



THE FILE - 3

Peter Adamis August 2014

It is time we took stock of what is occurring in our own environment and consider what is best for us in order to survive in an age of technology, misrepresentations and where privacy, truth and/or freedom to speak are being choked to death and overwhelmed by the raw material of a digital world that we live in today.

The strategic battle for Hawthorn. Well, well, I told you so is all that I can muster at the moment. Every drover and his dog is coming out of the wood work to be considered for the safe seat of Hawthorn. I don't know whether to laugh or cry at some of the dismal contenders and all that I can say is to watch listen and laugh (not cry or learn). We are about to witness some interesting turn of events that may change the face of politics for many years to come. Plans, plots and methodologies are about to be unravelled from the moth ball chambers that they have been stored. I for one believe that those who have kept their powder dry for so long are about to become explosive in nature and finally come to their sense to unite against a common opponent.

Mary Wooldridge - will she take up the cudgel? I thought that it was of some interest that Jeff Kennett a former Premier of Victoria was given the courtesy of whether he was interested in Hawthorn and his laconic reply that he did not have the experience was even more characteristic of his colourful personality. On the other hand with David Davis public stating that he is no longer interested and with John Elliot merely making waves for the sake of it, leaves it open for Mary Wooldridge to decide whether it's in her interest to contest the seat. If she does take the bait being offered, the powers to be will only readily move heaven and earth to ensure that the seat of Hawthorn is offered to her on a plate.

Sour grapes and bitter environment. This scenario will of course create a sour grapes environment and leave a bitter taste in the two up and coming young "johns", (John Pesutto and John Roskam). Whatever the case may be, based on my assumptions of what is best for the party and the many years of good work being undertaken, my bet still is on John Pesutto being the successful contender. To consider any other will be sending a powerful negative message to the membership at large. This battle for Hawthorn could not have come at worst time for the Liberal party in the wake of the recent BaillieuGate scandal and one hopes that this matter will be put to rest once and for all.

Ramifications and fallout. As discussed in a previous **THE FILE** article, the vacuum left behind in the Eastern Metropolitan region is a shoe in for the likes of Keith Wolahan. This young man who has been working diligently behind the scenes should take on the mantle of political responsibility and carve out a political career that will enhance an already dying empire of a bygone era. Keith Wolahan will be able to work with like minded individuals to strengthen the Liberal party presence and thus ensure that it remains within the Liberal heartland. There is no other serious new and invigorating candidate that comes to mind at this stage.

Political ideological battles. Victorian politics is about to become even more interesting over the next three months. Furthermore the battle for control of the Liberal Party is not a new phenomenon and as such battles have been raging for time immemorial. What we are about to witness over the coming months are racks in the political systems and paradigms that we have been taking for granted for too long. Political leaders and those of influence will soon become irrelevant and relegated to a bygone era never to rise again and influence the silent majority who have been taking it n the chin for too long.

Social media and the political connection. This is a concept that will become part of our lives in more ways than we think. The public will be able to express their voting patterns on line and as such their views will be taken seriously by a government that will try to work in the interests of the people it was elected to serve. What will this mean to the average voter is yet to be quantified and be analysed for the long term. One hope that comments and private discussions are not aired on line as they tend to became fact even though they are based on innuendoes and misrepresentation of the facts. By the time the truth is revealed, it's too late and the damage is irreparable. A good example of this was the ill-conceived witch hunt against a number of Liberals regarding the alleged leaking of the Liberal party emails and their collusion with Labor over the BaillieuGate leaked tape.

Out with old guard and in with the new. The old guard on both sides of the political divide will soon come to an end and in their place will arise a new breed of political gladiators to battle in the arena. These new, young, eager and enthusiastic warriors have been diligently honing their political skills in the finance, property development, business, education, military, legal and government sectors. In each case many of these will be filtered through the various political challenges that they will face and only the most resilient, craft, courageous and determined ones will succeed. Future articles of THE FILE will bring them to the public eye.

Let us reason together for Team Australia. Sometimes an image or a simple cartoon is all that it takes for 'reason' to take root and grown when all else fails. Leaders chosen to lead will if they are smart surround themselves with the best possible advisers that they can find. This is not something new, but the trick is to find those advisers that are not afraid to tell their leaders the truth based on information that has been thoroughly researched and tested. In the case of Tony Abbott he is fortunate to be blessed by some excellent advisers whose sole mission is the long term security and economic security of Australia. Once the facts are known it is then up to the leader to select the best possible course of action to take from a political point of view. In many cases it's like being between a rock and a hard place where it will make no difference which action is taken it may mean not being able to please everyone.

Tony Abbot has now arrived at this very juncture and it will be of interest to observe how he will extricate himself from this predicament over the Australian Islamic community failing to meet with him to discuss the matter of security, overseas Jihadists, radicalisation of the Australian Muslim youth, freedom to travel overseas based on profiles and suspect individuals that have been monitored by ASIO and ASIS. Without knowing the complete reasons for the failure of Victorian Muslim leaders to meet with the Prime Minister, one thing is for certain and that is the Muslim leaders are demonstrating a complete lack of respect for the office of the Prime Minster by their refusal to meet with Tony Abbott.



Let it be so providing we can agree to disagree on some matters that vex our communities.

