

Could we play our own Trump card?



US President Donald Trump rose to power largely on the back of shallow slogans and thin policies: could we see a similar ascension here? Image: Business Insider.

By Tom Waterwheel*

Australians seem to view the rise of Trumpist populism with bemusement and alarm.

The daily trainwreck of **Donald Trump** and his advisors keeps the political junky on high alert. As if the Trump Bull-in-a-China Shop was not entertaining enough, we now have puppet master **Steve Bannon**, the anti-intellectualist **Sean Spicer** and Dial-a-fact **Kellyanne Conway** sharing the burden of spreading hate, pseudo facts and fear around the globe.

Trump is no lone ranger. For the price of one, the US, and by extension the world, got Trump and his posse of war-mongering deadbeats, who now occupy the White House because of the

collective brain-out of 63 million Americans. Most may by now regret this, but the race was run and won on November 8, 2016 and on that day, too many Americans put number one next to the man who unashamedly campaigned on lies, sexism, racism, war-mongering and plain dumb economics.

The question is: could it happen here?

Trump tapped into a nationwide attention deficit disorder. For whatever reason the punters en masse didn't take the effort to read politics beyond a 140 character tweet. Those of us left bewildered by what we have seen blame Facebook, Twitter, I'm a Celebrity get me out of here, the media etc..

None of that matters. Trump and Clinton faced an increasing number of voters who do not do policies. Instead, they want solutions, quick, easy and on a plate; and on that front Trump was their man.

Where Clinton had thoughtful and considered responses to the challenges facing the USA, Trump had solutions and a little abuse thrown in, 140-characters-or-less. Few of which made sense. But at least Joe Punter heard the solution with little effort. (And he is still at it).

In Australia, we have seen politicians tread down this same path. The 2013 election where Tony Abbott prevailed, was characterised by fear politics.

On the specific policy issues of asylum seekers and climate change, Abbott blazed a trail that Trump made a highway. Whenever a microphone is close, these 'leaders' simply repeated the mantra that progressive policies on asylum seekers and climate change will take jobs away from middle Australia/America.

Trump and Abbott on asylum seekers: "stop the boats", "build a wall", "stop the boats", "build a wall".

Trump and Abbott on climate change: “great big tax”, “Chinese conspiracy”, “great big tax”, “Chinese conspiracy”.

Abbott handed the baton to his neo-conservative colleagues across the Pacific, and run with it they did.

But as we witnessed, Abbott’s ill-considered neo-con policies did not wash with everyone in his party and his stay at the Lodge was cut short. Perhaps Trump’s stay will be short too, however the US political system does not work as does ours, with leaders not so disposable.



Like a phoenix rising from the ashes, Pauline Hanson’s political career has been resurrected. Image: Alchetron.

Our own redhead, **Pauline Hanson**, is our closest version of Trump and it is when we look to her appeal and increasing popularity that we see Trumpism alive and well in Australia.

What is telling about the Hanson effect, is that she, like Trump, appeals to a scattering of the disaffected across the political spectrum from the far right to the traditional working class left. She, like Trump, speaks to their frustrations, often to their yearning of the old days, when

unskilled jobs were seemingly abundant and Australia was by and large a white, Christian society.

Fear is one of our greatest motivators and Pauline does fear well. Furthermore, times are tough for many, and as the USA has experienced over the last decade, the winds of global competition can be unforgiving, and we in Australia are now starting to feel its effects.

In a connected world where capital moves freely across the globe, old stable economies such as Australia, have much to lose. To deal with the acceleration of change, be it capital inflows and outflows, refugees, climate change and so on, requires intelligent, considered responses.

We have seen little of such, indeed the short-term opinion poll obsession of our major political parties suggests the established political class are more focused on short-term survival over long-term intellectual policy, leaving the door ajar for the Prophets of Doom.

So here we are, mid 2017. The UK has lurched towards nationalism in an increasingly global world; the USA has fallen for anti-intellectualism in an ever more complex and sophisticated world; and the French, as did the Dutch, looked closely at following the far-right option.

This at a time when more than ever refugees are escaping poverty, war and political and religious persecution.



When unemployment goes up, so does the appeal of neo-conservative approaches to climate change and asylum seekers. Image: FrumForum.

As it stands, one important ingredient is missing in Australia to cook up a Trump Stew: high and long-term unemployment.

