

# LIBS MUST KEEP SAFE WHILE COURTING THE INCOHERENT

Turnbull should channel John Howard in handling the Pauline Hanson challenge

DAVID CROWE  
POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT



Pauline Hanson is no longer an outcast. Once expelled from politics as an extremist, she has returned with a new power over the major parties based on a message that resonates in a part of the community that cannot be ignored. One Nation's 593,000 votes in the upper house last July give the party legitimacy. Hanson's bloc in the Senate is proof of that. The challenge for Malcolm Turnbull is

to deal with the reality of this potent force while doing everything possible to break its hold on voters. Bill Shorten was right to needle the Prime Minister this week over the West Australian Liberal Party's preference deal with One Nation at the coming state election. This is a test of how the conservative side of politics responds to a siren call from the Right — a wild, incoherent appeal. The splintering is everywhere. The dispute over the Q Society, where cartoonist Larry Pickering joked about jihadists throwing gay men from rooftops, is just the latest sign. Those on the fringe explore how low they can go in the name of publicity. Serious conservatives

then have to decide what they can accept. At what point do they repudiate the repugnant? Turnbull's response in parliament was instructive. Asked on Wednesday about a One Nation candidate's claims about "gay mind control" and same-sex marriage, the Prime Minister avoided any comment on the craziness. The caution may have been justified — check your opponent's claim before you take sides — but it cannot be justified forever. Turnbull and his colleagues make light of Shorten's barbs by saying Labor candidates won handsomely from Hanson's rise at the last federal election. They have a point. Nobody will wash their hands of One Nation preferences when power is at stake. The government named three seats — Herbert, Longman and Dobell — where it claimed Labor won with One Nation's help. Ewen Jones saw this at first hand. The former Liberal MP was

the member for Herbert, in Queensland, until last July, when he lost to Labor candidate Cathy O'Toole. Out of 88,337 valid votes, Jones lost by 37. A sluggish economy and rising unemployment were big factors, but the rise of One Nation was the wildcard. Jones likens Hanson to Bob Rumson, a politician in the Michael Douglas movie *The American President*. "Whatever your particular problem is, I promise you, Bob Rumson is not the least bit interested in solving it," Douglas says at one point. "He is interested in two things and two things only: making you afraid of it and telling you who's to blame for it. That, ladies and gentlemen, is how you win elections." Hanson's protest movement is not to be taken lightly. In Herbert, 11,950 voters put the One Nation candidate first — twice as many as those who chose the Greens and far ahead of Bob Katter's party. The machinery that worked

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against John Howard's government in the 1990s started turning again: it took primary votes from the Coalition, stored them at One Nation and converted them into second preferences for Labor. In Flynn, another Queensland electorate, Hanson's party received 14,948 primary votes out of 87,146 valid votes. The Liberal National Party held the seat but it was a close call. The lesson for the next election is clear: acknowledge the power of the One Nation base and campaign accordingly. This should mean denouncing the One Nation platform at every turn, but the government seems to praise the party instead. Hanson's odious admiration

for Vladimir Putin, whose surrogates shot down Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, killing 41 Australian citizens and residents, drew only the lightest admonition from the Coalition side. Astonishingly, the first response from LNP MP George Christensen was to declare "Russia is demonised unfairly". He later deleted the tweet. The Right's bizarre attraction to Putin is abhorrent. One Nation's call for a 2 per cent tax rate gives the lie to talk from Trade Minister Steve Ciobo that the party is becoming "economically rationalist" while the idea of requiring every bride and groom to sign a prenuptial agreement is hardly a "sophisticated" policy. For a conservative group, it has a strange love for Big Brother. The threshold issue remains immigration: Hanson's backing for a ban on the basis of race in 1996, on the grounds of religion today. Howard's rejection of Han-

son in 1998 still stands: "She is fanatical about modern campaigning. We are in a time of political disruption and I don't think you can hold positions with whom you will or will not deal on a hard and fast rule." He says deals could be case by case in each seat. "If I am lucky enough to run at the next election, I would put One Nation ahead of Labor and the Greens." This is pragmatic. Yet it also heightens the need for Turnbull and the Coalition to counter the One Nation message. Howard's approach was to treat One Nation voters gently while pushing back at the party at every opportunity, even if that meant taking a political risk with stronger gun control. Howard knew that voters in Liberal seats, such as the Chinese in his own electorate of Bennelong, would recoil if a Coalition government flirted with a racist message. This is the political wisdom his successors need to remember today.