Come! Let us reason together and discuss what is best for all the Australians of our society

The Victorian Islamic leaders must realise that it's not Tony Abbott that they are boycotting, but the office that he represents and as such it's an affront to all Australians. No Australian when requested to have an audience with the Prime Minister of Australia should refuse. The best form of courtesy is to attend and to listen with the respect due to the office. Alternatively send a representative who can speak on behalf of the organisation who has been invited. In most countries to refuse such an invitation is paramount to placing oneself above and beyond the parameters of the society they live in and eventually become outcasts representing no one but themselves.

If this is what the Victorian Islamic leaders want to demonstrate, then they have embarked on misrepresenting the majority of the Victorian Muslim communities who seek peaceful solutions. After all, are we not always being subjected media calls that Islam is a religion of peace.

Electorate by electorate exposure.

As we enter the phony aspect of the State election campaign we shall attempt to provide readers with information gleaned from each electorate that may influence the course of the election and the rise and fall of political parties for the next election. At this stage, each electorate has its issues confronting it and it is not yet known what issues will be the deciding factors that political parties will be judged upon. These will be garnered over the next few months in conjunction with domestic and overseas events in order to obtain provide a broad view of what will be the deciding factors that will lead to a successful political outcome.



Senior Liberals leaking to the press. Who are these 'senior Liberals' that continually leak to the press information that is sacred and held in custody on behalf of the membership. Are they talking with the media in order to ingratiate themselves that they are in the know and part of the so called inner circle of the 'Boys Club'. What silly people they must be, thinking that they can be so 'treacherous' in their behaviour. Why don't they have the 'intestinal fortitude and the balls to be named and to stand up to be counted. "Weak bastards if you ask me. It's all right for these so called 'Senior Liberals to leak information and seek out the alleged political guerrillas who leaked out the Liberal party addresses. What a waste of time of resources, manpower and money.

It's one thing to comment, another to have an opinion and grossly out of character and un-Australian to leak information that creates cracks and instability and lack of trust with the membership of any political party and/or organisation that is dedicated to the well being and long term security of this country we call home, Australia. We all ready are aware of some of them from previous articles put out by the media and from online sources easily available on the internet, but it is those who hide behind the veil of political respectability that concerns many of us. Its time for a change and the sooner it arrives the better for all concerned.

Those responsible need to be reminded that leaking to the press is damaging to any political process, especially at a time when a State election is looming. They are probably the same so called 'Senior Liberals' who are saying that some sections of the membership want the Liberal party to lose government in order for a reshuffle to take place and a revolution of the party's organisation to be implemented. They all remind me of a bucket that is shot full of holes!

Social media communication. The social media comments, rants, raves, images and videos are and have been a part of the political scene for the past ten years and only the past twelve months have the major parties come to realise that effective use of social media can reap benefits in the long term. Social media over rides many barriers that the average person in the street has to overcome to keep up with the news. We had written about the communication aspects and the importance of reaching voters using social media in the past and due to unfortunate recent events the public has come to realise that they can be in any place on earth witnessing atrocities and real time events within the safety of their homes.

This is not a new medium nor a new format for the dissemination of news, as its origins began some 40 years ago during the Vietnam war. Horrific images of war were streamed directly back home to a news hungry public eager to see what their sons and government were doing in a foreign country allegedly freeing them from oppression. However all this changed post Vietnam war and there was in some cases attempts to curb news journalists from reporting on the negativity of war and its effect on a public whose opinion was able to influence politicians.

The pendulum swung back during the first Gulf war where the world was showered by a array of smart bombs being dropped on selected buildings, the rapid approach to Bagdad in Iraq, the minimal casualties of war, the continual 'fire cracker' explosions and the shock and awe of the whole war scene being played out in our living rooms. Social media was in its infancy at that time but that changed dramatically over the years with Facebook, Youtube, blogs and the mainstream media latching onto a digital means of transmitting news. Those who made it their business to keep abreast of the technological changes (like myself) were not surprised by the revolutionary pace of social media but to the others it came as a shock to the system.

What has this all to do with the political scene in Australia and elsewhere? Everything! Soon there will be nothing sacred nor anything that we consider to be personal or private within the Privacy Act and lives and real time events will be streaming into our living rooms a lot more that we can imagine. We will feel part of the unravelling drama, be affected emotionally by the turn of events and such in the case of political drama, vote with our feelings and emotions based on what we are being fed rather than considering all of the aspects of policies and what political parties actually represent.

I have written section on the links between social media and politics as we shall see soon over the next 95 days matters that may shock and surprise some but to others it will mean that it was to be expected. There some very clever people out there in the world of social media whose skills were gained during their early school years and enhanced once they entered into the work force. A work force that was cluttered with technology, that had few safeguards and barriers that curtailed an individual from misusing the technology for mischievous and nefarious activities.

Today it is possible to fake any image, change any video to make it appear that a person who is speaking is saying something other than what he or she actually has said, make a person be in a place where they have never been, create digital environments that make it appear so real that it's almost impossible to deny. It's also my understanding that it's possible to control a home digital environment eternally and to control events. Emails can appear and be taken off your personal laptop and PC and documents added and removed without your notice. This is indeed a scary scenario and one must be vigilant at all times.

Therefore, what we read, see and hear may appear at first to be true, but all such matters of a digital format must always be taken with some degree of scepticism rather than to be believed by what we are being subjected to. This is a lesson as well as a cautionary warning to our politicians and those in government responsible for the security of Australian society. Technology combined with new and revolutionary changes in nanotechnology will enable governments and information providers to store images for almost forever and/or as long as mankind exists. The age of the matrix truly exists and don't be surprised when a link is made with human thought and that with the digital world.



