

ISSUE 1911

# "In Support of Progress" Newsletter

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## The Federal Election Part 2

### *The Federal Election - Part 2*

There is less than a week to go, and both major parties have now "launched" their campaigns – Labor did some 14 days out, and the government did so 6 days out.

Some observations:

## A Policy Matter Parking Meters

1. I have found this section far more difficult to write than I had at first thought, due to a sense of disengagement from, and a disenchantment with, the election campaign. And I am not alone. New promises are being made on a daily basis, even after the policy launches, and it is extremely difficult to keep up with them, or to even at times understand them. Even the candidates are confused.

2. Throughout the campaign the agenda has been set by the Opposition, with the government responding, rather than setting out its own case. This has not been a good look for the government. As commented previously (#1910), the argument that "we are "less bad" than them" is not really inspiring, or even convincing.

3. The campaign has been dominated by each party's negative campaigning. "How BAD is Scott Morrison?" "How BAD is Bill Shorten?" "You can't trust him!" "He tells lies!" etc. etc. It is a HUGE turnoff, and the electorate has turned off. The parties do themselves no favours by carrying on in this manner, and the rise of minor parties bears testament to this fact. Over a third of the electorate are now looking for an alternative to the two major parties. Commentator Greg Barns goes so far as to suggest that democracy itself is being damaged by this behavior, and certainly the trust in our political process is at a very low ebb.

4. The campaign has exposed the personalities of the two leaders. They have now participated in three head-to-head debates, and the general consensus is that for the first two they came out square. I thought the third Leader's debate was a telling one, in that it exposed both men under pressure. Shorten comes across normally as a wooden presenter, but over the last week or so he has become much more animated as he spells out his vision for a "fairer" Australia. However, under attack, his fuse is short, and it doesn't take much to make him "fetchy" and defensive. Morrison is obviously over his brief, but his brief is far too brief, and under attack a combative style emerges, bordering on the belligerent.

Both seem to be the product of a "scripted" presentation, and I suspect that is why the opinion polls show both to be regarded with suspicion by the electorate.

5. When it finally came to the policy launches, the Labor leader stressed a visionary policy agenda, while the PM concentrated more on "values". However, the lateness in the presentation of the policy launch is far too short for the electorate to make a considered judgement - in fact many people have already voted without waiting for the policy launches - so the launches are really more about show than substance.

6. What has been missing from the campaign has been any serious debate between the relevant Minister and the Shadow Minister on education, or health, or the environment, each of which is a significant issue. Given the emerging significance of the environment, the total absence from the campaign of the Environment Minister is passing strange.

7. And totally missing from the campaign has been any mention of defence or foreign affairs. Given that the world we live in is fraught with flashpoints, that our region in particular (to the north and to the east) is experiencing rapid change, and that vast sums of money are being spent in this area of government activity, one would have thought that the majors would have expressed some view as to our future role in world affairs.

8. It has become a contest of one-man vs a team. Morrison is essentially running a presidential -i.e. a one-man band – campaign, and his team has shied away from – or been told to shy away from - the limelight. A last minute showing at a policy launch six days out from an election is no substitute for the absence of Ministers from the campaign itself. Shorten on the other hand has been promoting his "team" strongly, and given his standing, it is indeed fortunate for him that he has a united and articulate team behind him.

9. The Labor promises made in and for Tasmania have included a promise of \$50m to MONA – as part of a larger tourism package - and \$25m to help fund an AFL team.

MONA is a private business – granting it such a sum of money to fund improvements to its "public" spaces, such as a library and a convention centre, is a difficult sell. A better sell would have been to provide infrastructure to enable the development to proceed

As for providing \$25m to help establish a Tasmanian-based AFL team, it defies all logic. The AFL should be funding it, just as they did the (Greater Western Sydney) Giants and the (Gold Coast) Suns.

And particularly so when the AFL has shown absolutely no interest in accepting a team into the AFL competition. The idea that Tasmania could have a VFL team "sometime soon" is an absolute fob-off.

Although government spokespeople have promoted such largesse as being southern-centric, they fail to expose the promises made to the north of the state.

10. In an interesting twist, the government at its policy launch promised to build the Melbourne east-west link even though the Victorian government had not sought it and presumably doesn't want it. Since when did the federal government make such determinations, in essence over-riding the state? It sets an extraordinary precedent in the provision of infrastructure - and other matters.

11. As predicted, the environment has become a critical issue in what started out to be an "economics" election. Both parties are addressing the issue but neither has been able to really come to grips with their own policy costings on this matter.

