

ISSUE 2407 "In Support of Progress" Newsletter

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Aftermath A Forestry matter

The Election result.

It's far too early to state definitively who has won and who has lost – after all the count is continuing, not all the postal votes have been counted, and the all-important preference flow will no doubt bring about a few surprises.

However there are some things that can be said:

First of all you will recall I ran a scenario for the 2021 election as if it had been for a 5-seat 7 member electorate. Those results were

	BRADDON	BASS	LYONS	FRANKLIN	CLARK	TOTAL
Libs	4	4	4	3	2	17
Labor	2	2	3	3	2	12
Greens		1		1	1	3
Other	1				2	3

What happened last Saturday suggests the following lineup:

	BRADDON	BASS	LYONS	FRANKLIN	CLARK	
Lib	4	3	3	3	2	15
Alp	2	2	2	2	2	10
Green		1	1	1	2	5
JLN	1	1	1			3
Other				1	1	2

Comparing the two, the differences are:

Braddon - no change

The Independent" is now JLN

Bass - The Libs lose one to the JLN

NB Gutwein had retired, Alexander loses seat

Lyons - The Libs lose one to JLN, ALP loses one to Greens

Tucker loses seat

Franklin - Labor loses one to an Independent

-being O'Byrne

Clark - The Greens gain one at the expense of an Independent.

On this analysis, not much has changed.

And yet, there has been a significant change in the way people have voted.

There has not been a winner. The Liberals may well hang on to government in some form of minority, but they are sitting on only 15 seats. There are 20 seats that are NOT Liberal nor of a Liberal persuasion.

Cobbling together some sort of deal with – well, exactly, who? – will cause the voters of "who" to be extremely upset.

The Liberals have lost ground (almost 13%) to the JLN (6.8%) and other independents, while Labor and the Greens have not really gained ground (basically 1% each).

The two walkouts lost their seats. What price principle?

The Liberals, who called the election early to avoid continuing to deal with the crossbench, will now have to deal with an expanded and more independent crossbench, if they are to retain government. That is not really a "win"

The Greens increased their vote by 1.1% - no big deal. However the ability of the Greens to gain more seats in the expanded parliament is due to the fact that the quota to get elected had been reduced (see footnote), and their base vote is around 12%. Easy to reach 12%, much harder to reach 16%.

Note: Parliament had to option, when setting the size of the House at 35, to amend the Electoral Act to create 7 seats of 5 members, thus leaving the quota at 16.67%. They decided not to do that, with the result that the quota would be lowered to 12.5% and make it easier for independents and minor parties to gain seats. They reap what they sow.

The move towards independents did not translate into more seats. There were two before and there will be two after.

The rise of the JLN is an interesting phenomenon, as the party did not run "lead candidates" and did not show any interest in any policy position, other than "trust us". Their vote reflected the rotating nature of the ballot papers, and as such I would expect minimal leakage from their vote during the cut-up. In fact I predict a flow TO them from other independents as they get cut up.

I believe much of their vote is derived from those who left Labor over development issues such as hydro and forestry. At the time, their only option was Liberal. Now there is an alternative, that alternative speaks their language, and they have embraced it.

The big issues, such as the stadium, the UTas move and the Marinus link, would appear to have had little if no effect on the overall outcome. The issues of health, housing, and cost-of-living overrode them.

All of that effort by the Mercury and others to hype up the AFL code counted for nothing. Now there is a parliament which is not moved by having such toys, and will not cut the government any slack when it comes to such matters.

In fact, just the opposite. Issues of accountability and transparency will loom large and answers will be demanded to questions such as:

What will happen to the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse?

Why did the head of DPAC resign?

What will happen to the matters that were placed before the Privileges Committee prior to the election?

Ten extra seats in Parliament. But has there been new blood? A quick review shows the following (in their true colours):

Old hands: **Willie** and **Howlett** - down from the Leg Co.
Abetz and **Petrusma** - back from the sidelines

New blood: **Fairs** in Bass
One other in Braddon
Brown (most likely) in Franklin
3 JLN and **3 Greens**

And those who have lost:
Tucker and **Alexander**
Young in Franklin

The campaigns have now been run....

The Liberals ran a spoiler campaign, which in many ways backfired. Essentially their message was – we are not Labor.

Labor ran a softer campaign, but found it difficult to gain traction.

The Greens ran a campaign which was all about giving them (the balance of) power.

...and the election night speeches have been made.

Jeremy was full of bluster and said the Liberals won, which was drawing a very long bow.. Presumably he wanted to impress the cross bench, he will in fact need to do just that.

Rebecca was measured, said the Liberals lost and there was an opportunity for further discussions.

Rosalie said the Greens want to close things down. Corporates were mentioned in less than flattering terms, which will no doubt encourage a drying up of capital inflow if they get the chance to do so.

