

From: Peter Brohier [peterbrohier@maptag.com.au]

Sent: Tuesday, 15 April 2008 7:17 AM

To: consumer (Ex email)

Subject: Submission Consumer Framework enquiry
Submission - Consumer Framework enquiry

I have read with interest following article by Mr Flanagan. If his conclusions are correct it is a matter for the Tasmanian people and their governance. But I wonder how many democratic governments across the world face similar dilemmas?

I believe that if democratic governments funded a public think tank and public lobby to balance the public interest with those of industry there may be a more balanced approach to many issues.

Perhaps your report can recommend that the Federal Government advance the Productivity Commission's role in this way. Perhaps the Productivity Commission should have the additional role of collating issues, reporting and developing them and then facilitate a lobbying function on behalf of consumers. This may be a very good thing.

The Commission could act as the collator on a public web site of issues raised by the public. It could then take the best of them subject to some political oversight, or ones of most concern to the public based on objective criteria, and develop the ideas to equally benefit industry, consumers and the nation and then engage lobbyists to place the ideas before politicians.

The political arm of government will then be in a position to compare a variety of well-constructed arguments, both from industry, the Commission and also directly from the general public and industry and make an informed decision, if it sees fit. This will allow both the public and industry to be heard most effectively. The Commission ought to have the resources or be resourced to achieve this outcome.

This process will give democracy another option to put ideas where they can be best developed and balanced before final support or otherwise. It will have the capacity to reduce many law and order issues that arise from traditional street protests and will add to the existing policy-making role of political parties.

My committees have acted as such a think tank and lobby. It is time that Government took over this role.

Flanagan has however made me think.

Bass Strait is not about Tasmanian Governance but about Federal Governance on a national interstate route. It is equally about Tasmania, Victoria and the Nation. It is about proper balance. The Productivity Commission has a chance to balance the interest of industry with that of the public. It can do so by recommending that the equitable intent of the BSPVES be addressed. It should not ignore the democratic will of the people and the equalisation intent of the scheme by ignoring this issue or substituting aims of its own that can maintain Tasmania's isolation. Canberra also

should not allow the sound economic and equitable policy basis of the scheme to be replaced by other objectives.

Peter Brohier 15th April 2008

Mr Commissioner,
Do I need to clear this with Flanagan first? Appeared in the Mercury on line. Peter Brohier

Flanagan's stinging attack

Article from:

Richard Flanagan

April 11, 2008 04:20pm

ACCLAIMED author Richard Flanagan has launched a blistering attack on the Government for creating a public sphere characterised by lying, threats and intimidation.

THERE is a sickness at the heart of Tasmania and it is time all Tasmanians demanded of their political representatives that it end.

It is no secret in Tasmanian life that blacklisting has for some time been part and parcel of our government's practice, a method to ensure compliance and silence in the face of what is wrong, but the extent revealed this week has shocked many.

We have a government now being described nationally as corrupt.

We have a judiciary which, through no fault of its own, now has a dark cloud hanging over it.

We have a public sphere characterised by lying, threats, intimidation and evasion in public, and cronyism and closeness to a handful of robber barons in private.

We have a politicised public service, and the unavoidable question that arises is how many other major offices in Tasmanian public life have been similarly corrupted by political vetting on the basis of possibly giving offence to a major corporation?

But the thuggery, the lies, the intimidation, the cronyism, are not just problems of public life.

They damage our name internationally, they shame us nationally, and in the despair and disillusionment they create, drive away our young and our best locally.

They stop us from evolving a dynamic new economy, while the backroom deals supporting and subsidising a few monopolies is somehow seen to justify the contempt for, and damage to, thousands of smaller businesses.

They prevent us becoming a force culturally by corroding a shared spirit of pride and belief fundamental to us in our island society.

We need this rotten era to be over.

We need a new politics of hope and change that is respectful of all Tasmanians, rather than craven to a handful of big businesses.

And for these things to happen we need to come together and say enough is enough.

We need practical measures to ensure such a shameful era never happens again -- an independent commission into corruption, a return to larger houses of parliament, the ending of political interference in our public service, statutory measures to ensure the return to proper and respectful distance between executive government and big business.

Premier Paul Lennon's government has shown that there is no notion of propriety, decency or democracy that is to be allowed to stand in the way of the Premier's oft expressed commitment to the Gunns pulp mill.

Christopher Wright, the distinguished judge and the second RPDC head that Mr Lennon tried to lean on, put it most clearly about the Premier. "It was plain as the nose on my face," Wright has said, "that he was trying to please Gunns."

If then Deputy Premier Steve Kons was not instructed by Mr Lennon or one of his minions to change his mind about the appointment of Simon Cooper because of his reporting of Gunns being "critically non-compliant" with the RPDC's requests for information, why then did Mr Kons change his mind?

Is the determination to punish any who stand in the way of this corporation's ambitions simply now part of this Labor government's culture?

Mr Lennon has learnt nothing and regrets nothing.

His response to Mr Kons' lies is to say he is a good man who may come back. On the other hand, the brave soul who exposed this crime by passing on the shredded letter is to be subject to a police investigation.

Thus in the perversity that is Tasmania today, lies are offered the promise of ultimate reward, and those who bring truth, punishment.

Mr Lennon's policy would seem to be reducible to this: keep power however, destroy whoever, and please Gunns with whatever.

This is not the rule of law, but the rule of lawlessness.

For the sake of Tasmania, for the sake of his own party, Mr Lennon must go, and go quickly.

And if he won't, his colleagues ought beware and fear the electoral backlash and the judicial investigations that are beginning to appear as inevitable should Mr Lennon stay.

There is a great and terrible sadness abroad in Tasmania today born of the knowledge of what we might be in sorry contrast to what we have become.

Yet if we allow the ongoing corruption of our public life to become simply the Tasmanian way, if our own action is only to privately despair, then it will not be our politicians who we must blame, but ourselves.

If we continue to live fearfully, frightened of the consequences of saying what we think, of speaking the truth about what we know, then the fearful, backward and bullying society that results will be our children's inheritance.

What we need in Tasmania is not a new Labor nor Liberal nor Green government, nor a mix of any these.

What we need above all other things is the restoration of certain values of truth, probity and respect in public life.

We need to take our government back from the thugs and the liars, the anonymous numbers men, attack dogs and spinners on inflated salaries.

To have different, better government we need to recognise that what joins us in Tasmania is ever more powerful and more positive than what has been used to divide us.

For the future of Tasmania we must walk together, Labor, Liberal and Green, we must cease to be frightened, to be silent, and we must begin to speak out in our workplaces, our homes, our cafes, clubs and pubs -- for a Tasmania no longer weary and sad with the hate and the division that benefits only those richest and most powerful, for a Tasmania of hope and unity.

I believe in the decency and goodness of ordinary Tasmanians.

Now is the time when we must step forward and demand a new politics from all parties in that image of goodness, rather than have them damn us in theirs of deception and hate.

Because change will not come from government -- it is a choice we make in our hearts, whether we wish to live in a culture run by lies and threats, or demand something better.

It asks only one thing of us: the belief that we are better than this.

We can delude ourselves that a poisoned, oppressive government is our inescapable destiny, a product of our dark history or our small size.

But it is not so: we made it so, we allowed them to be this way, we tolerated their crimes.

Though it takes courage, though it is far from easy, we can choose otherwise. It's our Tasmania.

We want it back.