

The Big Picture

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"News to use & bemuse"

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Editor: Mike Bolan

Across the news

Another instructive fortnight exploring the results of the race to the bottom by various Australian government departments...

But the Audit Office found that in serious fraud investigations, Centrelink misused its coercive powers, failed to keep records, lacked proper oversight and breached government and departmental policies. [Australian](#)

OK Investigate innocent dole recipients for fraud because Centrelink's own processes are unreliable. But at least we care for our young...right?...

VULNERABLE teenagers held in Victoria's youth justice centres are living in "disgraceful" conditions, where some are assaulted, units are dirty and poor hygiene is causing the spread of infection, according to an explosive report by the Ombudsman. [TheAge](#)

Only in Victoria...or is it?...

TASMANIAN Children's Commissioner Paul Mason has identified serious failings by child protection workers.

His report released in part yesterday portrays in graphic detail how the state system failed a girl, 12, after she was sold for sex to pay for her mother's drugs when she was returned to her care by trusting government child protection workers.

But the Children's Commissioner admitted yesterday to anger and frustration when he was left standing in ignorance by Children's Minister Lin Thorp in front of the media after she walked out of a heated, packed media conference over the Government's failure to protect the girl. [Mercury](#)

The Minister walked out? What kind of way is that to treat the Commissioner given the appalling treatment of the girl in question. But wait, there's more later in the week....

TASMANIA'S outspoken Commissioner for Children, Paul Mason, has been dumped from his job protecting Tasmania's most vulnerable children.

Mr Mason reacted without surprise to the news that he was being replaced by a senior public servant in the local child protection and family area that he has so recently condemned.

The heads of the three Tasmanian government bodies heavily criticised in Mr Mason's report police, education and child protection services all sat on the panel.

Mr Mason's report, completed in late July, found systemic failures, mistakes and an over-eagerness to "close the file" by teachers, police and child protection workers led to the 12-year-old girl "falling through the cracks". [Mercury](#)

So in Labor's Tasmania, that's how governance is carried out. By the managers.

Our politicians are leaving all the key decisions to the bureaucrats, who are creating niches for themselves, expanding their budgets and their powers at our cost...

THE delivery of indigenous services in the Northern Territory has developed into a huge bureaucratic machine.

The number of new public servants since the launch of the federal intervention almost matches the number of extra frontline troops of doctors, nurses, teachers and police.

And the department that manages indigenous affairs in the NT has increased its staff numbers by 60 per cent to more than 1100.

The scale of the growth in indigenous bureaucracy comes as remote communities complain of widespread bureaucratic wastage. Visiting government departments book out entire hotels to use only a few rooms, and officials from different departments arrive at the same meeting on separately chartered aircraft. [Australian](#)

It looks like no-one is really leading anything, least of all assuring that Australians can afford to live here...

ALMOST a decade after the Hydro Electric Commission was split into three state-owned energy companies, new figures show operating costs have risen 485 per cent, or \$1.4 billion.

At the same time, the figures show the amount of power sold has increased only 3.4 per cent. [Mercury](#)

Whatever the final figures, it's clear that more administration achieves little except more costs putting more pressure on householders....

With electricity bills now the single biggest strain on household budgets - so much so that a majority can no longer afford to heat their home - the letter warns the Premier the lights will go out on Labor at the next election unless the Government acts quickly and meaningfully to ease power price pressure. [Telegraph](#)

Government policies are driving our businesses offshore, exactly in the same way as happened in the USA...

Economists and policymakers continue to ignore the fact that all employment in tradable goods and services can be moved offshore. The only replacement jobs are in nontradable domestic services, that is, those jobs that require "hands-on" activity, such as ambulatory health services, barbers, cleaning services, waitresses and bartenders--jobs that describe the labor force of a third world country. Even many of these jobs are now filled with foreigners brought in working visas.

...The loss of middle class jobs and incomes was covered up for years by the expansion of consumer debt to substitute for the lack of income growth. Americans refinanced their homes and spent the equity, and they maxed out their credit cards...

The latest jobs report issued today shows that America's transformation into a third world economy continues. The economy lost 95,000 jobs in September, mainly due to cuts in local education and federal employment. Part of the loss of 159,000 government jobs was offset by 64,000 new private sector jobs.

Where are the new jobs? They are in nontradable lowly paid domestic services: 32,000 were in health care and social services, and 33,900 were in food services and drinking places.

There you have it - America's "New Economy" [ICH](#)

With little left to say I am left to quote the article 'Avoid meaningless clichés like the plague'...