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DAVID DAVIS RESPONDS TO LOCAL PARAMEDICS

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: David Davis, Minister for Health
Aug. 12, 2014,

AS Minister for Health, I fully understand and appreciate the wonderful job paramedics do in attending to ill and injured Victorians, 24 hours per day. In response to letters from paramedics Paul McMahon, Bernard Goss and Glenn Lazzaro I too acknowledge and value their work.

And it's because of our appreciation that the Victorian Coalition government is supporting Ambulance Victoria to provide our paramedics with the salary increases they rightfully deserve, and to maintain their superannuation and other benefits. This is in contrast to their union, which is using our paramedics as the meat in the sandwich in its politically-motivated campaign to discredit Ambulance Victoria and the government.

Ambulance Victoria, supported by the government, has been negotiating in good faith for two years to bring to a conclusion to the current enterprise bargaining agreement, but the ambulance union leadership has a vested interest in not resolving the dispute. Mr Goss, Mr Lazzaro and Mr McMahon claim that an ALS6 paramedic only earns about \$70,000. However, in addition to base wages, paramedics are entitled to a number of other benefits that increase their overall total remuneration package. These include:

- Leave loading that equates to \$1300 a year for an ALS6;
- Defined benefit superannuation contributions that equate to \$9600 a year for an ALS6;
- Fringe benefits that can be a maximum of \$9095 a year, which has a grossed-up tax value of \$17,000 a year; and
- Meals-entertainment benefit that allows employees to salary sacrifice an uncapped amount of further eligible claims.

When the pay increases in the Ambulance Victoria Settlement offer are applied, by the last year of the proposed agreement, a typical ALS6 would be in receipt of a total annual remuneration package of around \$110,000, before any additional overtime is added. Mr McMahon claims that the government has stonewalled and dragged out the EBA negotiations for more than two years, but nothing could be further from the truth. The delay in finalising a settlement rests entirely with the current leadership at the Ambulance Employees Australia Victoria who are politically aligned with the Labor Party.

This is what we are offering our hard-working paramedics:

- A \$3000 sign-on payment for full-timers (pro-rata for part-timers);
- In 2014, a six per cent increase on base wages and relevant allowances on approval of the Agreement by the Fair Work Commission;
- A further three per cent increase from July 1, 2015;
- Another three per cent increase from July 1, 2016; and
- Consent arbitration of the paramedic work value claim by the independent umpire the Fair Work Commission.

There is another agenda at play here the union facilitation clause. It is clear that the union wants to ensure that the union facilitation clauses are preserved, and this means payment for union secondments and payments for union members to attend union meetings, rather than being on the road. It is interesting that while the union seems to have at least partially backed off from its initial \$1.3 billion log of claims, one part it has not backed off from is the expansion in the union facilitation clause.

The expansion would see more union secondment in other words, more ambulance officers taken off the road to put their feet under the desks at the union office. Instead of saving the lives of Victorians, they would be paid by ambulance subscribers and government money to do union work. The Victorian Coalition government does support our paramedics, and the sooner they get the chance to vote on their EBA without the heavy-handed interference of their union leaders, the sooner they will receive the pay increases they deserve.

<http://www.gippslandtimes.com.au/story/2478266/davis-responds-to-local-paramedics/?cs=1324>



LIBERAL STALWART JOHN ELLIOTT CONSIDERS TILT IN HAWTHORN

August 23, 2014 Farrah Tomazin The Sunday Comeback? John Elliott. Photo: ABC - The Agony of Modern Manners. Former Carlton president John Elliott is considering running for preselection in Ted Baillieu's blue ribbon seat of Hawthorn, with the 72-year-old boldly declaring he could help the Napthine government's chances at November's state election.

A day after Mr Baillieu surprised colleagues by announcing he was quitting politics, jostling for the former premier's safe seat intensified on Saturday, with Denis Naphine's legal counsel John Pesutto firming as a frontrunner, frontbencher Mary Wooldridge still declining to reveal her plans, and Mr Elliott - a former Liberal Party president - contemplating his chances. "I could help them along a bit, I think," he told *The Sunday Age*. "I only learnt about it on Friday at about half-past five, so I've said I would contemplate it and make a decision within a week."

While party insiders doubt Mr Elliott is serious, pursuing a political comeback would not be out of character for the colourful businessman, who recently campaigned to become Melbourne's deputy lord mayor. However, a more likely contest would come down to a choice between Mr Pesutto, who was Mr Baillieu's industrial adviser and now works in Dr Naphine's private office, and Institute of Public Affairs director John Roskam, who is believed to be interested but could not be contacted on Saturday.

"I can confirm that I am seriously considering nominating for preselection for Hawthorn and that I am consulting party members from across the electorate and state," Mr Pesutto said. "I will make a formal announcement soon." Health Minister David Davis (whose upper house region takes in the seat of Hawthorn) has now ruled out standing, putting to bed speculation of a move to the lower house, while Ms Wooldridge (who was parachuted into a safe upper house seat after losing a bruising preselection in Kew) was still not commenting about her intentions.

