government proposal right out of the ball park – pun intended! The Minister summarily dismissed the proposal because 1. it wasn't his, and 2. "We have already signed a contract with the AFL".

Minister, really. Is that the best you can do?

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