

Penalties and taxes: Cuts are the arithmetic of delusional politics

July 2, 2018

Cutting penalty rates may create new jobs. For example: instead of employing one person and paying them \$100 a week, companies could employ 100 people and pay them \$1 each a week. But, with no extra money in the mix, how will this boost the economy?

David Pope

Merlyn Robbins, Coburg

While some go up, some go down

It's somewhat ironic that federal politicians, including Coalition members, many with little sympathy for workers, receive a 2 per cent wage rise (after a 2 per cent rise last year), while hospitality and retail workers will see their penalty rates cut for the second year in a row with further cuts ahead.

Hugh McCaig, Blackburn

ScoMo's personality comes to the fore

Scott Morrison's split personality. Tax cuts: it's your money we are giving back. Penalty rates: it's your money we are keeping from you.

Phil Lipshut, Elsternwick

Shorten has a lot to answer for

The hypocritical Bill Shorten continues with his advocacy to reverse Sunday penalty rates, all the while totally ignoring the EBA deals struck by the SDA union with respect to Coles, Woolies, Bunnings and their ilk that guarantee lower wages, lack of the penalty rates he espouses, union membership and the trickling of funds all the way through to the ALP.

Mal Alexander, Vermont

PM, the trickle down does not work

The Prime Minister trumpets the merits of his free market government. He focuses on reducing red tape and prioritises tax cuts to business ahead of all other uses for this revenue. He believes more profitable businesses will trickle benefits down to their workers although there is no evidence that this occurs. There is plenty of evidence to the contrary, however, that business will take all the government handouts on offer while still abusing their workers, customers and the

environment. The banking royal commission daily reveals horror stories. This government and overseeing authorities have been incompetently asleep at the wheel. A few dollars a week of personal tax cuts will not resurrect their fortunes.

Peter Thomson, Brunswick

Timing must be a coincidence

Probably just a coincidence that as union membership has decreased in Australia, employers ripping off workers has increased.

Phil Alexander, Eltham

Sorry for the misconception

My sincere apologies to wait staff and chefs. I never left tips as I assumed the exorbitant price of meals was a reflection of the wages paid to the staff.

Andy Indrans, Taradale

No profit gained from using this Cash

Those 700,000 workers who are affected by the changes to their penalty rates might reflect that it is Senator Michaelia Cash, on behalf of the government, who advocates their pay cut. She doesn't seem to realise that university students, for example, need to maximise their income at weekends when lectures are paused.

Single mothers and fathers who struggle to present their children with a happy and healthy upbringing cannot afford to concede to the senator's rhetoric of more employment.

The opposition can surely see this attack on our quality of life, as an extra step up the ladder to an election.

Graeme Lee, Fitzroy

FORUM

As it happens

It seems to me that many decisions made, by both political and commercial leaders in Australia, are purely a product of happenstance.

Paul Webster, Burwood East

Lift your game

Well said Tony Wright ("When banks abandon the bush", The Age, 30/6). As I'm waiting in a bank on Friday (which bank you ask?) with my elderly mother, I witness at least 15 very elderly people queueing patiently. This is the lot of people used to dealing with tellers, not ATMs. The banking royal commission has exposed many repugnant practices, but have the banks learnt anything?

In a suburban branch I see how elderly people are still treated as second class, made to wait an excessive time to perform a necessary task. Of course, if they wanted to borrow money they

could have seen the two staff waiting to assist immediately and been offered a seat. Lift your game banks and start treating the elderly with respect.

Rosslyn Jennings, North Melbourne

No change at banks

I remember in the 1960s when my father was a local bank manager. One thing he often commented on then, was how the banks charged a penalty interest rate on an underperforming business. He asked, why? this is only increasing the pressure on a business, rather than helping it get through its crisis. He always thought it was wrongheaded. Nothing much changes does it?

Graham Reynolds, Ballarat North

Fading world

Maybe it's nostalgia, or the fact that both my parents grew up on farms, but I always enjoy Tony Wright's writing about life growing up in and around a country town.