12. All parties are coming to terms with wayward candidates, with some 27 endorsed candidates now having resigned or been dis-endorsed. The government has lost 12, Labor 4 and the Greens 1. The remainder come from One Nation (1) and the United Australia Party (9).

This is an extraordinarily large number of people, and it shows up two things:  
posts on social media stay on social media.  
the vetting process by the parties have been shoddy in the extreme

13. In Tasmania, the government is hopeful of winning the two northern seats (Bass and Braddon), while folding on the other three. Expect a barrage of visitations to the north of the state and even more promises made in the next 5 days. (As an aside, I have not seen any analysis of promises made during the Braddon by-election, and to what extent they have been delivered and to what extent they are being recycled.)

14. The government was also hopeful of a third Tasmanian seat, but the Liberal candidate in Lyons imploded and was dis-endorsed for her various previous disgraceful comments on social media. The candidate had said that her comments had been "doctored", but more recent revelations have shown that a number of them definitely were not. So truth is obviously not her strong suit. The PM stated that he had been "lied to" about her candidacy. The question of course is: Who lied to him? We still don't know who did.

15. Having been handed the electorate of Lyons on a plate, Labor then put the electorate back into play. They decided that they would not only not agree to support Liberal (and National Party) promises of grants to community groups, but then abused those groups for publicly asking them to do so. Very smart stuff!

The party responded to these revelations by apologising and saying that the party operative would be counselled. What does that mean? Pathetic really, the operative should have been dismissed on the spot.

16. The Clark (formerly Denison) candidates faced a radio grilling at the end of last week. Intriguing stuff.

The Labor candidate spoke with passion about fairness, but in a very general "chant the mantra" sort of way – obviously vague on detail.

The Liberal candidate commented on the Labor proposals regarding changes to the tax arrangements, but got it wrong, and then said – in response to a question about homosexuality – that we were all sinners and that we need to seek forgiveness from God, as per the Gospel teachings.

The Greens candidate expressed concern about lobby groups (but not obviously environmental ones), and advised that the recent bushfires in the World Heritage Area were caused by dry lightning, and that dry lightning had only been around since 2000, and that as a result we should now "panic" about climate change – very helpful.

Unfortunately, the UAP candidate did not front – presumably too busy working on his family tree! Was he really a descendant of Joe Lyons?

Which left it to the Independent candidate to fill the void, which he did. He will romp home in a canter.

So, with 5 days to go, the leaders will now be concentrating their time and efforts on the obvious swinging seats, seeking as many photo opportunities as possible, and maybe even providing some late lollipops in a desperate last-minute bid to lock in votes. At least it keeps them busy. Meanwhile over 20% of the electorate will have already voted.

### ***From the sublime...***

The Hobart City Council has introduced "smart" parking meters, designed to ensure not only that each parking bay be used for no longer than the maximum period, but also that if a car leaves the parking bay with unexpired time, that the meter is reset to zero.

An in-ground monitor can sense when a car leaves and enters the parking bay.

The by law states that one shall not stay in the bay beyond the time limit. However, practice until now has been to "feed the meter", enabling one to stay beyond the designated time. No longer.

The current issue is that a meter will, on expiry, allow one to feed the meter for a further period, taking the money, while the in-ground sensor recognizes the car has not moved, and therefore has overstayed and can now be booked.

The reason the two pieces of technology – the above-ground meter and the in-ground monitor – don't talk to each other is that they were provided by two separate companies. Now which genius in the HCC came up with that one!!!

It could be seen as taking money under false pretences. The meter says yes, but the monitor says no. Council defends its position, but the present arrangement is indefensible, particularly in the public eye.

While the argument rages, a motorist has four options:

- Drive away
- Leave the car on the expired meter and cop the fine
- Move the car to another parking bay
- Move the car out from the bay, and then move it back in.

There is an App – EasyPark - which one can download onto one's phone that does away with the parking meter altogether, PLUS, you only pay for the time used. It's all done by credit card.

Council may need to give some further thought before rushing to defend the present arrangement.

The General Manager has gone into print in defence of the more draconian approach taken by Council, done he says to encourage more people to come into the city. That is all well and good. Maybe he should also give some thought to increasing the number of parking bays, not just in the CBD, thus encouraging more customers, and allowing them to stay longer, which is obviously what they want to do.

But.....why was the General Manager silent on these other two matters (the monitors not talking to the meters and the Easy Park app) when it came to his article in the paper on Monday defending the present system?