Party insiders are divided as to whether Ms Wooldridge should nominate: some say it would be a "bad look" given the effort it took to find the minister a safe seat in the wake of the Kew bloodbath; others point to her leadership potential, and the fact that she has often enjoyed Mr Baillieu's support, as reasons she should. The Liberal Party's administrative committee will meet on Monday to discuss the process for nominating Mr Baillieu's replacement. Usually Liberal preselections are put to a local vote, but given the election is only 97 days away, it is more likely that the administrative committee will pick a candidate to fast-track the process.

Mr Baillieu's decision to stand down caught the government off-guard on Friday, and party insiders remain puzzled about the timing of his decision, given he resisted pressure to quit earlier this year to assist Ms Wooldridge staying in the lower house. However, it is understood that the former premier only came to the conclusion to bow out of politics last week, after 15 years in parliament. On Saturday, the tributes continued, with his former chief of staff Michael Kapel - now the government's Commissioner to the Americas - describing Mr Baillieu as "a man of great dignity and intelligence who made a huge contribution to the advancement of the state".

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/liberal-stalwart-john-elliott-considers-tilt-in-hawthorn-20140823-107o9u.html>

VICTORIAN ELECTION: JOHN ELLIOTT CONSIDERS RUNNING IN HAWTHORN

Sat 23 Aug 2014. PHOTO: Mr Elliott has confirmed he is considering throwing his hat into the ring. (ABC TV). Former Liberal Party president John Elliott has confirmed to the ABC he is thinking about whether to stand in the Victorian state election in November. It comes after Ted Baillieu announced he would not recontest the blue ribbon seat of Hawthorn. Mr Elliott, who is 72, was the president of the Liberal party for three years from 1987 and spent two decades as president of Carlton Football Club. He will make a decision on whether or not to run next week. It is understood the Liberal Party would not need to hold pre-selections for the seat because the election is so close. Other possible candidates include John Pesutto, the legal counsel to the premier and a former industrial relations adviser to Mr Baillieu.



John Roskam from the Institute of Public Affairs is also believed to be interested. Community Services Minister Mary Wooldridge, who secured a safe Upper House seat after losing a bruising preselection battle in Kew, has refused to comment on speculation she may also be interested in Hawthorn. Health Minister David Davis, who has an Upper House seat, has declared he is not contemplating a move.

"I can assure people widely that I'm not a candidate but I wish the administrative committee well in its deliberations as it proceeds forward," he said. The Liberal Party's administrative committee will discuss the preselection process at a meeting on Monday. Mr Baillieu, the former Liberal premier, represented Hawthorn, in Melbourne's inner-east, since 1999. He has been on the backbench since resigning as premier last year.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-08-23/john-elliott-considers-election-run-in-hawthorn/5691632>



THE PARTY - AND THE STATE - NEEDS JEFF KENNETT BACK, WRITES TERRY MCCRANN

TERRY MCCRANN HERALD SUN AUGUST 22, 2014.
Jeff Kennett with Ted Baillieu.

JEFF, please, please come back. Hopefully, straight as premier after the state election in three months. The party needs you - more importantly, the state needs you.

Ted Baillieu's belated recognition of reality – that there was as much point in him staying in parliament as a failed leader backbencher, as it would have been for Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard to have done so – has opened the door. But it's the Liberal Party which needs to ask you to walk through it. Indeed, the party should insist you walk through it.

The most important invitation has to come from the premier Denis Naphine, closely followed by the two who will compete for the title of opposition leader if – more pointedly when - he loses the coming election. Bluntly, in short, Jeff Kennett has to come back not just as the next member for the blue ribbon seat of Hawthorn. But once parliament finishes and the countdown starts to polling day, to take the Liberals as leader to that election. Let me break this down into key points.

First the party needs you. It is looking down the gun at being the first one-term government in Victoria since the 1950s – perhaps setting an awful precedent for their colleagues in Canberra. In particular the competing heirs to the Naphine succession need you. Planning minister Matthew Guy and treasurer Michael O'Brien face the prospect of spending the next decade fighting over the title of opposition leader, Andrew Peacock and John Howard, 1980s-style.

If he's honest with himself, Naphine should recognise it would be better to be a minister in a Kennett cabinet than an ex (half-term) premier. Most importantly the state needs you. Since you were 'invited' by the electorate to retire as premier in 1999, the state, its governance and most critically of all its leadership has gone downhill. First the genial Steve Bracks and the grumpy John Brumby splurged the hard-won financial strength you and your treasurer Alan Stockdale had built it by taking the tough and unpopular decisions.

On Myki, on the desal plant, on any number of other billion dollar disasters. Then a do-nothing Baillieu government sat on its hands until rogue MP Geoff Shaw made the state virtually ungovernable. Victoria now has significantly higher unemployment than NSW, close to the level of South Australia. We now face a most unattractive choice of a well-meaning but insipid Napthine and an equally insipid Daniel – or should that be Dan – Andrews, but would be leading ministers and a government that would wreak all the financial havoc of their predecessors. Only a Kennett-led Liberal party could offer Victorians not simply a future of competent government, but of optimism – a sense of direction, of purpose.

Kennett has changed and grown since he lost the 1999 election. He's kept his confidence, his sense of optimism, but he's also matured, become more inclusive. To my mind the last 15 years of variously incompetent and ineffective government and even more insipid 'leaderless' leadership would make most Victorians appreciate the Kennett-Stockdale years; indeed even think fondly of them. Yes it would be unusual for Kennett to lead the government – actually, just the party - from outside parliament. But Campbell Newman showed it could be done in Queensland – admittedly, in opposition. The state needs two things: leadership and a choice. Which choice would you prefer: Napthine v Andrews or Kennett v Andrews? Which of the three can provide the leadership and direction we need?

