

NEWS

OPINION Hastily thrashed-out JLN-Liberal deal leaves much to be desired

Deal of the decade for Rockliff's Libs

Matt Maloney

DURING the state's election campaign, the Liberal party incessantly attacked Jacqui Lambie Network candidates for taking no policies to electors, for being Greens in disguise and a future factor in a "coalition of chaos".

JLN candidates too attacked the government for an apparent 10 years of failures, particularly on budget management and within the state's health system.

Now, both sides have conveniently set that aside - as if it resides purely in the theatre of an election campaign - and swiftly formed a coalition of their own to allow for the Liberals

to continue to govern for the next four years.

Online commentary and letters to the editor show JLN voters believe they have been cheated in casting their vote for apparent change.

This is no doubt a result of the details of the deal, which as written make the JLN parliamentarians more mute than they would be as Liberal bankbenchers, and the lack of quid pro quo.

Both sides have argued that the deal provides stability and certainty for a workable parliament for the benefit of the Tasmanian community - and most importantly - avoids a situation where continued destabilising threats inevitably result

in another early election.

But what does the JLN actually get in return for this and why does it matter?

What appears to have been offered to the JLN is either vague and broadly open to interpretation or already in train, while they have had any potential power or influence neutralised in return.

Greens leader Rosalie Woodruff said the JLN members had sold themselves out and ended up with nothing for it. Nelson independent MLC Meg Webb accused the government of bad-faith negotiation.

"This agreement will see the JLN being the apologists for ongoing government se-

crecy, unaccountability and lack of integrity," she said.

"The JLN MPs are now shackled in a way that will prevent them from delivering or strengthening transparency, accountability or integrity, or policy reforms."

It's hard to see where they might be wrong.

There was no urgency to sign the deal - the Premier could have assembled a skeleton cabinet for the Governor to commission.

This would have allowed the JLN members more time to seek advice, arrange briefings with government departments and continue thorough negotiations.

Under the deal, JLN members cannot abstain

from a vote and prevents them from moving no-confidence and censure motions of their own - nor support those moved from opposition members and the crossbench.

They have to support the government on binding motions moved against it - binding motions which are intended to force the government to act in a particular way that might be against their will.

This can be effective to compel the government to produce information it wants kept private for its own reason, but which might be in the public interest.

If the JLN members wish

to vote against the government on a particular matter, they need to give the government 24 hours notice of that fact which allows time for negotiation. Not even Liberal members are bound to a condition like this.

The deal has been signed for the term of government with an agreement for review in the next 12 months.

Perhaps with a year of experience in parliament by the time this review happens, the three JLN members sharpen up their negotiation skills with a promise of stability, but with more freedom for them to uphold their so-called principles of transparency and integrity.