In the end, the Liberals have the greatest number of seats, and will have the first opportunity to form a government. It could form government with the support of the JLN and independents. Discussions are already occurring and deals are already being offered. However, it could (be forced to) enter Parliament with no deals in place and have to test its strength (i.e. confidence) on the floor of the House. And it would then be up to the Opposition and cross bench, acting separately, to determine their respective positions.

I make this point – the only deal in such a scenario is that there are no deals. The Liberals would in this circumstance be entering parliament with no deals in place to secure a majority. The power that this presents to the 20 non-Liberal MP's is extraordinary, and they could end up playing this power game on a daily basis. And this was the door that Rebecca had opened on election night. It was a clever ploy.

On Sunday morning, however, everything changed. Labor's Administrative Committee met that morning and it made the announcement that Labor had lost the election and that there would be no deals.

Excuse me! **Who** said that? An Admin Cttee? Who are they?

What happened is that a body unelected by the people just overruled their leader who was elected by the people. Which seems to suggest that for them their leader is just a puppet. There to do their bidding. What an absurd state of affairs. At a time of great political volatility – and opportunity – when a leader is sorely needed, they have stepped in and said "Roll over Rebecca, there will be no effective leader, we are in charge". They dealt themselves out of the game.

Rebecca now had a choice – to remain pro tem as an enfeebled leader, without authority, having been over-ruled by a kangaroo court, or to resign. She chose the latter.

Labor's Admin Cttee is off-the-dial mad. They dealt a body blow to the political authority of their own party at a time of great political volatility. This decision has relegated Labor to irrelevance, and has given a faux authority to a government that has lost credibility, a majority of voters and public support.

Labor is now without a leader – what a brilliant strategy guys.

Politics is all about gaining and using power. It is far more than being the Pontville Debating Society, or some other amateur group, which it would appear is where Labor's Admin Cttee believes Labor should be.

They should heed the lines from former Labor leaders:

- Only the impotent are pure - Gough Whitlam
- Whatever it takes – Graeme Richardson
- Power is not given, it is taken; given the opportunity, seize it! - Paul Keating

Seems that impotence is more attractive to the Admin Cttee.

Labor has a rule that after an election all positions are declared vacant. Once the makeup of the parliamentary team is known, and given a contest, a vote for leader is taken by the PLP, which has a weighting of 50%, the other 50% being made up of a vote of the rank and file. Obviously, if there is a contest, that will take some time.

It may well be time for Labor to change its leadership, but not like this. Rebeca has been an extraordinary leader, through difficult times. Strong, resolute, articulate, committed. She deserves so much better.

And she may not be the only leader under review!

Labor is now navel gazing as to who its new leader might be. While so gazing, and ignoring what might be swirling around them, they may also wish to reflect on allowing the leader to be the leader and have the room to show leadership. Otherwise why have a leader at all!

Footnote:

I should also make this final point. Sometimes you can get things wildly wrong. In #2403 I mused that Ella Haddad could lose her seat. Not only was I wrong, but I was very very wrong. Ella went on to top the poll for Labor in Clark, having run an excellent high profile campaign. All power to her. I have been eating humble pie all week.

Forestry

Meanwhile, in the world of commerce, the beat goes on.

An Expression of Interest process has been run for persons wanting to access timber for processing, in particular sawlogs. All is as it should be, except...

- a. the process is being run by mainland law firms and consulting firms, which does not signal much confidence in local law firms and consulting firms;
- b. Tasmanian interests are presently being outbid by Victorian interests, and logs are and will be going to Victoria for processing.

"That's just competition", you might say, and "why shouldn't forestry attract high prices for their product?".

Well, it's not as simple as that. As many have been trumpeting, the Victorian Government has recently closed down its native forestry operation, which has threatened to put a lot of Victorian timber firms out of business. What the Victorian government then did was it paid compensation to Victorian sawmillers for the loss of access to local timber, and cashed up, these sawmillers are now outbidding Tasmanian local operators for local timber.

There is something not quite right here. I suspect that there is an argument that, based on the Constitutional provision that there must be free trade between the states, that this is not free trade at all but a subsidy being paid by one state to gain advantage over another state for that state's resources.

After all, a new Victorian government could reverse the ban on native harvesting, and we would be back where we started. In the meantime, Tasmanian interests are sacrificed.

Such an argument may or may not be prosecuted, However, it is incumbent on the Tasmanian government to ensure local interests are protected against this unfair state of affairs and to move to ensure sufficient supply is available to local processors of logs.

Both major parties committed themselves to such a course of action during the campaign. It is now incumbent on them to deliver on that promise. Although action may have to wait until the parliament has determined the make-up of the new government!!!

I trust you enjoy the Easter break!