His great word-pictures evoke the daily human interactions big and small that comprise that softer world of community, which is unfortunately disappearing today from too much of modern life.

As someone of roughly his vintage, I find substance in his writings but also I'm left with a feeling of a world which is fading.

Ross Crawford, Frankston

Monash campaign

It is to be hoped that Peter FitzSimons's new book, *The Battle of Hamel*, reviewed by military historian Michael McKernan (30/6), reignites the campaign to have the greatest of Australian generals, John Monash, elevated to Field Marshal status. The centenary of this WWI battle on Wednesday should acknowledge the genius of a brilliant soldier, engineer and intellectual whose revolutionary assault template combining infantry, aircraft, artillery and tanks helped to ensure Allied victory; and minimised the loss of soldiers' lives compared with the static trench warfare of the previous four years.

That Monash, from a colonial civilian militia and German-Jewish background, came to be a figure of world significance is further attested by the adoption of his Hamel strategy by the famously brilliant German panzer general, Hans Guderian, – known to us as "blitzkrieg" warfare. It is time for Australia to brush aside bureaucratic moral pygmies and fully acknowledge an exemplary Australian's place in history.

Jon McMillan, Mount Eliza

Doing hard Labor

If the ALP replaces Bill Shorten as leader after having been well ahead in 34 Newspolls in a row they really don't deserve to be in government. It would show they have learnt nothing from the Rudd-Gillard years.

David Fry, Moonee Ponds

Fearful times

All Australians should be filled with fear, now that we know that we can be imprisoned, by our own government, for making public its corruption.

Jeffrey Newman, Ivanhoe

Moving on

Bill Shorten's judgment and leadership credentials are being questioned as a result of his handling of the company tax cuts. On any measure Malcolm Turnbull showed far poorer judgment in his involvement in the disastrous Godwin Grech affair. At the time, there seemed no doubt that this was a death knell for his leadership aspirations. He is now Prime Minister and those events appear forgotten and buried in the annals of time. With the daily news cycle, when it comes to politics, we move on fairly quickly.

Stephen McNamara, Newtown

War in space

America the great, has militarised the world, spending the last century feeding their greed-driven military-industrial economy. And now Donald Trump wants to militarise space.

Terry Malone, Warburton

Revise the law

How is it that an Australian law can allow a solicitor to be prosecuted simply for acting on behalf of a whistleblower who exposed the bugging of East Timor during commercial negotiations ("Spy who exposed East Timor bugging charged", The Age, 29/6).

How is it that defending a client can now be a crime in this country? This is a legal disgrace. It's the sort of behaviour totalitarian communist regimes used to practise during the Cold War. Federal Parliament needs to revise these laws and get rid of the offending provisions as a priority.

Bill O'Connor, Beechworth

It's not new

Christopher Pyne may take issue regarding Anthony Albanese's recent speech. He forgets that Tony Abbott has been undermining Malcolm Turnbull ever since he became an ex-PM.

Peng Ee, Castle Cove, NSW

Taking advantage

The most egregious aspects of the bugging of East Timor's ministerial offices are that it was undertaken on an impoverished ally and for commercial reasons only.

Ray Fallu, Kardella South

Pulling levers

It's obvious to any logical thinking person that political donations are leverage. That is a conflict of interest by the politicians after taking their oath to protect the interests of the public. Any donation to a political party is simply a bribe for favour – nothing more. If you look at the state of American politics you can see Australia's future and I certainly don't want that.

Daryl Younger, Shepparton

Traffic examples

The article on Melbourne traffic ("Moving the jobs", The Age, 28/6) noted Grattan Institute's interest in "transport services that carry smaller groups". Hong Kong has two types of public transport that do just that. They are called "Maxicabs" and "Minibuses". Both use small 14-seater buses.

Maxicabs run on fixed routes, but Minibuses vary their routes to suit required pick-ups and drop-offs.

