

THE AUSTRALIAN

Let us vote for the anti-party Common Sense Party

GREG RUDD | THE AUSTRALIAN | NOVEMBER 30, 2015 12:00AM

In 2010 I wrote an article titled “[Forget About Kevin, Julia and Tony and Fix Politics](#)”. Five years on only the names have changed. In 2020 only the names will change again. Politics cannot be fixed by current political parties. There are too many vested interests who care about self rather than country. .

I was in Port Moresby when Malcolm Turnbull became the fifth prime minister in five years. When asked by those around me how I felt I said it was good to be in a stable democracy. Most laughed. In Australia we should cry.

Changing leaders is like throwing money and nervous sweat at the GFC to papier-mache over the all too obvious structural cracks. It gives the appearance of a fix. But the cracks are still there, getting wider underneath, causing greater long term structural damage.

The biggest crack in the foundation stone of parliamentary democracy is the insidious cancer of career politics. The old democratic model is achieving worse and worse outcomes. This is not because democracy in itself is bad. It's simply getting worse because we never improve the model. We are caught within our own Stockholm syndrome.

Political parties have no intention of improving the operating model of our parliamentary democracy. It will destroy their career structures, thus their patronage and power. So we have no choice but to start a new Common Sense Party. It will be a centre party based on logic not career. The centre is ripe for something new and imaginative, a co-operative logic that retains the tensions humanity needs to be creatively productive.

The Common Sense Party will be a “get rid of the bastards” party to run a better Australia. In this new party there is no political career. That is the key to protecting Australia. It won't matter what minister you staffed with, what union you belong to, what faction delivered numbers or how well you can rig or shape a preselection. If you don't have common sense solutions to the problems facing Australia you don't get to stand as a candidate. You will undergo personality and aptitude tests and role plays by independent professionals to make sure you care about Australia rather than just care about you. Vanity will take a back seat to what's best for the country.

The party will advocate 5 year terms. Only outstanding individuals, judged by the public

and peers, can serve a third term as leaders. If you can't do something for your country in 10 years you won't do it in 20 or 30. In the private sector we turn over CEOs every 5 years for a very good reason.

Candidates will be pushed to join the party by friends, community and business who think they have something to offer. It won't be populated by people who start plotting in high school how to become prime minister by 40 by cajoling or assassinating all in front of them while smiling at cameras giving practised sound bites of insincerity.

The best leaders are often those who don't want to lead. It's a service, taking 5 to 10 years out of your life to help your country. It's not about pork barrelling in marginal seats to win elections or retire on a generous pension.

Members of the Common Sense Party will get no pension. Do you get a pension when you change jobs? This is not a career. If you do your job well over 5 or 10 years you'll easily re-enter the workforce. We are so politically, commercially and culturally young we have an unequalled opportunity to show the world democracy can be done better. We can improve the model.

Most global democratic countries carry too much historical baggage. Vested interests wield too much money and power. Australia still has a chance to be a bright light of hope.

The world is not a happy place and new trade agreements are no silver bullet when global trade is gradually declining because global trust is dwindling.

Our new PM demanded "mutual respect" from religious, ethnic and social communities. But ask the millions of school kids who've sat in Question Time in Canberra over past decades how much mutual respect they see from our country's leaders? Our model doesn't allow it. That's why we need to improve it.

Politicians will only stand in front of a camera and tell the truth when they no longer care if they get re-elected. This will only happen if politics is no longer seen as a career but as a service to our country. If we start the Common Sense Party now it will be the majority party within 10 years. If we don't our standard of living will continue to decline and Australia's ability to withstand future shocks with it.

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Rob

3 DAYS AGO

Where do you sign up? Can we also eliminate one tier of government

[LIKE](#) [REPLY](#)



Ian

4 DAYS AGO

I'm in, where do I sign up. Seriously I would join the party, no pension so no vested interest and actually have to get stuff done, sounds fun.

Two things I will need, the right to sack senior bureaucrats out of hand, and an independent auditor. I need those two powers so I can eliminate further entrenched self entitled power blocks and to make sure the departments are doing what I directed.

Then I'll have at it!

[LIKE](#) [REPLY](#)



Alan

4 DAYS AGO

I like a maxim 2 consecutive terms but don't have a problem with successful candidates coming back after a term of "refreshment" as it allows us the benefit of good people being reused. I also like fixed terms and more referenda especially Citizen Initiated Referenda (CIR) as this allows us, like the Swiss, to let the polities know that we didn't like their decisions even if they were in line with current law or practice. We would also be able to nix international agreements, eg UNHCR, which we objected to. The UN human rights committees populated by the worst offenders would be the first to go.

[LIKE](#) [REPLY](#)

Jennifer

4 DAYS AGO



I'm with you. The last 8 years has been a nightmare. Their pension has corrupted everything. I'd join.

1 LIKE REPLY



Kevin

4 DAYS AGO

A good start would be to introduce fixed terms and let you only stand for election in two consecutive elections. If you win both, you're now banned for life. If you win one, and lose the other, you can have one more go.. If you lose both - get the hint.

