

CRAIG THOMSON

(All papers continue to write on the Craig Thomson story, with new allegations that Thomson lobbied a group that was seeking government funding for a job for his ex-wife – Tele splash, Tiser p5 – news that he's quits as head of the economics committee – Tele p4, Oz fp, Fin p3, CT fp, Hun p2, Tiser p5, the police examining the dossier – SMH fp, Tele p4, Fin p3, CT fp, Hun p2, Tiser p5, Age fp, and news that the HSU has decided to take action – Oz p2.)

It's been public for some time that there is a Fair Work Australia investigation under way into various allegations.

Of course, many people under investigation end up having nothing to answer for.

It's appropriate that that investigation run its course before I comment further.

MISUSE OF FUNDS AND THE FWA INQUIRY?

That's a matter for Fair Work Australia.

ON NSW ALP PAYING LEGAL FEES

Questions about NSW Labor finances are best put to NSW Labor.

HAS THE PM'S OFFICE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH MR THOMSON IN THE LAST FEW DAYS?

As the PM said, her staff are always talking to Labor MPs, including MPs facing media attention – the same way leaders' offices always have.

FULL CONFIDENCE IN THOMSON?

He is a dedicated local member, working hard for the people of Dobell.

ABBOTT

There is only one party with an MP currently facing criminal charges – and it's not the Labor Party.

Now, that only became public a little while ago. Tony Abbott should stop applying double standards and explain when he first learned about that.

ON WHETHER ENOUGH WORK WAS DONE CHECKING BEFORE LAST ELECTION

Craig is a hard worker for his local community. Obviously that's a big factor in preselections.

Ultimately pre-selections and the processes that go with them are a matter for the NSW ALP.

ON WHETHER MR THOMSON WILL BE PRESELECTED AT THE NEXT ELECTION

There is an investigation under way, and I don't think it's fair to make assumptions about how that investigation will turn out.

The fact is Craig Thomson works hard for his electorate, but that is ultimately a matter - as it is for all MPs - for local party members.

ON THE HSU'S FINANCIAL AFFAIRS / HSU DECIDING TO TAKE ACTION ON CLAIMS

That's a matter for the HSU.

ON NSW POLICE LOOKING INTO ALLEGATIONS

As there are particular matters that now relate to a NSW police assessment, it would of course be inappropriate to make further comments.

ON ALLEGATIONS THOMSON LOBBIED CENTRAL COAST GROUP TRAINING TO GIVE HIS EX A JOB

I'm not across the details, but it seems to me I haven't seen many weaker front pages in my time.

There are investigations under way; the proper thing is to let them conclude.

IF PUSHED

His ex-wife didn't get the job, so I'm not sure there's much to talk about here.

ON HIS RESIGNATION FROM THE COMMITTEE

That's a decision for Mr Thomson.

But let me make this point as well.

When Liberal MPs were being investigated by the AFP in 2007, Labor held back from criticising – because the proper thing to do was let the investigation run its course.

And now that a Liberal MP is facing charges over assault, Labor has held back out of respect.

The gross double standards and hypocrisy we're seeing from Tony Abbott is the same thing we always see – grubby politics with a huge splash of hypocrisy.

This is now a matter for police, and the Opposition should stop using the law as a political plaything.

As John Howard said, slurring someone under parliamentary privilege is "the cheapest game in the book".

HOWARD – ABC AM – MARCH 7 2007

JON FAINE: He alleged corruption.

JOHN HOWARD: No, but yeah, under parliamentary privilege, under parliamentary privilege. I mean, that is the cheapest game in the book.

DEATH IN AFGHANISTAN

(Monday's announcement of the death of the 29th Australian soldier in Afghanistan and yesterday's announcement that the soldier was Private Matthew Lambert runs in the Tele p9, SMH fp, CT p9, CM p16, Hun p3, Tiser p9, Age p2.)

The death on Monday of Private Matthew Lambert is a terrible tragedy, for his family, for his mates and for the country.