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/the-party-and-the-state-needs-jeff-kennett-back-writes-terry-mccrann/story-fnocy1xj-1227033736690>

FORMER PREMIER JEFF KENNETT HAS RULED OUT A RETURN TO THE PREMIERSHIP

JOHN MASANAUSKAS HERALD SUN AUGUST 23, 2014

Former premier Jeff Kennett has ruled out a return to Parliament. FORMER premier Jeff Kennett has ruled out returning to his old job, joking that he is too young and inexperienced.

Mr Kennett seemed bemused by a proposal that he be drafted to lead the Liberals to victory at the next election from outside Parliament, and become premier after winning the seat of Hawthorn being vacated by Ted Baillieu. "I'm too young, I'm too inexperienced," he said yesterday of the idea put by *Herald Sun* columnist Terry McCrann. "In five or 10 years' time I might think about it but I've got too much on my plate at the moment" "(My chairmanship of) Beyond Blue is more important to me than any political pursuit."

Kennett continued his attack on Mr Baillieu for quitting Parliament as Health Minister David Davis ruled himself out as a candidate for blue-ribbon Hawthorn. Asked if Mr Kennett should run and about the possible candidacy of businessman John Elliott, Mr Davis said: "I'm here launching a seniors' festival and I'm very much in favour of seniors, but it's a matter for the party to make a decision as to who it would like to represent it, and it's got its own internal processes."



John Pesutto. Frontrunners for Hawthorn are Premier Denis Napthine's legal counsel John Pesutto and Institute of Public Affairs director John Roskam, while Community Services Minister Mary Wooldridge is considered an unlikely starter. Mr Pesutto confirmed yesterday that he was seriously considering a tilt at the seat. "I will continue to consult with party members from across the electorate and state (and) I will make a formal announcement soon," he said.

A source close to Mr Roskam said he was very interested in running and felt positive about the move. Both men are friends and are highly regarded within the Liberal Party.

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria-state-election-2014/former-premier-jeff-kennett-has-ruled-out-a-return-to-the-premiership/story-fnocxssc-1227034339753>

CONSERVATIVES BATTLE TO TAKE CONTROL OF THE VICTORIAN LIBERAL PARTY

August 24, 2014 Farrah Tomazin *The Sunday Age's state political editor.*

Denis Naphine was on his way to the Bendigo Jockey Club for what spin doctors call a "good news" photo opportunity, but the bad news of the day was occupying his mind. Splashed across the national media that morning was one of his candidates for the state election, Institute of Public Affairs research fellow Aaron Lane, exposed for posting crude and homophobic tweets on social media. Naphine was furious. Laden with references to "faggots", masturbation and politicians described as "Giant C's".

Lane's comments were not only politically damaging, they also came from someone seeking to represent the upper house region of Western Victoria – which happens to take in the Premier's own much-loved electoral turf. As party chiefs in Melbourne discussed cutting him loose, Naphine didn't hesitate to seal his fate. "There is no place on my team or in the Coalition team for this sort of behaviour and these sort of comments," he told reporters in Bendigo, hours before the Liberal administrative committee was due to meet and make an executive decision.

"Mr Lane needs to step aside." It was a big call, designed to send a strong message to other candidates, not to mention voters more broadly. Yet three days later, the Premier was back in his office with staff, poring over other offensive screen grabs about to hit the press: this time showing the Facebook rants of Bendigo West candidate Jack Lyons, whose posts involved everything from rape jokes and racism, to juvenile stupidity.

By the weekend, it was the Young Liberals' turn: two members of the Melbourne University Liberal Club were caught describing women as "sluts" and Muslims as "degenerates", and 24 hours later, another Liberal student for making offensive comments while he was the vice-president of the Swinburne University Liberal Club. With 97 days before November's election, the events of recent months are not only a bad look for a government flagging in the opinion polls, they have also given rise to valid questions about the culture of the Victorian Liberal Party, and whether hardline forces are gaining ascendancy within its ranks.

In isolation, the social media gaffes could be dismissed as a salient lesson on the perils of Twitter and Facebook. But in recent months there have been other signs, too: a botched attempt at the Liberal state council to manipulate a vote for control of the party's powerful administrative committee; Liberal backbenchers encouraging Geoff Shaw to agitate for changes to abortion law; the government's decision to attend a controversial pro-life/anti-gay event later this month. Even a leaked Dictaphone recording of a private conversation in which former premier Ted Baillieu criticised some colleagues is believed to involve "Tea Party style" operatives working in conjunction with Labor to destabilise the Naphine government.

As one senior Liberal told *The Sunday Age*: "I have no doubt there are some people in our party who wouldn't mind seeing the government fall if it meant they could rebuild it with their own prototypes." So what exactly is going on? Is there a growing infiltration of extreme right-wingers trying to flex more muscle in the Victorian branch? Are they merely irritants, or actual impediments to public policy? Or is this simply part of the ebb and flow of modern politics; the product of ever-shifting factional alignments within the party's ranks?

Every party, after all, has had its share of rogues over the years, and the Liberals are no different. In 2008, two staffers working for the organisation started an anonymous blog devoted to undermining Baillieu when he was state opposition leader, referring to him as "Red Ted" and accusing him of being too far "left" to be leader. An investigation traced the blog back to members of the Liberal campaign unit, based at the party's headquarters in Melbourne.

