



Bernie Kilgariff AM

Grant Tambling AM

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When the CLP Central Council selects the new Senator it will be one of the most important tasks ever in the Party's history. That is not an exaggeration. Reduced to a rump in the Legislative Assembly it has been a hard grind restoring and holding the membership and restoring the Party's financial viability – I know. The parliamentary wing of two has done exceptionally well in the circumstances. Higgins and Finocchiaro have kept the CLP alive, relevant and despite mutterings to the contrary the CLP brand is well and truly on the mend rating a very creditable 45 / 55 tpp split. Could the CLP win an election tomorrow – probably not but Territory Labor has a number of 'oncers' that will see normalcy return to the local political scene following the next NT General Election. The smarties in Labor know this; there is an inevitability about the political cycle.

Further the Senate position is no longer guaranteed. Politics as we know it is in turmoil. Come the election in May expect the field to be crowded – One Nation, Katter Party, independents and possibly Terry Mills. The NT Senate position will be a fight.

The CLP must get the Senate right. The Territory economy is now officially the worst in Australia. This is not something that one side of politics should rejoice in to the detriment of the other side – in this case an ever-increasing unstable Territory Labor Government. The simple fact is that we Territorians are all in this together. The crippling debt, the fraying economy, the looming collapse of the commercial sector is a problem that belongs to all of us. The right candidate as Senator can play a very important role in helping the Territory out of its current predicament. To be blunt this is not something for recycled defeated candidates that belonged to a failed CLP Government. This is not a role for a 'green horn' who will disappear into Canberra and be swallowed up by the machinations of a Coalition Party room. This is not a job for recycled staffers or party apparatchiks. This job requires skills, experience and the ability to work with who ever the Government of the day might be. This job requires someone who will not be intimidated, stood over or seduced by the all persuasive Canberra culture. This is not a job for someone going down there chasing Ministerial or leadership roles – this is a job for someone who understands that they have one job – the NT.

As we have all witnessed, dating from the Rudd Government to the present the real power in our Federal Parliament lies in the Senate where legislation is made and broken depending on the vagaries of the cross bench, where Senators trade favours and rapacious self interest rules. No matter which way you crunch the numbers neither side of politics is going to have a working majority in the Senate come the election. The CLP Senator will have a unique opportunity to influence Government policy and that includes projects and expenditure that benefit the Territory.

Therefore, the selection of the CLP Senator is critically important. Important to the future fortunes of the CLP, critical to helping the Territory out of its financial morass and critical in restoring confidence and pride in our Territory.

The CLP faces two challenges – first, was it the right call to restrict nominations to existing Party members? I think not. Second, if the Central Council presses on regardless and none of the applicants cut the mustard Council must have the backbone and courage of their convictions to say ‘no’ and readvertise.

For the CLP Central Council this is the most important decision they will make on their watch so for the sake of the Territory get it right. This is the first real test of whether the CLP has learned from its mistakes. Put the Territory first.

Please don't let Territorians down.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Shane', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Shane L Stone

Former CLP President, Federal President of the Liberal Party and Chief Minister of the NT and now working hard at retiring from active politics.