It's also a terrible reminder to 28 other families of the losses they have suffered.

We believe we're on track to complete our mission in Afghanistan, which is to transition to Afghan-led security responsibility by 2014.

Private Lambert was conducting a mentored patrol with the Afghan National Army and other coalition forces in the Khas Uruzgan region, 85 kilometres north-east of Tarin Kot.

What is believed to have been an improvised explosive device detonated at approximately 0230 hours local Afghan time, or eight o'clock yesterday morning Australian Eastern time.

Private Lambert was a respected member of the Townsville based second battalion the Royal Australian Regiment. This was his first deployment to Afghanistan and he had previously served in East Timor in 2009. He deployed to Afghanistan with MTF-3 in June.

We very strongly believe that what we're doing is not just in our own national security interests, but also in the international community's interests.

We are part of an international community effort to make sure that Afghanistan, in particular the Afghanistan-Pakistan border area does not again become a breeding ground for international terrorism. We are operating in the 48 member International Security Assistance Force and under a United Nations mandate.

CARBON PRICE

(In carbon this morning we have:

- *The Minister says O'Farrell's claims about power prices are based on assumptions of price gouging – SMH p5*
- *Combet to ask states to axe inefficient climate schemes – Oz fp*
- *Qld to fare worst under carbon price – Fin p10, CM p8, Oz p6.)*

NSW GOVT'S CLAIMS ABOUT POWER PRICES

The NSW Premier Barry O'Farrell has signed up to Tony Abbott's misleading scare campaign by making highly exaggerated claims about the impact of a carbon price on electricity prices.

The analysis released by Mr O'Farrell assumes the State's electricity generators will pass on 150 per cent or more of a carbon price – this is absurd unless Mr O'Farrell's real agenda is to hike State government charges to pay for his election promises.

Federal Treasury's modelling shows the carbon price will see household electricity prices will rise by \$3.30 a week on average (10 %) - with the total impact on costs for households estimated to be \$9.90 on average. To assist with this the Federal Government will provide assistance to households worth \$10.10 a week, on average, in the form of tax cuts, increases in family payments and higher pensions and benefits.

Nine out of ten households will get assistance. Almost six million households will get assistance that meets or exceeds their expected average impact on prices. And over four million households, almost half of all households, will get assistance that provides a 20% buffer over and above their expected average impact on prices.

COMBET TO ASK STATES TO AXE INEFFICIENT CLIMATE SCHEMES

A market mechanism like a carbon price is the most economically efficient way of reducing carbon pollution.

It creates incentives for large polluters to reduce their emissions and for investment in the clean energy sources of the future like gas, wind and solar power.

Minister Combet has flagged that when the carbon price is in place there may be scope to work with State Governments to examine other programs that cut pollution at a higher cost.

CLAIMS QLD WILL FARE WORST UNDER CARBON PRICE

The key conclusion of the Queensland Treasury report released yesterday is that over the period to 2020 Queensland's economy will grow strongly at an average annual rate of 3.5 per cent – with or without a carbon price – and there will be an extra 474,000 jobs created over the period.

This is consistent with the federal Treasury modelling, which shows that the economy continues to prosper and jobs grow strongly nationwide with a carbon price.

IF PRESSED ON DELOITTE ACCESS ECONOMICS REPORT SHOWING WORSE RESULTS FOR QUEENSLAND

The difference between the Queensland Treasury and the Deloitte Access modelling is driven by assumptions about the share of carbon pollution abatement sourced domestically and overseas.

Basically Deloitte Access Economics are not allowing as much cheap abatement overseas, meaning we need to do more high-cost abatement in Australia.

The Gillard Labor Government believes the modelling by the Australian Treasury is robust, and that's why its conclusions were confirmed by the Queensland Treasury.

ABBOTT REFUSING PAIRS FOR CARBON BILLS

(Abbott refusing to provide pairs for carbon debates runs in the Tele p9, CT p8, CM p9.)

