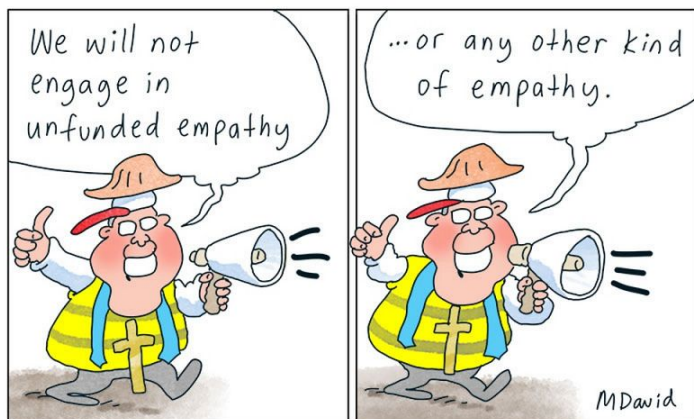


Election campaign demonstrates sorry state of Australian politics

By Jane Salmon

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Cartoon by Mark David/@markdavidcartoons

In the sea of campaigns and corflutes, it is easy to be disillusioned with Australia's political landscape, writes [Jane Salmon](#).

I'M VERY interested in policy. Over the years, I've written on politics and spent many years as a publicist, paid and unpaid, for causes such as foreign aid, forests, anti-whaling, anti-nuclear, pollution, housing, affordable education, public transport, health research, concentration of media ownership, AIDS research, particulate filtration, special needs education, the [NDIS](#), welfare, Aboriginal rights, [#MeToo](#), and refugees.

The last has taken up about nine years and entailed serious commitment, sacrifice and expense.

Five or so of my acquaintances are local candidates in this election. Having engaged with electioneering

since 1980s, there have been many campaigns. This has mainly been for Greens and Labor. More recently, various independents have also attracted a measure of support. Being a carer, facing a few of my own physical challenges, I have spent a lot of the past 15 years volunteering.

I live in a safe Liberal heartland. You are meant to be rich to live here. If you are not, you are supposed to simply rack off. The local MPs are certainly not going to help you. Comfortably off, rusted-on Australian, 2GB and Sky News audience members select their facts to suit themselves.

They strut to the booth in a defensive posture, determined to vote for what [they believe](#) to be the "common good" created from lower taxes, cronyism, corruption, greed, privatisation of national assets bought by lower-income taxpayers and franking credits without acknowledging any counter-argument or the interest in the fate of their children and grandchildren.

They insist that we should continually rearm against whatever threat arms dealers and generals can conjure. They seem happy to charge ordinary taxpayers triple the cost of public education for their private schooling. Entitlement drips from them. For most, there is a generational and gender divide, too. Independents, for example, are dismissed as "mere" women.

Little old ladies who will be given stale mush, their vaccines late, triaged out of ICU, short-staffed at the retirement village and denied a nurse in the aged care unit don't dare realise that their private

health insurance and [franking credits](#) are unlikely to protect them. They still drag themselves and their zimmer frames up to the booth to vote conservatively.

Publicly owned assets afforded by actual taxpayers get flogged off at bargain-basement rates to mates.

Some young rebels think they've done something radical by voting for billions of dollars in mining subsidies via the [United Australia Party](#). That an individual like UAP's bankroller, [Clive Palmer](#), is even allowed to set up a party raises many questions.

Every group indulges in some sort of blinkered thinking or denial. The Greens are way too fixated with drug decriminalisation, northern rivers bullshit, admin and navel-gazing. Their fixations cost them many votes. It's arrogant as is it self-defeating.

Laborites can't look themselves in the mirror over defence, democracy, draconian responses to "security", refugees and attachment to the coal lobby. Hip-pocket voting is everywhere. The lack of moral leadership from Labor in opposition has been truly concerning. Once you're on their campaigning site list, nation builder, a never-ending flood of requests for donations is a given.

[Independents courting Liberal voters](#) are smugly walking a tightrope between their market gods and conservation credentials. Many don't preference other candidates for either house which can lead to unintentional outcomes. Kitchen cabinets may exaggerate their claims of community consultation and respect. Few dare to offer a brighter world order.

Yet there is much to be learned about grassroots team-building from their campaigns. Thousands of us go wobble corflutes at dawn, leaflet stations and houses, go to street meets, door-knock, defend, donate, debate, attend candidate forums, zoom gatherings and dream. Some host parties, film and pub events. Masks, hair and brollys have been coloured teal.

Sadly, gloomy Monday morning commuters all seem certain that nothing can be done by humans to mitigate global warming.

After all this, when I see folk lining up to vote at prepoll who clearly don't know what the Senate is, it is hard to avoid despair. Citizenship and matriculation should require civics classes. The other day, I got home and mentioned this to my 18-year-old, who is clearly as disengaged, despite the piles of information sent his way. He asked: "so, how does it work, again Mum?"

The multi-millions spent on these campaigns could be helping [flood victims](#) or building refugees.

Even the folk who take your flyers reveal that they haven't thought their whole vote through. And I'm not too happy with my sixth choice for the Upper House, not that it will matter.

This is the system that has delivered us former PM [Tony Abbott](#), [Alexander Downer](#), [Peter Dutton](#), [Pauline Hanson](#) and PM Scott Morrison and many more truly odd parliamentarians.

Either we get rid of compulsory voting or we complicate it to the point where mainstream media watching zombies can only botch their ballots.

This week feels like the last time I drag myself out to watch or to help. I despair for humanity and I am simply disgusted with the folly of many Australians.

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