The man who should not be PM

By Pat Byrne
President

Normally we don't make specific recommendations about voting to our members. The State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia is a diverse organisation. Our members are intelligent and make their own decisions.

However, for the federal election to be held on 21 May we are making an exception to say loudly and clearly that Scott Morrison does not deserve your vote.

He is, to coin a recent turn of phrase, a dud.

This is a man who, as Treasurer, abetted the gutting of the original Gonski recommendations designed to bring a fairer funding system into play; this is a man who, as Prime Minister, stayed silent as his former Education Minister declared himself "pleased that the school funding wars were over".

That particular lie was exposed, with the losers and winners being starkly delineated in the March budget when funding for public schools was slashed by $559 million over the next three years, while funding for private schools was increased by $2.6 billion over the forward estimates!

Minister Tudge was not in cabinet by the time that budget was delivered. He was on the back bench having apparently "stood aside" from his ministerial duties (but still being paid his ministerial salary) and had been replaced before Budget Day by the man who declared public school teachers to be duds.

This man was deemed suitable to be acting Minister for Education after repaying $39,975 that he had inadvertently claimed from taxpayers for internet usage not related to his actual job, which came five years after inadvertently accepting $50,000 Rolex watches from a businessman and three years after resigning from the Turnbull ministry for an inadvertent breach of the ministerial code of conduct.

There was nothing inadvertent, however, about Stuart Robert declaring public school teachers to be duds. He was #MorrisonMustGo addressing an audience comprising private school representatives, who of course would never tolerate duds in their schools.

Scott Morrison's war on public school funding, along with the wanton destruction of TAFE across much of Australia and the blatant attacks on the public university sector, has been shameless.

We saw private schools and private universities getting JobKeeper payments while their public equivalents got nothing.

Private schools got $750 million in JobKeeper payments alone and still increased their fees!

Universities lost significant revenue from international student enrolments but received nothing from the government – to the point of 40,000 university jobs being lost across Australia.

This was the Morrison Government flaunting its loathing for public education.

While the ALP has a far better policy on school funding, there remains cause for concern; Anthony Albanese's silence to date on the $559 million cut to public school funding in the federal budget gives us no comfort.

Even with the commitment to fund 100 percent of the Schooling Resource Standard, questions of timing and of the state/federal government share of that 100 per cent are crucial and AEU members need to see the detail about this.

Failure by the ALP to do this risks it being seen as taking AEU members for granted.

Now, not everyone allocates their vote on the basis of the work they do. There are many broader issues to consider.

So let's consider Scott Morrison's performance in other areas.

When eastern Australia was on fire he was in Hawaii. He is accused by former NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian of putting politics above lives during the NSW bushfires.

When Queensland and New South Wales were inundated by floods he was in Canberra and WA.

Then he announced financial aid to Coalition seats but not to some Labor seats, to NSW electorates but not to Queensland electorates.

When COVID-19 came he went to the footy. He was dragged kicking and screaming by state premiers of all political colours to take proper action.

He failed to address the concerns of teachers across Australia; refused to countenance the idea that schools should close, despite the risks posed for teaching staff.

Only a letter from the AEU and IEU, backed by strong public support, persuaded him to meet with the unions representing teaching and allied staff. Even then, he lost interest within days – he did not follow up with commitments made.

As vaccines became available, he failed to secure supplies, declaring that vaccination was not a race.

He repeatedly attacked states such as WA which took a more stringent approach to COVID-19 management.

The Morrison Government's performance around women's issues has been appalling. Despite several opportunities arising for him to show leadership on these issues, he has demonstrated a complete lack of understanding.

He genuinely doesn't get it, which shows, every time he has to ask Jen.

Indeed, asking his wife makes clear that he is unable to conceptualise these issues other than by how they affect the women in his family. His record is one of inaction:

- A long-delayed, never released, inquiry into an alleged rape, metres away from the PM's office.
- A failure to address a march for justice outside Parliament House (instead reminding those women that, "not far from here such marches, even now are being met with bullets").
- A complete failure to address gender pay gaps.
- A failure to implement the most significant recommendations from Kate Jenkins' report on workplace sexual harassment.

Many of those speaking out about Morrison being a bully seem to have something in common: Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, Jacquie Lambie, Julia Banks, Linda Reynolds, Gladys Berejiklian and Pauline Hanson.

Other major failings have been

- The lack of progress on supporting an Indigenous Voice to Parliament.
- Zero funding in the budget for action on climate change. The man who waved a piece of coal around in parliament continues to delay and to obfuscate instead of confronting an existential threat to Australia and the planet.

Now in modern politics it is easy to say one side is as bad as another, or that the main parties are all alike.

However, Scott Morrison has crossed too many lines for us to sit on the fence. Whoever you vote for, it should not facilitate his return to the Prime Ministership.

It is no coincidence that many of his most trenchant recent critics are from his own side – they see him behind the scenes, they understand how he manages disagreements.

I will leave you with the words of Concetta Fierravanti-Wells, someone who knows Morrison all too well:

"By now you might be getting the picture that Morrison is not interested in rules- based order. It is his way or the highway – an autocrat and a bully who has no moral compass."

"Morrison is not fit to be Prime Minister."

Authorised by Sally Dennis, General Secretary, The State School Teachers' Union of W.A.
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