For Melbourne they could run around the outer and middle suburbs to pick-up passengers for the morning peak, then on freeways to the city.

During the day the small buses could operate within five to 10 kilometres of the city, then pick up passengers and back out to the suburbs in the evening. They could also operate "ring" routes between the mainly radial roads, and train and tram routes.

Michael Hipkins, Richmond

Pressing issues

I want an intelligent and free press – that's why I support the ABC with my viewing and listening, and Fairfax with my reading and subscription dollars. I suspect I'm not alone. Please don't make me choose ("News outlets at war in Coalition's review", The Age, 30/6) – odds on I'll walk with my wallet first.

Andrew Watkins, Highett

Cease rejoicing

Ross Gittins is interesting and thought-provoking as always especially on the basic importance of our natural environment and a more realistic way to measure GDP ("Green shoots in economic growth", Business, 30/6). However, I'm less certain he's justified in rejoicing that Australia's greenhouse gases are now growing less rapidly than in an earlier year (2006-07).

The very worrying facts are that emissions and consuming populations are still growing here and worldwide, and many governments including our Coalition are still pushing economic growth, all of which is wrecking the natural environment via climate change and global warming in a ghastly vicious circle.

Barbara Fraser, Burwood

Focus on customers

In this age of "nimble, responsive, customer-focused" corporations we cut branches and reduce front-end staff. Have senior managers never heard of digital work flow apps, or multi-person

online zoom/skype meetings? Have they never considered the depth of information gleaned by on the ground branch staff?

Isolated "work from home" staff have their drawbacks, but not so small local teams. So build your branch networks, and really become customer focused.

Tom Danby, Coburg North

It's not difficult

Is it really that hard to adapt to bringing your own bag to the supermarket? I fear for the future of this planet. A lot of us are doing everything possible to be responsible but there is a large segment out there who just don't get it.

Barry Lizmore, Ocean Grove

Without a word of a lie

Why do our politicians speak gobbledegook? Josh Frydenberg talks about "mistruths". What is a mistruth? There's no such word. (Check the Oxford Dictionary.)

John Brennan, Surrey Hills

Twisted logic

The Trump administration has banned people from five Muslim-majority nations from entering the US ("Trump's pick tips balance", The Age, 28/6). According to the Cato Institute since the 9/11 attacks, about nine Americans have been killed by Muslims a year. In that same time, about 32,000 Americans have been killed by guns a year. Yet it is Muslims that have been banned. Not guns.

Alison Davies, Surrey Hills

AND ANOTHER THING

Politics

Elect Matthew Guy and he will build a road to somewhere at no disclosed cost and route until after the election.

Brian Henderson, Kallista

Most Australians would aspire to sharing in the prosperity which, currently, seems to be the prerogative of the rich.

Ian Gray, Benalla

Did Malcolm Turnbull really accuse Bill Shorten of not having any authority in his own party? What colour did he say that kettle was?

Chris Appleby, Fairfield

Bill Shorten, how about a captain's call to get refugees out of detention?

Lindsay Donahoo, Wattle Glen

Is a back flip equivalent to half a flip flop?

Joan Segrave, Healesville

It should be compulsory for Pauline to wear the burqa in Parliament.

Les Field, Blackburn South

Shooting

Another five shot. Trump says hopes and prayers. I suppose action's out of the question.

Des Crowle, Casterton

Another idiot showing the world the stupidity of US gun laws.

John Michaels, Malvern

Will Trump now advocate arming journalists with swords?

Richard Bowman, Brighton East

Trump's "my thoughts and words are with the victims and their families" is a hollow platitude.

David Seal, Balwyn North

Furthermore

If Australia wants a better chance to win the World Cup, it should undo Federation and field more teams.

Rob Ward, Lake Tyers Beach

Kasey Edwards – "Feminism 'ally' devalues women's voices" (Comment, 27/6) – I'm with you.

Bruce Beatson, Toora

Bosses large and small, will pocket workers penalty rates.

Malcolm McDonald, Burwood