This is typically ridiculous behaviour by Tony Abbott.

He's behaving like a two year old. It's time for him to get over his anger about the last election and start acting like a grown-up.

MPs get sick like anyone else. They have babies. They have to attend funerals. Tony Abbott is treating the serious business of governing as a personal plaything.

Common sense should apply and it would be extraordinary if the Opposition refused a pair for health and other legitimate reasons.

ASYLUM SEEKERS

(New in asylum seekers this morning:

- *High court decision reserved – Tele p18, SMH p6, Oz p4, Fin p13, Tiser p17, Age p9*
- *Work starts on Manus Island – Oz p4*
- *Children at Inverbrackie not properly protected against child abuse – Tiser p4*
- *Immigration defends funding decision – the Opposition is shopping around that we have a \$12 million contract for an Antarctic Airbus plane that is not being used. The contract with Immigration is on the tenders website - Oz p4.)*

MALAYSIA HIGH COURT CASE

The Government awaits the High Court's decision.

The landmark transfer arrangement with Malaysia combats people smuggling and increases protection opportunities for refugees in the region.

The Minister has said consistently, and from the outset, to expect legal challenges. But we are on strong legal ground and no one should doubt our resolve in this.

As the arrangement clearly outlines, Malaysia has committed to treat transferees with dignity and respect in accordance with human rights standards, and will respect the principle of non-refoulement, the key tenet of the Refugee Convention.

We are committed to breaking the people smuggling trade and stopping people from getting on boats to make the very dangerous journey to Australia.

It would be inappropriate to comment further with the case still before the court.

PNG TALKS OVER REOPENING MANUS ISLAND

The Government is in ongoing discussions with Papua New Guinea about Manus Island, including on the details of the facility.

We are working in partnership with PNG to get the assessment centre online as soon as possible. At this stage, we have not entered into any commercial arrangements to refurbish the centre.

We'll have more to say on the details at an appropriate time.

AS BACKGROUND ONLY - NOT FOR MEDIA

Toll is in PNG of their own accord, scoping out potential work on site. As part of prudent contingency planning, we have informally sounded out the market on regarding potential works at the site.

WAITING PLANE ON CHRISTMAS ISLAND

This contract is for the provision of air transport services for the Immigration Department across the whole detention network, not just for transfers to Malaysia.

That includes flights to locations across the country and to and from Christmas Island for transfers and settlement. The Antarctic aircraft arrived on Christmas Island on Sunday.

The \$12 million figure is not the cost to the department, but the value of the contract - if the full amount is not needed, the Government is not required to pay it.

The aircraft has already been used for more than 70 charter flights to Darwin, Sydney and Perth, among other locations, to transfer irregular maritime arrivals around the detention network.

The availability of an appropriate aircraft for transfers to either Malaysia or Papua New Guinea is a necessary part of ensuring the success of these transfers when they do take place. The Australian Government makes no apologies for putting this arrangement in place.

This is a prudent arrangement that achieves value-for-money for taxpayer dollar expenditure, given the department's regular need of charters for transfers.

The aircraft is at the department's ready disposal and given the high volume of use, it is at a reduced cost to individual arrangements agreed to under charter panel arrangements.

BACKGROUND ONLY NOT FOR MEDIA:

The contract period, as it appears on the tenders website is 10 June 2011 to 9 Sept 2011. To date the department been invoiced more than \$4 million.

<https://www.tenders.gov.au/?event=public.cn.view&CNUUID=6F30364E-90D3-2299-E2228D5D3DDB4B6B>

MANUFACTURING JOBS

(Treasury rejecting the idea of industry bailouts runs as the Fin splash, SMH p5, and various aspects of manufacturing jobs, the future of the manufacturing industry and the fallout of the Bluescope announcement get a run in the Oz p6, Fin pp6-7, CM p12, Hun p4.)

The Gillard Labor Government believes that innovation, skills, world-class infrastructure, clean energy and technologies like the NBN to lift productivity are crucial steps to meet the demands placed on industry by the high dollar and other competitive pressures.