Those who were there at the time admit the event was politically damaging, but it also gave the party the chance to flush out "destructive individuals" and rebuild. Unsurprisingly, Labor is now crafting a narrative designed to convince progressive-minded swinging voters that a new breed of destructive individuals are creeping back in. Baillieu's shock resignation on Friday will further fuel claims the dynamics are shifting.

"It is not an accident that more and more often we are hearing extreme right-wing sentiments - extremely offensive sentiments - from Liberal MPs and candidates," says Labor's shadow attorney-general, Martin Pakula. "They are the logical consequence of what the Liberal Party is fast on the road to becoming." Also unsurprisingly, Liberal hardheads vehemently disagree. Some argue all sides of politics play to their base by espousing "strident" views and social media has simply provided more avenues for those views to be aired, whether we like them or not.

Others admit there might be a few rogue elements - variously labelled as "staffers in political offices", "free market radicals", or just "stupid people doing stupid things" - but this didn't necessarily point to a broader shift across party ranks. "There's probably a small, noisy group of people who are agitating at the sidelines," one senior Liberal told *The Sunday Age* last week, "but I don't subscribe to the view that we're about to be overwhelmed by them."

One thing is certain: the Victorian Liberal Party is a particularly broad church, comprising religious right MPs such as Bernie Finn; the socially conservative Attorney-General, Robert Clark; small-l Liberals such as Baillieu, Mary Wooldridge and David Davis; economic hardheads such as Treasurer Michael O'Brien; backbenchers representing Melbourne's so-called "Bible belt" in the eastern suburbs; and Napthine himself: a 62-year-old country MP who is quite traditional on some issues, and politically pragmatic on others.

And while the philosophical divide between conservatives and moderates is often overstated, keeping the doors of the broad church open is a delicate balancing act. Perhaps this goes some way to explaining the government's decision to take part in next Saturday's World Congress of Families - a controversial conference discussing abortion, euthanasia, and the "pro-family policies" of the US and Russia - despite a potential backlash from voters.

Boiled down, the conference is a who's who of the far religious right, some of whom actively promote bigotry towards gays or hold views on abortion many Victorians would find downright

offensive. Included is Angela Lanfranchi, a US doctor who insists there's a link between breast cancer and abortion. There's World Congress managing director Larry Jacobs, an ardent supporter of Vladimir Putin's laws banning gay pride demonstrations and "homosexual propaganda". There's Louise Kirk, the UK co-ordinator for Alive to the World, who warns about school curriculums being "laced through with the homosexual agenda", and there's Reverend Fred Nile, whose recent musings on the gay "lifestyle" include calls to categorise homosexuality as a mental illness.

But the political backlash isn't so much about the speakers themselves, but the fact that senior Liberals are sharing a stage with them, which critics say implies approval. Federal Social Services Minister Kevin Andrews, who is an "international ambassador" for the World Congress of Families, will open and close the event. Victorian MP Finn - who recently claimed abortion should not be acceptable in any circumstances, including cases of rape - will talk about his role as president for "March for the Babies". Eastern region MP Jan Kronberg will chair a forum on sexuality entitled "A Gift for Life", while Attorney-General Clark, Victoria's chief lawmaker, will welcome participants to the conference.

So far Naphtine has played down the issue, arguing that welcoming a major event to Melbourne is consistent with the government's tourism strategy. But that Clark is attending a conference run by a group endorsing Russia's anti-gay policies isn't exactly a good look ahead of an election, particularly for a government that reckons it's made significant inroads in the gay community: expunging criminal records of men convicted of gay sex before homosexuality was decriminalised in Victoria; removing discrimination in the law for people with HIV; backing the No To Homophobia campaign.

Nor is it a good look for the Attorney-General himself, who Labor has repeatedly attacked over the years for comments he made as a Kennett government backbencher in 1995 when he likened homosexuality to spina bifida and noted that "homosexual practices form a destructive way of life". Clark last week defended his involvement in the conference but when asked if he stood by his comments, he appeared to back away slightly. "My view is that all people are entitled to be treated with dignity and respect regardless of sexuality," he said. "The remarks I made in 1995 were in the context of a particular debate at the time, I haven't revisited those issues in recent times."

It's hardly surprising that broad-based parties court the religious right - so, too, does Labor - but problems emerge when views espoused are so extreme that they are regarded as out of touch with the mainstream. Victoria, after all, is a fairly progressive state that has traditionally been the Coalition's weakest link. At last year's federal election, the Abbott government won a two-party preferred majority in all the mainland states - except Victoria. Here, it only secured 49.8 per cent of the vote, or 16 out of 37 seats.

Or take the 2010 election, where Baillieu's personal branding as a moderate, coupled with his firm position on traditional Liberal issues such as law and order, gave him wider appeal. Indeed, before the poll, Leslie Cannold, a left-wing feminist and ethicist, wrote a piece for *The Age* arguing that progressive voters should consider voting for Baillieu over the Brumby government if they wanted "the Liberal Party to remain a party of Liberalism - not religious conservatism". Her argument was that if Baillieu lost, his more conservative enemies would dominate the party.

