

Premier should face music, not frame independents

For all of Premier Jeremy Rockliff's repeated statements committing his government to going full term, once again Tasmanians must watch parliament imploding like a proverbial slow-motion car crash.

But the irony that it's the Premier swinging the stability wrecking ball has not gone unnoticed.

As speculation swirls over when Premier Rockliff may drive to Government House, it is instructive to look at what it is he may be running away from.

Quite frankly, should the parliament resume as scheduled on March 5, the government benches

Rockliff should have guts to test confidence on the floor of the House, writes Meg Webb

were always going to be an uncomfortable place to sit.

On that day, a Lower House inquiry is due to report its findings into whether the Premier and the Department of Premier and Cabinet Secretary withheld evidence from, or misled in some way, the December Assembly committee hearings examining the government's response to the child sex abuse commission of inquiry.

The Legislative Council is set to

hold its own select committee grilling of the government's commission of inquiry response during the last week of March, where many victim-survivors are desperately hoping for long-awaited answers.

A no-confidence motion in the Attorney-General, over the bungled recall of parliament and the Justice Geason matter, waits on the Assembly books ready to be debated.

Additionally, there is the fallout of the Murrhiy harness racing review, a

seriously collapsing health system and other ongoing controversies.

All sticky matters which would be preferably avoided from the government's perspective.

Yet the Premier has continually promised his government will go full term. So how can he pull the parliamentary plug a year early and still retain any credibility?

A scapegoat is needed.

Enter the Blue Meanies (with apologies to the Beatles' Yellow Submarine cartoon), in the form of the two ex-Liberal independents for Bass and Lyons, Lara Alexander and John Tucker respectively.

Notably, the Premier has failed to point to any actual instance of where

either conservative independent has voted in breach of the terms of their current Memorandum of Understanding.

By basing his demands for a revised and more restrictive agreement on hypothetical future actions which may or may not occur, the Premier himself is indulging in moving goalposts.

Sadly, it appears the government is gas-lighting the broader electorate as well.

By attempting to establish the "don't blame me, blame the Blue Meanies" narrative to justify an early election, it seems the government is also hoping to ensure some of that mud sticks to independents more

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as early election scapegoats

widely. The bullying and gas-lighting of the two ex-Liberal independents could reduce the appeal for others to consider standing as independents for election to the restored 35-seat House of Assembly.

It may also serve the major party agenda by broadly discouraging electors voting for independent candidates, by reinforcing perceptions of instability and untrustworthiness.

We are already seeing some of the telltale signs in recent commentary where pejorative adjectives such as "rebel" or "rogue" are automatically inserted before independent when referring to these two Members for Bass and Lyons.

Technically, these MPs may once have qualified as rogue or rebel Liberal backbenchers, but since then they have left the party and are independents. At this stage nobody has suggested they are rebelling against themselves.

It is safe to assume whenever such adjectives are inserted unquestioningly by commentators in relation to independent MPs that somewhere a government spin doctor smiles.

Tasmanians are currently battling many real and serious crises.

We don't need another deliberate distraction and manufactured political crisis. Frankly, it is insulting for the Premier to presume people

cannot see through the spin.

Tasmanians deserve a leader who doesn't bully and poke until the desired reaction is achieved to justify running to Government House while complaining over their shoulder "look what you made me do".

Instead, Tasmanians would respect a Premier who fronts up when parliament resumes to get on with the job, and has the guts to test confidence, if necessary, on the floor of the House.

If it's all got too much, then it is on Premier Rockliff to be big enough to own it and not seek to shift the blame.

Meg Webb, independent Member for Nelson

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