But there is more that we can do to ensure that Australian companies have better access to markets at home and abroad.

The Government is assisting industry to lift productivity through a range of measures including:

- The Buy Australian at Home and Abroad initiative announced in the 2011-12 Budget, which helps Australian firms gain more work from the resources sector;
- Enterprise Connect, which uses experienced business advisers to help firms become more competitive;
- Supplier Advocates, who champion Australian suppliers to supply chains; and
- Australian Industry Participation Plans to ensure Australian firms get every opportunity to compete for government projects.

Industry will receive a huge boost from the new R&D tax Credit, which passed the Senate this week and which doubles the payment for R&D for small and medium sized enterprises.

There will be huge opportunities in the Clean Energy Future programs, where the Government will co-invest with firms who are prepared to back themselves by investing in energy efficiency, new technologies and more sustainable manufacturing and production.

BLUESCOPE EXECS' 'OBSCENE' BONUSES

(Xenophon's comments that the Bluescope exec bonuses are 'obscene' along with general coverage of the issue – Tele p13, Hun p4, Tiser p31, Age p9.)

The Gillard Labor Government has always said that shareholders – the owners of a company – should have a greater say in the setting of executive pay. Our reforms give shareholders that say.

Bluescope shareholders will have an opportunity to vote on the remuneration of the company's executives at their next annual general meeting.

If more than 25 per cent of shareholders at the meeting vote against the remuneration packages of the executives – the 'first strike', the board risks being voted off if they receive a 'second strike' at the following AGM.

BACKGROUND

The Government's executive pay reforms came into effect on 1 July.

The new laws include a 'two-strikes' rule, where shareholders get the opportunity to vote on whether or not to spill a board if a company's executive remuneration report is rejected by more than 25 per cent of the votes cast at two consecutive annual general meetings. This means executives won't be able to give themselves huge pay increases without justifying it to their shareholders, and if they ignore shareholder concerns they risk a backlash that could lead to them being thrown off the board.

BUY AUSTRALIAN

(Government push on the Buy Australia campaign is the SMH splash.)

A "Buy Australian at Home and Abroad" initiative announcement will be made later today.

VOLATILE FINANCIAL MARKETS

(The current volatility on the financial markets is a bigger threat than the GFC according to the Oz fp, SMH p5, Age p6.)

There's no doubt that we're seeing renewed uncertainty and volatility in the global economy, and we can expect this to continue for some time yet

Of course, Australia is not immune to this uncertainty – but we can take confidence in our strong fundamentals and our bright outlook in the most dynamic part of the global economy

We have:

- Avoided recession, giving us very strong public finances and very low debt
- Low unemployment – around half the level of the US and Europe
- A massive pipeline of investment, particularly in resources
- Strong financial institutions and world-class regulators
- A well-functioning Government that is getting its bills through the parliament.

LIBYA

(The situation in Libya still on the front pages of the Oz and the Age, as well as elsewhere in the world sections. The rebels are reported as having taken Qaddafi's compound.)

It is clear that the end of the Qaddafi regime is very near.

There are reports that rebels have taken Qaddafi's compound, and that opposition forces have control of about 80 percent of the city, including an airport.

For the sake of civilians in Tripoli and the future of Libya, Qaddafi should order his forces to put down their arms, and he should step aside.

SO WHERE IS QADDAFI?

Qaddafi's whereabouts remain uncertain.

He is reported to have spoken on the phone to the Russian Head of the World Chess Federation yesterday, saying he was in Tripoli and he wouldn't leave, but we can't confirm this report.

DANGEROUS DOGS

(The AG and Minister for Home Affairs' comments on a national response to dangerous dogs run in the Oz p8, Tele p17, Hun p11, Age p9, Tiser p20, along with Minister Shorten's comment that the dangerous dogs are "sharks on legs".)

Clearly, we should all be doing everything we can to avoid the kinds of horrific attacks we saw in Melbourne last week.