3 LIKE REPLY



Juliet

4 DAYS AGO

Entirely agree. Where do I sign up?(!)

1 LIKE REPLY



gordon

4 DAYS AGO

Here here, also agree with 2 terms only (from below).

So what happens now?

LIKE REPLY



Janette

4 DAYS AGO

Good article Greg - like your thinking. So if the Common Sense Party is the what, are you doing a follow-up article on how? Or is this your soft campaign launch?

1 LIKE REPLY



Byrne

4 DAYS AGO

One of the better functioning democracies is Switzerland,

I believe they change prime ministers on an annual basis, in a four year term they have four prime ministers, all from the same elected party, so no more Prima Donna captain's pick but doing the best job you can for the country, that alone would dramatically change Aust politics,

The second vital change is that any major policy or law change goes to a referendum so the majority of the people make the big decisions, so for example moving jet fighters into bombing Syria would require a referendum,

The last big change made by referendum in Switzerland was the people overturning the politicians approval of Minarets being built, the people nixed the idea ,thats democracy,

Finally, fixed terms, ALL politicians have a used by date, I suggest two terms, if they accomplish nothing in that time they are seat warmers and should go and earn a living, and ,no pension or perks, they are there to serve their country.

2   LIKE REPLY**Brett**

4 DAYS AGO

Their are two issues here, waste and BS. We need to remove all levels of government and replace then with regional government where the boundaries are based on logical geographical and environmental boundaries not political. Each regional government provides members for a federal board to manage tax, health, transport, etc nationally. The Senate are no more along with compulsory voting and preferences, first past the post with a majority of actual votes wins the seat. I know I'm a dreamer but this would fix many of our current problems.

1  LIKE REPLY**Terryd**

4 DAYS AGO

Totally agree Greg and while we are at it, reform the Senate with its ridiculous preferential voting and let's go a step further and get rid of state governments. Think of the money we would save and the agility we would inject into the political decision-making process. Surely we are the most over governed country on Earth with most areas of Australia having five layers of government.

9     LIKE REPLY**Alan**

4 DAYS AGO

@Terryd after Federal, State, and Council I'm missing two

LIKE REPLY

**Terryd**

3 DAYS AGO

@Alan @Terryd Most states have upper and lower houses as does Federal and then you have local government.

LIKE REPLY

**sandfly**

4 DAYS AGO

First stop is Senate reform: pay only the average wage along with modest expense and pension entitlements. With a bit of luck party time-servers, self promoters and other useless opportunists will be replaced by worthwhile candidates.

4     LIKE REPLY**Bob**

4 DAYS AGO

@sandfly

If this proposal were to be so effective, why would we need a Senate at all? , but I say dream on.

1  LIKE REPLY

**sandfly**

4 DAYS AGO

An upper house of review is no bad thing if populated by genuine persons of good will armed with the ability to delay and reform only - not the power to scuttle.

LIKE REPLY

**Peter**

4 DAYS AGO

The turkeys will never vote for Thanksgiving.

8 LIKE REPLY

**John**

4 DAYS AGO

You've certainly identified the key problems with politics and politicians - vanity and greed, but these are powerful drivers of behaviour and I fear the solution may be more elusive. Changing the political culture is a very ambitious project. Nonetheless, a very good start to a worthy cause. The ball is now rolling.

2 LIKE REPLY

**Kevin**

4 DAYS AGO

The first thing to do would be to abandon our ridiculous compulsory voting laws which drag 40% of our electorate who have no interest in politics to the polls every 3 years. Because this unwilling 40% are voting, our politicians need to buy their votes, with policies or handouts that serve only the politicians careers with no national benefits what so ever.

15 LIKE REPLY

**Peter**

4 DAYS AGO

@Kevin

Precisely correct.

Compulsory voting is a major cause of the terrible state of of our polity.

Preferential voting compounds the problem.

Three year terms and a cynically misused house of review are the icing on a very bad cake.

9 LIKE REPLY

**Alexander**

4 DAYS AGO

Fine thoughts Greg but let's get to some practical means first, foundational changes are required. We must through away the outdated notion that the Crown is paramount. In law the Queen owns everything, hence our governments see themselves above us. We could make a start in Canberra, like Maggie Thatcher did making over council leased homes to freehold. We should remove compulsory voting. As for selfless service by those in

government, this has resonance because we have become governed by regulation and regulators. Regulating bodies called Government Business Enterprises. GBEs don't have to abide by the rules governing the Public Service and therein lies much of your self serving attitude, witness the enormous costs to us subjects as taxpayers.

7  LIKE REPLY



Jonas

4 DAYS AGO

Why bother with this Common Sense party business? If you like Plato's Republic so much why not just declare yourself philosopher king dictator.

I do agree with the no pension part. Lets go further, no compensation at all for polities. It was not that long ago even your local council member was an unpaid community oriented job, rather than a full time career.

4  LIKE REPLY



lindsay

4 DAYS AGO

Too sensible to be accepted.

15  LIKE REPLY



Raymond

4 DAYS AGO

Why was there not a word about our senate election system which is a model for the world - NOT!

3  LIKE REPLY