And, at the end of the day, this is probably not a good idea, because nothing like that ever happens around here, and even if it did, it would happen for a reason. And it would definitely seem like something out of a movie, which wouldn't be a problem. [Australian](#)

Bon chance.

That Was The Week That Was

Governance + spin

Labor in deadly embrace with Greens [Australian](#)
More power for ASIO [TheAge](#)
Mismanagement the rule in batts scheme [Australian](#) [SMH](#)
NSW Govt spins down concerns about dam [SMH](#)

Food/forestry

Food prices up [Telegraph](#)
Australian food security under threat [SMH](#)
Green mania will cripple us: Bolt [HeraldSun](#)
Bogus timber schemes revealed [Australian](#)
Tas forestry deal close [Australian](#)

Climate/water/energy/resources/environment

MDB could be a Green/Labor deal breaker [Aust](#) [BusSpec](#) [WTN](#)
Tas power prices surge to cover overheads [Mercury](#) [Merc2](#)
Sit in the cold and count pennies [Telegraph](#)
If you want a phone, you need the NBN [Australian](#)
More money on power than food [Telegraph](#)
Solar power owners being ripped off [TheAge](#)
Energy bosses get millions as power prices soar [Telegraph](#)

Health & education revolutions/communication/defence

Plenty of infrastructure problems to come: Davidson [TheAge](#)
HSC students have forgotten how to write [SMH](#)
Wireless browsing can pinpoint your location [TheAge](#)
Hospitals profiteering from parking fees/fines [TheAge](#)

Economy/social/shelter/transport/free speech/World

Bushfire legal battles commence [TheAge](#)
Intervention Inc exposed in waste [Australian](#)
Tasmania's housing shame [Mercury](#)
Tas kids commissioner sacked, inquiry weakened [Merc1](#) [Merc2](#)
Centrelink IT systems flaws lead to fraud charges [Australian](#)
Qld ratepayers revolt against Councils [CourierMail](#)
Soaring rents fuel Melbourne property crisis [TheAge](#)
Affordable housing schemes in disarray [Mercury](#)
Stamp duty is state sanctioned larceny [TheAge](#)
Human consumption outstripping Earth's production [TheAge](#)
A different view of the war on terror [ICH](#)

Communications not essential

The Howard government chose to define telecommunication as a 'non essential' service in Australia.

Essential utility services include electricity, gas, water and sewerage, with supply guarantees administered through various State and Federal authorities. Telecommunications service, is not an essential service. However, a Universal Service Obligation does exist in relation to the provision of a Standard Telephone Service. [Email from ACMA Compliance](#)

The purpose of this was probably to ease the sale of Telstra by cutting out the investment requirement to create a robust network.

The military forces all over the world have learned that communication is a vital component that helps assure control, command and information are all possible.

Anyone who can fog a mirror must realise that telecommunications are essential to enable you to contact other essential services – how do you get help for a fire if no-one knows that you've got one?

How do you run an economy if your banks cannot communicate, if the government cannot communicate?

This grotesque denial of reality by the Howard government, has been embraced by Labor in their NBN program. Worse yet they propose to remove the existing telephone copper wire network – presumably to force people to pay to upgrade to the NBN and thereby justify its outrageous costs.

If Australians do not opt in to the national broadband network (NBN) as it is rolled out they will lose their fixed-line phone service unless they pay a one-time fee of about \$300.

Communications Minister Stephen Conroy has said repeatedly that he would not be forcing homes on to the NBN, however, if consumers want to keep their fixed-line telephone service once Telstra has decommissioned its copper network, then they will need to connect to the new network.

Although the government is covering the installation costs now, those who decline to allow NBN Co on to their property will need to pay up to \$300 to connect to the NBN at a later date, according to ISP iiNet chief regulatory officer Steve Dalby. [TheAge](#)

What Labor is doing is threatening Australia's security and our economy because copper wires carry power to run the telecommunications network while optical fibre requires external power to offer telecommunications.

That means that if we rip out the copper network, then any power outage will also shut down all of our telecommunications (mobile phone towers rely on land lines too). An outage in the right place and we'll get a black out for banks, police, fire, ambulance, businesses – everyone. Worse yet, anyone who can cut the fibre cable can create such a black out.

Supply chains, finance, security – all easily compromised by cutting a wire.

How long before people learn how to black an area out for their own purposes? In Tasmania we're even stringing the broadband cable between power poles to make blacking out whole areas even more likely. And how will the 'authorities' know there's a black out? No-one will be able to phone to let them know.,

Is the federal government really stupid enough to do this?

Listen to Stephen Conroy and make up your own minds.