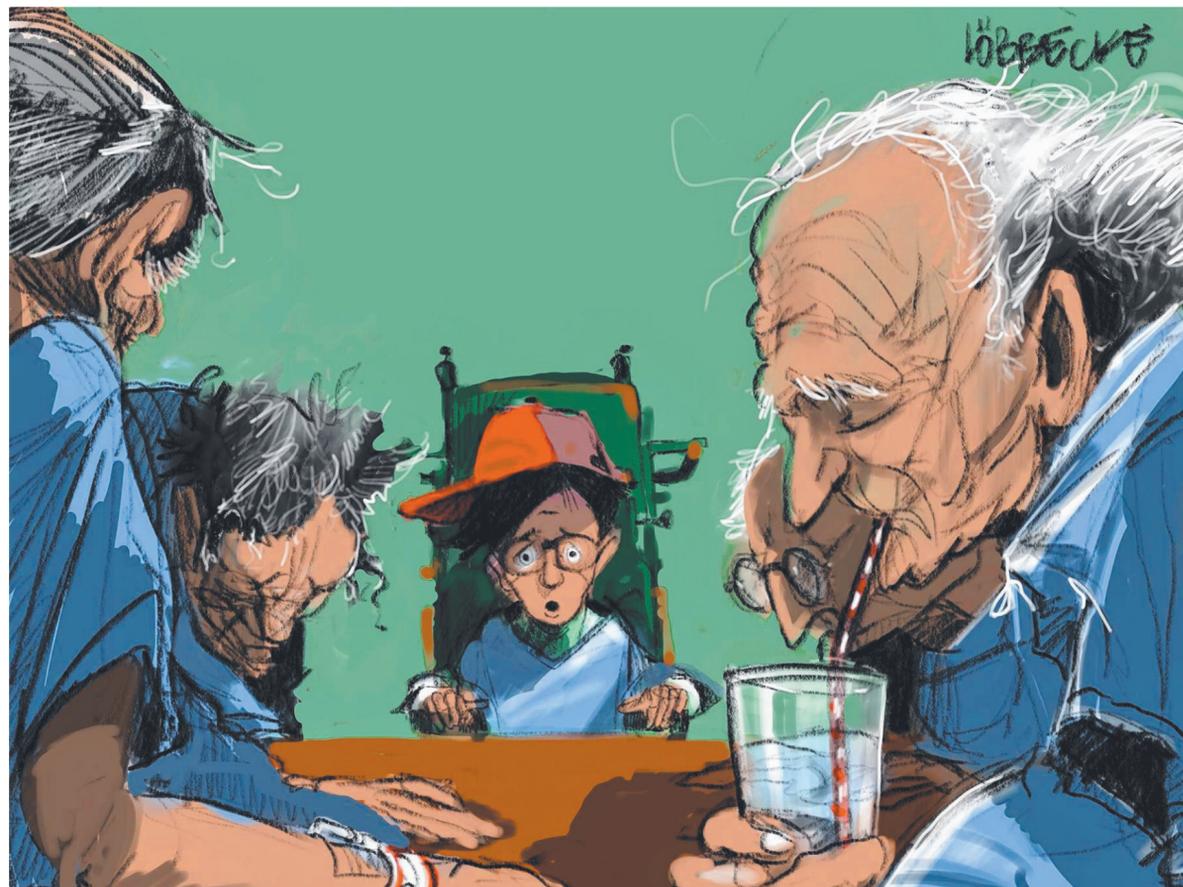
On trading votes, Jones is a realist about modern campaigning: "We are in a time of political disruption and I don't think you can hold positions with whom you will or will not deal on a hard and fast rule." He says deals could be case by case in each seat. "If I am lucky enough to run at the next election, I would put One Nation ahead of Labor and the Greens." This is pragmatic. Yet it also heightens the need for Turnbull and the Coalition to counter the One Nation message. Howard's approach was to treat One Nation voters gently while pushing back at the party at every opportunity, even if that meant taking a political risk with stronger gun control. Howard knew that voters in Liberal seats, such as the Chinese in his own electorate of Bennelong, would recoil if a Coalition government flirted with a racist message. This is the political wisdom his successors need to remember today.