The dynamics have changed in recent years (the former premier's top aides were known to vet staff appointments, keeping at bay many people with opposing factional agendas) but Liberals say this doesn't mean the party has suddenly become a haven for ultra-conservatives. One figure put it like this: "Does the prominence of people like Kevin Andrews mean social conservatism is more apparent? Maybe. But people on all sides of politics have always had strident views - now there are simply more avenues to disseminate them."

However, Monash University politics expert Nick Economou believes there has been more of a push towards the right, partly to counter what he describes as the "lefty hegemony" of Labor and the Greens, which dominated the federal landscape during the Gillard years. "It seems to me there's been quite a mobilisation of people who are looking to the Liberal Party as a vehicle to bring social conservatism back into the political debate," says Economou. With the state election only three months away, Napthine's challenge is to appeal to the masses, even in the face of "punishment politics" - whereby religious groups inflict electoral pain on MPs based on their social views.

At the 2010 election, for instance, Right to Life Australia took out ads in Frankston newspapers urging voters to preference Labor MP Alistair Harkness last in his battle against then Liberal candidate Geoff Shaw. "In October 2008, the Brumby government legalised abortion," the ad said. "Now babies in the womb have no protection. Member for Frankston Alistair Harkness voted for this legislation. Vote Harkness last." Right to Life president Margaret Tighe has vowed to adopt the same approach in November, and others are also following suit.

Last week, three socially conservative parties contesting for upper house spots - the Rise Up Australia Party, the Australian Christians and the DLP - signed an agreement to work as a block, preference one another, and help candidates who espouse similar views to their own, particularly when it comes to abortion. (They want to repeal section 8 of the act, which requires doctors with a conscientious objection to abortion to refer their patients to another specialist who doesn't object.) How much influence this will have is yet to be seen, but the sentiment is clear. "In a sense we're sending a message to the Liberals to wake up," says Danny Nalliah, Christian evangelist, head of Rise Up Australia and Catch the Fire Ministries. "This is going to be a nail-biting election, and the fact that three parties have come together to work as a bloc could shape a lot of votes in crucial seats."

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/conservatives-battle-to-take-control-of-the-victorian-liberal-party-20140822-1078h7.html>



MINISTER MAY REFER FAKE OFFENSIVE FACEBOOK RANTS TO POLICE

August 24, 2014 Farrah Tomazin *The Sunday Age's state political editor*. Multicultural Affairs Minister Matthew Guy.

Multicultural Affairs Minister Matthew Guy may ask police to investigate a series of Facebook posts purporting to be one of his staffers making highly racist and sexist comments about senior Liberals.

In a bizarre twist to the state government's recent social media woes, several Facebook screen grabs claiming to come from one of Mr Guy's employees have been distributed, with offensive references to Asians as "slopes", Arabs as "towel-heads" and Arts Minister Heidi Victoria as a "dumb blonde." The posts – which the Young Liberal staffer strenuously denies were made by him – also lashes out at Liberal frontbencher Mary Wooldridge, saying it was "f---ing bullshit that a woman" was "flown into" a safe upper house seat after failing to secure preselection in Kew earlier this year.

A spokesman for Mr Guy, who is also the state's planning minister, insisted the statements were fabricated, and the Minister's office is now considering whether to refer them to police on the grounds of fraud and defamation. But the fact they were distributed in the first place - and the considerable effort it would have taken to get them looking like genuine Facebook material - paints a worrying sign of the battles now being waged in politics using social media. *The Sunday Age* was sent copies of the screen grabs last week by someone claiming they had been collected by people "over time" from a Facebook page used by the Young Liberals. It is claimed the account was shut down after state election candidate Aaron Lane was disendorsed earlier this month for making offensive comments on Twitter.

Each one included a legitimate photo of the staffer, apparently lifted from his real Facebook profile, and the same template used by the social networking site. If the posts were genuine, they could be highly damaging for Mr Guy, whose job as Multicultural Affairs Minister involves promoting tolerance and diversity. One of the comments, for instance, refers to an event organised by a Liberal candidate of Asian descent, which says: "the last time I went to one of her events it was packed out with slopes."

Another weighs in on the metadata debate, with unsavoury references to terrorists and "towel-heads". The attempt to taint the Minister's office comes after several other Young Liberals were exposed for making homophobic and misogynistic comments on social media, and after two candidates for November's poll - Mr Lane and Bendigo West candidate Jack Lyons - were disendorsed for similar offensive rants.

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/minister-may-refer-fake-offensive-facebook-rants-to-police-20140823-107li1.html>



WHY I WON'T PLAY FOR TEAM AUSTRALIA

August 21, 2014 Jack Waterford Editor-at-large, The Canberra Times

Prime Minister Tony Abbott wants to captain team Australia as he would a boisterous boarding school. Photo: Brett Hemmins.

I don't want to play for team Australia, or for team Abbott. And I wouldn't encourage my children to, either. The real community of Australians is not a band of footy thugs ruthlessly enforcing conformity, led by a bully who doesn't hesitate to punch people on his own side, who divides people according to whether they are for or against him, and who wants everyone to defer to his judgment about matters of the general interests of the team. This is not a partisan matter. I would no more be a happy Vegemite marching for Julia Gillard against the Palestinians, or Kevin Rudd against boat people.

A part of the privilege of being Australian is that I don't have to march for anyone, sing to anyone's hymn sheet, or listen to anyone's tendentious and pretentious nonsense about patriotism and duty, respect for authority, honour and sacrifice. These are people who cannot inspire, whether with their deeds, or by their words. All too often their words pander to selfish instincts of particular members of the team, not to the natural generosity of the human spirit. These are leaders who cannot galvanise, and whose every reach into the abstract should be carefully parsed for hidden self-interest, while at the same time checking that one's wallet is not being stolen.