Australia's unemployment rate is 5.9%. Australia is yet to swallow the bitter medicine of a changing world economy where jobs are replaced by robots, computers and machines and unskilled labour exported off shore.

Rest assured, however, it is coming and recent history demonstrates that Australian politicians offer little in the way of long term policies to enable Australia to adapt to an ever changing world. If Australia's economic fortunes nose dive and unemployment tilts up, a reactionary politician may be the sole beneficiary.

Our seat of Wannon doesn't follow national trends: its voters are unquestionably loyal to the conservatives. Wannon will go where the Liberals take them. If Canberra judges a hard right Trumpist is needed to lead the Coalition, then of course they could expect to count on the vote of the Wannon constituents

to support them.

Having witnessed Trump in full flight, would we be wise enough to stand up and say no?

** Tom Waterwheel is the pseudonym of a local political observer and agitator who, because of the constraints of his day job, cannot write publicly under his own name.*

First female Liberal candidate for South-West?



Dairy advocate Roma Britnell.



Former MP Donna Petrovich.



Glenelg Cr Anita Rank.

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A02F2F;"]
A[/dropcap] little bit of history will be made on Sunday (Sept 20) if, as suspected, the Liberal Party endorses a woman candidate to run for the plum seat of South West Coast for the Oct 31 by-election.

While young **Tom Naphine** (son of Denis) is also in the mix, the money is on either dairy advocate **Roma Britnell** (left), of Woolsthorpe, or former Macedon MP **Donna Petrovich** (centre). Glenelg Shire Cr **Anita Rank** (right) is also running, but not generating quite as much 'chatter' as her pre-selection colleagues.

Either way, it will be a first to see a female Liberal candidate running for either the seat of South West Coast or its predecessors Warrnambool and Portland.

Interesting times.

[button link="http://the-terrier.com.au/subscribe-2/" type="icon" icon="heart" newwindow="yes"] If you wish to support independent media, please become a part of Bluestone here.[/button]

Related stories...

[By-election: are we on a road to nowhere?](#)

[Roy Reekie's open letter to voters](#)

[McCluskey endorses marriage equality](#)

[Neoh to run for Nationals](#)

Ignore Shaw and focus on the real issues



The actions of Frankston MP Geoff Shaw could lead to the unravelling of the State Government. Image: www.womensagenda.com.au

OPINION – ROY REEKIE

A [dropcap style="color: #A02F2F;"] someone with a keen interest in politics and a local political profile, I've recently been asked my thoughts on **Geoff Shaw**, State Member for Frankston and parliamentary recalcitrant.

Ex-Liberal Shaw holds the balance of power in State Parliament and seems to hold something of **Premier Denis Naphthine's** political destiny in his hands. Personally, I think that we – the people of the South West – should decide Dr Naphthine's political destiny.

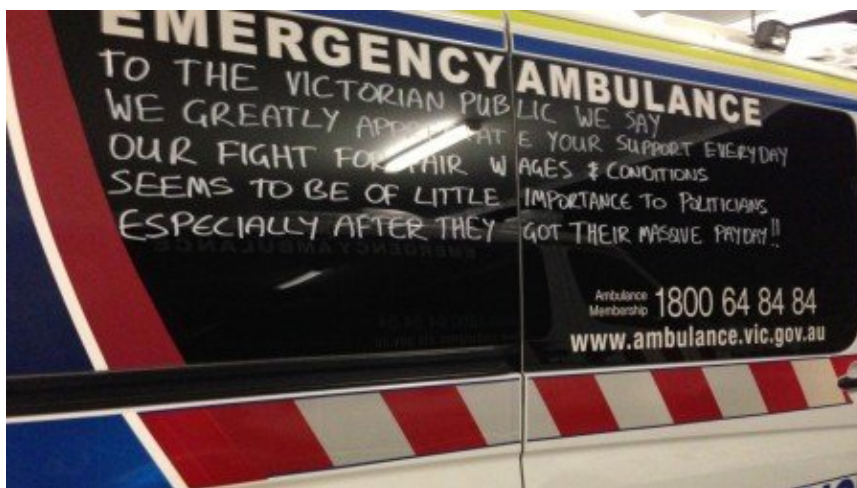
What are my thoughts on Shaw? Precious little as it happens. My thoughts are focused on more substantial, positive and progressive things, about our region, community and its future, rather than the fate of a parliamentary representative of an outer suburban seat.