## NATIONAL SHAME OF TEENAGERS TRAPPED IN AGED CARE

How can we be so careless with these young disabled?

LINDA REYNOLDS

There are 6000 young Australians with a disability, some only 17, living permanently in aged care. This is a national disgrace. What shames us even more is that despite these younger Australians being a National Disability Insurance Scheme priority, it will take up to three years for all of them to gain access to the scheme and many more years after that for them all to be housed and supported in suitable community-based accommodation. Take the story of Ariana Pila, who was admitted to Royal Perth Hospital in Western Australia with a rare illness called anti-NMDA receptor encephalitis in 2013 when she was 16. After living there for 15 months her family was told the only option was to place her in a nursing home 45 minutes away. Other arrangements were made, but life for Ariana and her family remains a daily struggle.



So, how has our federation failed younger Australians such as Ariana? A stroke, an accident or a degenerative disease could leave any of us condemned indefinitely to life in a commonwealth-funded aged-care facility. Far too often there is simply nowhere else for desperate families to turn to. The stark reality is that once the commonwealth picks up their tab in aged care, there is no incentive or accountability for any state or territory government to provide the complex, and expensive, ongoing support patients need. So, often there is no pathway out of aged care back into the community. Our failure to address the complex, dysfunctional inter-governmental arrangements that have developed since Federation means there is a jurisdictional chasm that far too many people like Ariana slip through. Even under the NDIS there is no guarantee state and territory governments will provide these younger Australians with the rehabilitation and health support they require if it is outside the scope of disability services that can be provided under the scheme. Aged-care facilities are designed for the specific requirements of older people, with an average age over 85.

While they provide basic shelter and care, they cannot provide the individualised multidisciplinary health, rehabilitation and disability support required by the younger people who too often end up there. Aged-care facilities certainly can't provide younger people stimulation and social interaction with other people their own age. Research into the matter is overwhelmingly clear — young people who live long-term in aged-care facilities experience extreme social alienation and declining emotional, physical and mental health. Not that any of us needed research to explain that. The NDIS was created to solve problems like this by better meeting the long-term needs of people

with a disability, and their families and carers. NDIS access for these younger people is critically important so they can start to receive the complex support they need. Far too often there is simply nowhere else for desperate families to turn to and also to provide them with a pathway out of aged care into appropriate housing. Despite estimates that at least 98 per cent of this group will be eligible for the NDIS, less than 10 per cent have been enrolled so far — an unacceptable situation given

there are already enough places in the NDIS to allow all to enter the scheme this year. Not only are these young people trapped in social isolation without the medical and rehabilitation support they need, there are even darker aspects of their plight. For example, an additional financial burden is placed on these young people and their families when they're forced to live in aged-care facilities, as they are subject to the same income and assets assessments relating to government assistance as the elderly residents. This can mean that a young person is up to \$1000 worse off per fortnight than if they were part of the NDIS. Consequently, some decide the only way forward for them to afford the care they need is to div-

orce their spouse. Others decide they have to sell the family home, which can result in them having no home to return to and never being able to leave aged care. Even worse, many others, in total despair, give up on their life, and some have taken their own. Initially, when advocates raised this situation with me, I found it almost impossible to believe it could be true. But sadly it is. This is why the first inquiry I sponsored as a senator was into the plight of younger people with disabilities living in aged care. This is where I first heard about the plight of Ariana and many other younger Australians, who today are still being admitted into aged care. In June 2015 the Senate community affairs references commit-

tee made a series of practical and implementable recommendations to provide an interim solution for younger people as the NDIS was rolled out nationally. Despite our tortuous Council of Australian Governments processes, with goodwill and prioritisation, change is very possible this year. The 2015 Senate report provides a detailed pathway forward and I have recently written to the responsible commonwealth ministers proposing an additional five-point solution that can be implemented this year. Even within our current inter-governmental arrangements, this is something that can and must be addressed as soon as possible. Linda Reynolds is a Liberal senator for Western Australia.