They may have notions of what is in the public interest, but their right to enforce these notions is contestable, and at best on leasehold. As things stand, the only argument in favour of extending the lease at the next opportunity is the feeling that Labor has yet to learn anything from its last trouncing for failing at exactly the same hurdles. My own aversion to playing in the team comes in part from Groucho Marx's injunction against belonging to the sort of clubs that would have people like yourself as members. I was once thrown out of school cadets on the grounds that I was bad for morale (the other troops would get dispirited about my being the only one in step).

But my aversion to others playing in the team is not unlike the fears of mothers about letting their darlings play rough games, like rugby, which seem to them brutal, unscientific and managed by bruisers of no conspicuous moral or intellectual leadership values such as Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey, or, for that matter, Bill Shorten or Tanya Plibersek. The only reason I would follow *any* of them, and then at a distance, would be out of curiosity about which fresh disaster they were leading us to.

One can, of course, be entirely sure that Tony Abbott has no partisan game in mind when he speaks loftily of team Australia – the collective, or family, that we are regardless of our different backgrounds, types, political opinions and disagreements. The squabbling family that is still, nonetheless, a family at heart. And the family that recognises that there are rules for resolving arguments and values we all share. Rules we all agree on, and are bound by.

Team Australia is like a boisterous boarding school, such as Riverview, where Tony Abbott went. Those who go there are the cream of the Catholic crop, having much more uniting them (particularly access to a *lot* of money) than dividing them (such as how far an ethic of obligation to others has to be taken in real life.) There are prefects and seniors, rules and traditions, and, of course, lots of little factions and friendship groups – but everyone cheers for the same side at the big games. Members of team Australia might be defined as those who feel a burst of pleasure and pride when Australia wins a gold medal at chess, or the first Ananga child to graduate from high school.

(The latter hasn't happened yet, though by the time she should have done so, about \$850,000 will have been paid to various non-Aboriginal members of team Australia "helping" her with life's struggles.) In this Enid Blyton or Frank Richards vision of the world, the example is, of course, set by the senior boys and girls, and the enduring culture of the place. That's a culture that is British, of course, or perhaps particularly English. Certainly not Scottish, apparently. And who could better encapsulate it than Tony Abbott himself, the reason why we are all so delighted when he, as a captain's call on our behalf, anathematised any idea of the end of the 1707 Act of Union and a separate Scotland.

It is never quite clear just when Tony is making a captain's call – when he is presumed both to be infallible and to be speaking on behalf of all in the team. Or when he is simply being a divisive, rancorous and fallible figure leading team Abbott out to play against the leaners and takers. His pronouncement on Scotland came in the middle of a host of other pronouncements, about the sheer wickedness of the Russians, and of soldiers in the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, where he appeared to be speaking *ex cathedra*, as it were. I am, for that matter, never quite sure into which category his occasional comments about Indonesia, Israel, China and Japan fit, though I am often uncomfortable with the remarks he has made on those as well.

I have, of course, no objection to his saying what he thinks, to his putting forward arguments in debate, and even to his right, as prime minister, to carry forward into action the things he thinks right. What I object to is his claim of a right to have us all fall obediently into line behind him when there has been argument and deliberation, on the basis that father Tony knows best. And in saying that this claim of a right sticks in the craw, I would also observe that he was never, either as a leader of the opposition or as a follower of other leaders of the opposition, conspicuous for loyalty either to the leader of *the* team, or *his* team.

Abbott has a right to denounce terrorism, and to demand that others do not practise it, here or abroad. I am not so sure that he should be able to formulate, on behalf of all Australians, just what classes of Australians – Muslims say, or Tasmanians – should think about the civic obligations, or their duty not to kill those with whom they disagree, unless Tony Abbott, on behalf of the team, has declared them to be enemies of all Australians. There are several reasons for caution. Even in my lifetime, some regular Australians – Catholics such as myself, for example – have believed things about our right to impose values on others that we no longer can do in the secular society we have become.

Not so long ago Spaniards, in the name of Catholicism, were offering Jews conversion, exile or death. It would be relativism, surely, to say that values and cultures can be defensible in different contexts. My other reservation is that sometimes I have a slight sympathy for the sentiment of our captain, but contempt for his explanation. Such as, for example, about the problems of Syria being about bad baddies and not-so-bad baddies, or the readiness with which he has assumed that the shooting down of MH17 was a positive act of Vladimir Putin's will.

And much as I tended to agree with his assessment of the need to render urgent humanitarian aid and protection to the Yazidis and Christians in northern Iraq, I was a little concerned at his idea of a fresh and unprofitable war in the area. For all I care, Abbott can even categorise things as "un-Australian", though, given the things that some "great" Australians have done and won praise for, here and abroad, I have often wondered whether there are any clubs to which Australians cannot belong on the grounds of being too ghastly or too evil. I think, frankly, he should concentrate on leading team Abbott, which is not doing at all well, and leave the slaying of uniting encomiums to governors-general, and other, more natural and uniting leaders, not so obviously muddled by battle on the field.

<http://www.smh.com.au/federal-politics/political-opinion/why-i-wont-play-for-team-australia-20140822-106r0q.html>