Dog owners and the wider community must work to make our homes and streets as safe as possible.

The Attorney General and Minister for Home Affairs and Justice have indicated they'll be talking to their State and Territory counterparts about law enforcement in relation to potentially dangerous dogs, as well as the adequacy and consistency of penalties across borders.

QANTAS TAKEOVER SPECULATION

(The splash in the Oz this morning is Qantas takeover speculation – private equity bidders are circling the carrier, they claim, and Labor is signalling a hard-line approach to any private equity bid as "not in the national interest", according to the yarn.)

It would be inappropriate to comment on what appears to be little more than market speculation, particularly given the comments from the airline itself. However, this Labor Government has made it clear on previous occasions that we're committed to a viable, majority Australian owned and based Qantas.

SAME SEX MARRIAGE

(The Oz p5 has a piece on same-sex marriage, and Bob Katter's brother coming out runs across the papers.)

The National Conference will be held on 2,3,4 December 2011.

The National Conference of the Labor Party is a genuine forum for debate; it provides the party with a chance to hold a contest of ideas.

When it comes to the issue of marriage for same-sex couples, there are a wide range of views within the party, views very strongly held on both sides of the debate. I'm expecting a respectful debate.

ON BOB KATTER'S BROTHER

That's a matter for the Katters.

NEWSPOLL

(A new set of Newspoll numbers ran yesterday in the Oz fp, Hun p2.)

PRIMARY VOTE*

Percentage support	2010	2011					
	Election Aug 21	Jun 10-12	Jun 24-26	Jul 8-10	Jul 22-24	Aug 5-7	Aug 19-21*
Labor	38.0	31	30	27	29	29	27
Coalition	43.6	46	46	49	47	47	47
Greens	11.8	11	11	12	13	12	13
Others	6.6	12	13	12	11	12	10

TWO-PARTY PREFERRED*

Percentage support	2010	2011					
	Election Aug 21	Jun 10-12	Jun 24-26	Jul 8-10	Jul 22-24	Aug 5-7	Aug 19-21
Labor	50.1	45	45	42	44	44	43
Coalition	49.9	55	55	58	56	56	57

*Based on preference flow at August 2010 federal election

*Excludes NT

GILLARD'S PERFORMANCE

Percentage support	2011					
	Jun 10-12	Jun 24-26	Jul 8-10	Jul 22-24	Aug 5-7	Aug 19-21
Satisfied	30	28	30	32	33	21
Dissatisfied	55	62	59	59	58	61
Uncommitted	15	10	11	9	9	10

ABBOTT'S PERFORMANCE

Percentage support	2011					
	Jun 10-12	Jun 24-26	Jul 8-10	Jul 22-24	Aug 5-7	Aug 19-21
Satisfied	35	39	42	39	39	36
Dissatisfied	52	52	49	52	52	55
Uncommitted	13	9	9	9	9	9

BETTER PM

Percentage support	2011					
	Jun 10-12	Jun 24-26	Jul 8-10	Jul 22-24	Aug 5-7	Aug 19-21
Gillard	41	39	38	40	39	31
Abbott	38	40	43	41	40	50
Uncommitted	21	21	19	19	21	19

Leadership isn't one long opinion poll.

It's about doing what's right for the nation.

We know we've got a lot of hard work ahead of us - improving hospitals, cutting pollution, rolling out high speed broadband.

No matter how tough it gets, we will keep doing what we believe is right for this country, while the Liberals just keep saying no.

HASN'T YOUR CLIMATE POLICY FAILED TO MOVE VOTERS?

The test of our plan to cut pollution isn't a newspaper poll - it's what it does to cut pollution, what it delivers for families, what it delivers for Australia in new jobs and new industries.

ABBOTT

Tony Abbott will always take the easy option because the only thing he does care about is opinion polls.

He'll say yes to everybody and no to everything - that's why, at the end of the day, you can't take the bloke seriously.