## REAL TEST COMING AS ONE NATION STEPS WESTWARDS

A strong showing there and we will have to recalibrate the politics of the nation

GRAHAM RICHARDSON



While One Nation is going gangbusters in Western Australia and Queensland, it has been slow to take off in NSW. As far as I am aware, the party that will have such a huge bearing on state and federal elections for the foreseeable future has so far failed to formally register in the state. The breakneck speed of the rise of One Nation can be best judged by looking at the Orange by-election held last November 12. Just three months ago, this by-election, which helped bring down a premier and his deputy, was fought out between the Nationals and the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party. One Nation was neither sighted nor mentioned in the welter of commentary about a by-election that saw a 21 per cent swing against the NSW Liberal government and rewrote the electoral records book.

state election in Queensland shows that of 11 seats won by the first incarnation of One Nation, six were taken from Labor and five from the Nationals. More people live outside of Brisbane than in it, which makes Queensland a different political beast. Two decades ago One Nation won outer Brisbane and regional seats from Labor and bush seats from the Nationals, and that is exactly what will happen in Queensland next time. Hanson faces a big test in the WA election. It is not being played with a home ground advantage and yet judgments will be made on its results. On my reading, One Nation will need to poll somewhere near 20 per cent to be able to claim big-time success.

It is my understanding that One Nation is out there collecting signatures and getting its NSW house in order so the party can be formally registered. While its power core is in Queensland, polls would suggest its appeal is national and if the party is to make the high-water mark set for it by Pauline Hanson, then seats will have to be won in NSW and Victoria. There is legitimacy in comparing the Trump phenomenon to the rapid rise of Pauline Hanson and her party. The most recent research of which I am aware suggests that Hanson and her party's support base is skewed towards men aged 51-65. This is precisely what happened in the US where a showy billionaire became the spear carrier and preferred warrior of poor white working-class men who had either lost their jobs or feared they were going to. Hanson is a working-class woman so she is a far more likely standard-bearer for the working poor than a property billionaire like Trump. At the time of the Orange by-election I wrote several commentaries without mentioning One Nation, which was not even a speck on the NSW political horizon. In just three months the situation has changed so graphically that One Nation could have come from nowhere to a position of a real contender. Some recent polling in the northern NSW federal electorate of Page indicates that in NSW, and I assume something similar in Victoria, there is a view among country-based voters that they would support either the Shooters or One Nation depending on who ran the better local candidate. Orange was won by a guy named Philip Donato who is a well-known and popular local. One Nation's predilection for selecting too many crazies who have to be quickly disendorsed may make it much more difficult for the party. The Shooters search high and low for the best candidates and that may mean they can hold out against the Hanson tide. A quick glance at the 1998

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You might wonder how the Greens feel about this. After 30 years, they hover about 10 per cent. Twenty years after coming out of jail, Hanson can attract double their vote in just a few months in the spotlight. Now, tonight on *Richo* on Sky News I will be interviewing Hanson's spokesman on energy, Mark Butler, about his efforts to blame the federal government for the most recent power outage in his home state of South Australia. Butler had claimed the other day that "yesterday's South Australian blackout wasn't the result of renewable energy, or a lack of thermal capacity in the state; it was the result of a calculated decision by Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg's own electricity regulator". Either Butler was simply unaware of the structure of the regulator, or he was being mischievous. I will have to opt for the latter because he would have known that the federal government would haul him over the coals for his ignorance. Counter-claim after counter-claim has been made by both sides of the argument and it is difficult for the great mass of us who are not experts in the field of electricity generation to work out the truth that lies buried somewhere among the many words that have been spoken over the last few months. One fact that for me ends the petty bickering over the worth of renewable energy is this: "Wind capacity in SA is 1576MW and at the critical time prior to the load-shedding event it was only generating 70MW to 90MW, with demand at the time being over 3000MW." That is a quote from a Frydenberg press release that nobody has challenged. On a good day wind power provides about 40 per cent of South Australia's normal supply. Preceding that blackout that number was a lousy 3 per cent. There are times when the wind won't blow and the sun won't shine. By definition this makes it well-nigh impossible to include renewables in baseload power.

