

NEED FOR CHANGE TO OVERCOME POLITICAL FATIGUE

With a state election just finished and now a federal campaign coming up, there is no doubt many people feeling that they are politically exhausted.

For me the thing that I find exhausting with our political system is the unnecessary complexities and overlapping that unchecked bureaucracy has done to Australia.

I reckon most people would find the three levels of government, local state and federal, to be so complex that they look at the system with total disdain. For me, when I look at the system, I see a barrage of overlapping and inefficient gobbledygook that costs taxpayers' big money each year.

If you were to go back to the time our Constitution was being drafted, you will find that it was never intended that there would be a State *and* a Federal Health Minister or a State *and* a Federal Education Minister. Yet here we have it, nearly 120 years after federation, bureaucracy is so big no one person can honestly say that the buck stops with them.

Despite all the errors that Kevin Rudd made, there was one aspect of his 2007 election campaign policies that I thought was brilliant. That was a full federal takeover of health services from the states – by referendum if need be.

Sadly, Kevin lost the ticker for meaningful change but imagine the streamlined straightforward system of governance that could have been. No buck passing over funding, no one level of government begging another level for funding. The absurdity that Medicare is federally funded yet hospitals are state run could have become a thing of the past.

The same goes for education. How could we possibly explain to our forefathers that schools are controlled by State Government, federal funds can go to private schools, the Federal Government is responsible for university tertiary education, but TAFE training remains with the state. And don't forget local Councils dabble just a bit in child care!

Wouldn't it be fantastic if there was a referendum that would properly divide government services and end the overlapping nonsense? Instead, the only constitutional change that is being spoken about is the potential for another republic referendum – essentially constitutional window dressing compared to meaningful change.

From a Council point of view, on one hand, we are a creature of the state's Local Government Act of 1993 yet on the other hand we collect a large amount of our funding from the federal government. Even this arrangement leads to complex and expensive bureaucratic arrangements to grind down better service outcomes.

Outside funding, it is getting harder and harder for people to work out just who are the ones who approve developments. Is it the state planning authority? The local Council planners or Councillors? Often residents have no idea when development application go to Council or the State Government for final approval.

There is clearly a need for streamlining of our political system. It's too big, it's complicated, it overlaps and it's inefficient. It is about time we start fixing the problem.

Last Edited: 10 Apr 2019

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