However, I do have some thoughts about the process that seems to be unfolding around him.

This Tuesday (10/6), Opposition Leader **Daniel Andrews** and his Labor parliamentary colleagues are likely to present a motion that might result in Shaw being expelled from Parliament. The pressure will then be on Denis Naphthine and his coalition colleagues to either support that rather moral motion or oppose it and save Shaw's bacon.

Liberal member and ex-Speaker of the Assembly, **Ken Smith**, may cross the floor to vote with the Labor Opposition. In this case, the motion would succeed and Shaw would be tossed out, perhaps heading immediately to the Supreme Court to lodge a writ challenging his expulsion.

[Crikey](#) recently published an excellent analysis and critique of the situation. I tend to agree with Crikey's William Bowe's view that Parliament voting to expel a member, even one as scurrilous as Shaw, creates a dangerous precedent on a slippery downhill slope towards a potential political cesspool.



The focus on the future of the Member for Frankston is detracting from the real issues facing Victorians, such as health care, jobs and emergency services. Image: aeavvic.com.au

[dropcap style="color: #A02F2F;"] T he Geoff Shaw situation mirrors that in Federal Parliament recently when the Coalition Government attempted to use its parliamentary majority (and an accommodating Speaker) to have comments made by an Opposition member excised from Hansard and replaced with words that the Government saw as more acceptable.

Here was a Government that espouses free speech as an inalienable right seeking to exploit its numerical advantage on the floor of parliament to put words into an Opposition member's mouth in place of her real views.

Meanwhile, in Victoria, the State Government may join with the

Opposition to form a super-majority to expel a member, someone from their side of politics no less. This is a government that decided to drop criminal charges against that member, most probably for political expediency and survival. So, Shaw's future will now be decided by a parliamentary vote. Criminal charges remain a genuine alternative to this intensely political process.

This is my point: it is dangerous – and morally murky – to use a parliamentary political process to solve what is arguably a criminal issue and inarguably a moral question that society, rather than Parliament, should judge.

If anyone of us committed a serious fraud against our employer, we'd most likely face two consequences – criminal charges and dismissal by our employer.



Surely the people of the South-West should decide the future of their local member, Denis Napthine, not an MP from a seat in Melbourne.
Image: Angela Wylie, The Age.

[dropcap style="color: #a02f2f;"] S [/dropcap>haw's employer is not the Parliament, but the people; in this case, the people of Frankston.

One genuine option now might be for Daniel Andrews' motion to

be re-framed so that Geoff Shaw's fraudulent actions are the subject of criminal charges, rather than seeking to expel Shaw from Parliament.

Let the courts decide on his criminality.

Let the people of Frankston judge him in November.

Ignore Shaw.

Focus our politics on the most meaningful issues that impact on our communities – jobs and training for our young people, health services for our ill and aged, emergency services to keep us all safe – rather than on the criminality and morality of individuals. Lift our political discourse to the intellectual and moral heights that the issues our society faces deserve.

Let's realign our political compass.

While Spring Street sorts itself out, I'm going to continue to try to realign the politics of the South West. Frankston electors can sort out their own member.

[box] Warrnambool lawyer Roy Reekie is a member of the ALP and stood for the now-defunct seat of Warrnambool in 1999. He then contested the new seat of South West Coast against Denis Napthine in 2002, coming within a few hundred votes of victory. Reekie last ran against Dr Napthine in 2006.[/box]

[\[button link="http://the-terrier.com.au/subscribe-2/" type="icon" icon="heart" newwindow="yes"\]](http://the-terrier.com.au/subscribe-2/) Did you enjoy this story? Please subscribe here to help Bluestone thrive.[\[/button\]](#)



Find more Opinion pieces here...

[Scrap trader levy and start over](#)

[Motor museum to revive Fletcher Jones](#)

[Traders are right to be asking questions](#)

[Be all things, or stick to the basics?](#)

[What is holding Portland back?](#)

Time for Dan to deliver



[Image: australiavotes.org]

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color:#A5CECD;"] T
[/dropcap]he Liberal Party will be well satisfied with its thumping victory in Wannon at the weekend as part of the national swing against Labor, but now it is time for Dan Tehan to deliver.

To date, Dan has been in the luxurious position of being able to make significant promises that have yet to be tested, but the people of Wannon will now apply a very different yardstick

to that which he has enjoyed as a member of the Opposition.

