

ISSUE 1920

# "In Support of Progress" Newsletter

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**A strategy to hold on to government**

**An Industrial Matter**

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## ***The Numbers Game***

For some, it has been a revelation. Government wants to hold on to government! The arithmetic is simple – to gain a majority of 13 in a chamber of 25. The government has that number, although with a rogue element in the Speaker, who remains in the Liberal Party under duress. The task becomes a little harder when members of the team don't play the game. A majority government in name only, but a majority government nonetheless.

A further analysis of the arithmetic exposes the fact that to win government one needs to win 3 of the 5 seats in the 3 northern electorates, because the two southern seats will remain 2 2 1 for some time to come, owing to the presence of a strong Green vote in those seats.

What better way to win those three seats than to be parochial. "We are for the north!". "The north is being hard done by." "Those southerners, getting all that money!" "That Hobart bubble which doesn't understand the needs of the regions!", and so it goes. Shame the Premier fell about laughing as he said it – he obviously doesn't believe it - but he said it because it was part of the strategy.

It is by all measures a co-incidence that 7 of the 9 members of Cabinet are from the north – that is simply where the majority of government members reside. But a happy co-incidence none-the-less.

The government has unashamedly and unabashedly played that card, and it has worked. Guess what card will now be played by them at the next election, and beyond, and I guess by any party that wants to win government?

Every upside has a downside. The risk in promoting this strategy is that the southern seats may go 3 1 1 in retaliation, and it is a simple fact that the government is not strong in those seats.

This is how the game is being played. Cheap shots for short term gain, but gain it is. So let there not be any wringing of hands and cries of shock horror – that is simply the way things are in this island state – always has been and always will be. That is the sad fact of life.

## ***Industrial Relations***

After 18 months of protracted negotiations over public service pay rises, and over 140 meetings that went nowhere, the government has decided to allow the case to go to arbitration. "Let the umpire decide!". The announcement was met with typical bile. Why not do that before now? Why wait so long? What a mess! What chaos! Cant organize a chook raffle! Etc. etc.

And yet...has it in fact been in the government's interest to prolong and postpone? Has this delay been simply a strategy employed by the government to NOT get a deal? Maybe so.

Why would they not want a deal? Well, for starters, not agreeing to a pay deal means a tighter control can be exercised over the state's finances and makes the

figures look good for the last financial year. Interesting that the decision to go to the arbitration was made on the last day of the financial year.

Further, if/when the Industrial Commission does decide on the pay rise, no matter what it might be, and even if it is backdated, the costs will be met out of this year's budget. The government can blame someone else for causing damage to the budget, especially as it was looking decidedly optimistic anyhow. Macchiavellian it may well be, and unfair it may well be, but a tried and true negotiating tactic when one doesn't want change.

### **Battery of the Nation**

In recent times some further comment has hit the airwaves about our Hydro becoming the "Battery of the Nation". Four sites out of 16 possible sites have now been chosen to consider the "pumped hydro" option. The second BassLink cable, called Marinus is being promoted and new wind farms are being considered. It all sounds very exciting.

So far so good. Everyone in the energy game is beavering away doing business plans, designing gear, calculating the benefits.

But let us look a little closer. The hydro system has an installed capacity of some 2500 MW, most of which is used in Tasmania. The pumped hydro option, if ALL schemes were to come into play might add another 2000MW. Windfarms can add more, but they are intermittent suppliers of power.

One option for the Marinus cable is that it will have a capacity of 1200 MW, Together with the BassLink cable, which has a capacity of some 600MW - maximum – we have an outlet for 1800 MW, assuming all on-land transmission lines have the capacity to carry the load.

Recently in the mainland press, the owners of the Yallourn power station, a coal fired power station in Victoria's Latrobe Valley, advised that it was considering closing it earlier than the 2032 deadline. Yallourn has an installed capacity of 2200 MW and supplies 22% of Victoria's power needs.

Now I am in favour of the development of the second cable and the future development of our power resource. Unequivocally so. However, let's have a reality check, and let's not get carried away with the hype. "Battery of the Nation" is just some language to make Tasmanians feel good. The national grid is going to require a helluva lot more than the ridiculously small amount of power that the "Battery of the Nation" will be able to supply into the national grid, relative to what will be needed if/when coal is phased out.

### **Macquarie Point**

I am an enthusiast for writing good stories about developments at Mac Pt, as you know. How they were too busy to accommodate Dark MoFo, how they have it seems, now after only 5 years – or is it 6 now – almost completed remediation works on the first of 5 remediation sites, and of the exciting development of a bike track and veggie garden. They have of course been waiting expectantly for the Eden Project people to provide them with a business plan, for the Hobart Council to approve some master plan reset, and they have been in constant contact (ie having meetings) with appropriate stakeholders. Yes, very busy indeed!

I note the new Minister for Infrastructure, the former Health Minister, has got the bug, and is talking up the work that has already been done on the site. Unfortunately for him, there is not too much to talk about, quite yet. A good start might be to disclose the government's vision for the site!

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