

The Chronicle

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letters continued
Strong Choices

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Sale pitch cost

TREASURER Tim Nicholls recently spent \$6million of taxpayer's money on his Strong Choices sales pitch to sell our assets, which will ultimately see devastating impacts on Queenslanders and the loss of **millions** from state revenue.

The treasurer, has committed a further \$5.2million to roll out his Strong Choices plan, most people would have seen the advertisements that have been running on our TV screens, newspapers and radio.

An \$11.2million spend when the state (according to the LNP) is supposed to be in economic crisis is both ridiculous and unjustified.

In December 2013 Premier, Campbell Newman stated: "Energex, Ergon and Powerlink despite what you are hearing from the unions are not for **sale**", this comment was again repeated in the Chronicle by Tim Nicholls himself accusing myself of scaremongering.

Well surprise surprise since then Treasurer Tim Nicholls has announced private investment deals, which is privatisation by stealth.

The LNP intends selling 49% of Energex, Ergon and Power link to private investors.

At least 49% of profits under the Nicholls plan will go to private investors, most likely going offshore, instead of going back into general state revenue to fund our schools, roads and hospitals.

Under Nicholls' plan, these private investors also gain three seats on the board tables of Powerlink, Ergon and Energex.

These boards determine any reinvestment back into our networks and maintenance of our network.

Their focus and decisions will only be in the interest of greater profits for their shareholder, not the people of Queensland.

Investors are already lining up, with private investors such as SP Ausnet, (a **Chinese** and Singapore-owned **company** which also has interests in the Victorian private system) having recently set up an office in Brisbane.

There will be many more overseas-based multi nationals, ready to buy what is essentially a licence to print money, our money.

In 2012 /2013 financial year 49% of profit from Ergon Energex and Powerlink amounted to 613.06million.

This huge amount of money will end up in the pockets of private (and most probably overseas) owners instead of being invested back into Queensland.

Tim Nicholls and the LNP Government want to sell or lease all of our profitable assets, also including our water asset Sunwater, our power generators Stanwell and CS **Energy**, the Ports of Gladstone and Townsville and our Townsville to Mt Isa rail link.

History has shown us, wherever private interest has invested in our public assets, by buying or leasing it always ends up costing the consumer more.

We have experienced it with Telstra and the Brisbane airport, we have seen it with the devastating Victorian bush fires, and we are feeling it with our power prices increasing by 36% in less than 12 months, a move some might say is fattening the cow for **sale**.

These are the facts that Trevor Watts and John McVeigh don't want you to know, these are the plans they support, these are the plans that will ultimately see electricity become a luxury rather than a necessity.

CHRIS MCGAW, President Qld Council of Unions Toowoomba

School chaplains

Support

HUGH Wilson has taken a swipe at Chaplains in State Schools (The Chronicle June 28, 2014)

He and Ron Williams (on his website) claim that the National School Chaplaincy Program (NSCP) was created in 2006 by John Howard "purely as a vehicle to place a religious influence into state schools, on a political whim to buy votes".

What they cannot deny is that successive governments, both Labor and Coalition, have continued and even increased funding to the NSCP.

What the government funding for school chaplains tells us is that at all levels of government both sides of politics recognize that the education system can no longer ignore the spiritual dimension of a young person's life.

This in no way denigrates the excellent work that school counsellors and social workers are doing.

The fact is that on some issues students feel more comfortable and prefer to talk with someone who is outside the education system and who recognizes the spiritual dimension of their life.

Mr Wilson claims that "thousands" of people oppose the school chaplaincy program and supported the recent High Court challenge.

He gives no figures to support this claim.

However, in response to the recent High Court challenge by Ron Williams, the community rallied, and over 86,000 people signed statements of support for the school chaplaincy program.

This is an outstanding demonstration of how the community value chaplains in local schools.

At the end of 2013 Queensland schools were given the option of having a school chaplain or a secular welfare worker, 98% chose to retain their chaplain.

Yes, the High Court, by its definition under the Constitution, found that the NSCP was not a "benefit to students".

The truth is that thousands of students, parents and teachers do see that the NSCP is of great benefit to students and there is overwhelming community support for continued funding of school chaplaincy.

GEOFF LAPTHORNE, Toowoomba

Sydney Comedy Festival

Precedence set

IN THE debate about whether the Vault should have been approved or not Professor Swannell put in his two bob's worth of support for the "showbiz" that was about to change Toowoomba.

Now he has had a taste of what is so-called real entertainment, at his “posh venue”.

How dare this “obnoxious, unfunny and often obscene” show be on display at the Empire?

I don’t know professor. Perhaps because the Empire is competing with the Vault for a paying audience the management thought they had to literally bend over backwards to meet the competition.

Previously I suggested the good professor would not like some of the baggage that would follow the Vault to town.

Perhaps if he had read the reviews of the Sydney Comedy Festival he would have known that this is considered top-shelf entertainment and has appeared at venues similar to the Empire elsewhere.

After attracting a full house more will come Professor. A precedence has been set, yes I agree at a low level. But that’s entertainment these days.

JOHN FRIEND, Toowoomba

School chaplains

Data required

I SEE that, following the ‘Williams’ ruling on School Chaplaincy Program funding, the feds are hell-bent (perhaps I should re-write that?) on finding another – legal – way to fund the program.

Did anyone expect any other response from those in charge at the Vaticanberra?

While we all want to see our younger citizens supported in a way that meets their needs, is there any data that shows the situation “before” and “after” the program’s introduction in 2006?

If so, then at least the arguments for or against it could be based on demonstrable terms and not on, albeit heartfelt, opinions.

TONY LAKE, Meringandan West

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