For the first time as the Member for Wannon, he will be expected to not only stand by his promises, but to also defend the decisions of his entire Government: decisions which, more often than not, will be well beyond his control.

This is what Dan's opponent in Labor's Michael Barling faced as a mere candidate: an expectation that he, personally, should be held accountable for decisions that were being made much higher up the political chain.

[box] Given the announcements in the lead-up to the election, Wannon will be waiting expectantly to see how long it takes for Dan to come good on his word as part of Coalition Government.[/box]

First cab off the rank is the \$10 million promised for the Peter's Project cancer treatment centre. Once the new Government is installed, that should surely be signed off without delay.

Next will be a reduction in mobile phone blackspots across the electorate, plus the rollout of the Coalition's cheaper, copper-based broadband scheme which promises, by the end of 2016, five times the speed we have now in places like Naringal and Nullawarre and Dunkeld and Maryborough.



The potholed roads around western Victoria should be a thing of the past by the next election, and the Princes Highway

between Warrnambool and Melbourne will be well in the throes of transforming itself into a true national road that is a pleasure to drive with its smooth surface, multiple overtaking lanes and dual carriageways.

The Coalition promised that the scrapping of the carbon tax would mean more funds for this sort of spending and would also reduce our cost of living.

[box] This week, make a note of your electricity bill, grocery bill and mortgage repayments, because we have been assured that they will all tumble without the carbon tax and an improved economy.[/box]

And so, to the economy. We have been told it was a basket case and modern times have rarely been so grim. Dan – and the Coalition – has promised more jobs, although I doubt they will be in renewable energy, and more opportunities for young people seeking training, a higher education or employment. The national unemployment rate currently sits at around 5.7 per cent; please make a note of that too.

Come 2016, we can retrieve our notes and be in a position to see if the landslide was deserved.

For the sake of a now super-safe seat like Wannon, I hope that it is.

Why I'm voting for Barling



Opinion – Carol Altmann

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #A5CECD;"] I
[/dropcap]MAGINE living in a place where an election was held every three years and, no matter how many candidates ran, the same party kept winning? Would you call this a healthy democracy? Well, we live in a place just like that and it is called the federal seat of Wannon.

For the past 58 61 years – that is 10 years longer than I have been alive – the Liberal Party has won Wannon.

In the past 58 61 years, there have been **22 23** federal elections – the ~~23rd~~ 24th will be held on Saturday – and, in that time, just **three** different Liberals have held the seat of Wannon: Malcolm Fraser, David Hawker and Dan Tehan.

It is not surprising that the Liberal Party has come to treat Wannon as a soft landing for its next generation of MPs. Dan Tehan, who seems like a nice enough guy, was parachuted into the seat of Wannon four years ago.

He had little connection to south-west Victoria, but bought a property near Hamilton to try and fast-track his status as a local. Is that all it takes for the Liberal Party to secure this seat? Judging by the 2010 election result, it appears so.

And while the Wannon electorate has fallen into line year after year, many of these same voters can be heard

complaining – yes, complaining – that they are being taken for granted.

Of course this contempt for safe seats is not confined to the Liberal Party, they all do it, but this election Wannon voters have an opportunity to draw a line in the sand and demand a real contest.

With the help of the redrawn boundaries, Wannon is now defined as a 'marginal' seat, although it still requires an almost a 6 per cent swing to change hands.

And, for the first time in a long time, the ALP has a strong local candidate in Warrnambool secondary school teacher **Michael Barling** who has had time to build his profile and who has committed an enormous amount of energy toward winning the seat. He has done this despite the antics of federal Labor making it increasingly impossible for him to win: he has not given up.



I am not normally a Labor voter, but I am going to vote for Barling because he represents to me what politics should be about.

It is about presenting voters with a real choice, not a fait accompli.

It is about supporting a candidate who knows and loves the

electorate because he or she has spent most of their life here, not because they have been forced to relocate in the lead up to an election.

And it's about having a candidate with a strong moral compass who is prepared to challenge the party line on issues like asylum seekers and gay rights, rather than follow it blindly.

Above all, however, it's about electing an MP who will continually fight hard for the seat, whether in Government or in Opposition, knowing that they will be held fully accountable at each election.

This will happen if Wannon shifts even further into marginal territory after Saturday: that's the sort of democracy I want to see in action.