## LABOR TROIKA FAILS TO SEE THE ROADBLOCKS IN PALESTINE

Israel seeks peace and two states, but its neighbour can never quite decide

MICHAEL DANBY

Fairfax assembled a cast of old predictables — Bob Carr, Gareth Evans and even Bob Hawke — to sound the siren call that Australia should unilaterally recognise a Palestinian state. That would reward a Palestinian leadership that has three times walked away from Israeli peace offers on borders, settlements, refugees and Jerusalem, and encourage it to keep dodging direct negotiations with the Israelis. Former US president Bill Clinton described the opportunity missed by the Palestinians during the US-brokered peace talks in 2000 and 2001 in the following terms: "Yasser Arafat's rejection of my proposal after (Ehud) Barak accepted it was an error of historic proportions." The Israelis and Palestinians issued a joint statement

saying: "The sides declare they have never been closer to reaching an agreement and it is thus our shared belief that the remaining gaps could be bridged with the resumption of negotiations." Labor supports the right of Israel to live in peace with secure borders with international recognition. It also supports the aspiration for a Palestinian state to exist in peace and security. It believes this can be accomplished through mutual recognition and via an agreement directly negotiated between the parties. The ALP national platform on Palestine, adopted in 2015, commits Labor to the following: "If however there is no progress in the next round of the peace process, a future Labor government will discuss joining like-

minded nations who have already recognised Palestine and announcing conditions and time lines for the Australian recognition of a Palestinian state, with the objective of contributing to peace and security in the Middle East." Unfortunately even in the peace talks in 2014, according to US mediator Martin Indyk, Benjamin Netanyahu was "sweating bullets" for an agreement, but Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas just walked away. Labor and Coalition governments have long supported a two-state solution to the Palestinian conflict. Hawke's analysis of the conflict included a surprising throwaway that the Palestinians are the "indigenous" people of the Holy Land. How could anyone, let alone a former prime minister, ignore the plethora of historical documents and archeological artefacts that attest to the unbroken chain of Hebrew, Israelite and Jewish language, culture, religion and civilisation in the Holy Land over the past 3250 years? Our common

Judeo-Christian heritage attests to thousands of years of Jewish ties to the Holy Land. Judaism predates Islam by more than 2000 years, especially in geographic areas that now comprise Israel and the West Bank. Australians and the Labor Party must not view Israel through the prism of one stupid, recent law retroactively legalising "adverse possession", a law that may well be overturned by Israel's High Court. If we are to fetishise about settlements we should equally praise the Israelis for the 3000 Israeli police who dismantled the illegal Jewish outpost of Amona just last week. Labor notables who insist we only view the Middle East through the distorted prism of settlements discount the strong Australia-Israel relationship. Trade between Israel and Australia amounts to \$1.2 billion. Bilateral dealings in fields of aid and development also include ongoing hi-tech, scientific and medical research. Our security relationship also helps to pre-

serve the safety of everyday Australians from crazies such as Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic State — groups that are classified by the Australian parliament as terrorist organisations. Israel is a creative bastion, perhaps the epicentre of the world's technological revolution. In Tel Aviv, 150,000 gay people can peacefully parade. Equally the same number can light the Christmas trees in Bethlehem or Jaffa, where the only growing population of Christians in the Middle East lives without fear or discrimination. Surely our three wise men understand this context? Israel is an island of freedom in a Middle East beset by war, genocide, economic failure and ugly sexual violence. As former US ambassador to the UN Samantha Power said in explaining the US's abstention in the Security Council on the resolution Hawke mentions — "even if every single settlement were to be dismantled tomorrow, peace still would not be attainable without both sides

acknowledging uncomfortable truths and making difficult choices". No serious statesman can ignore the regional morass in which this tiny, peaceful, tolerant, technological country lives. If you were an Israeli who would have to live in peace with your Palestinian neighbours, would you risk another Hamas takeover in the West Bank to please Carr or Evans or the goody-two-shoes New Zealanders? Recognising the myopic state of Palestine will do nothing to encourage the Palestinians whose adamant continuing refusal to negotiate directly with their Israeli counterparts is the key blockage to peace. Being rude to the first sitting Israeli prime minister to visit Australia will not serve Australia's interests. Sincere engagement with the Israelis will be taken seriously — and that is what mainstream Labor should advocate. Michael Danby is the federal member for Melbourne Ports.