

We The People

Program 105

Mandates and Promises to Keep



From time to time we hear a word used over and over until we accept it in a certain context and in that way it may betray its actual meaning. So it seems timely to take a look at the word **mandate** and what it means and what it says about those who often use it. A **mandate** may also be coupled with the phrase **promises not to be broken**. So **mandate** and promises dovetail well together and carry a public meaning and a democratic weight.

My intention is to consider a **mandate** in the political sense and reflect for a moment on the new federal government and the **mandate** they claim. I suggest when politicians have a **mandate** it's like a ticket to get something done and that's based on their public proposals articulated during the election campaign. In the House of Representatives the Coalition won convincingly and all legislation presented and debated must therefore be passed to the Senate as the house of review. The Senate should not be used to continue another party agenda, rather the Senators should test the legislation and ensure it's balanced and fairly delivers the intent of the government's instrument. The Senate should not try and manipulate the national agenda for which the government has a legitimate **mandate**, rather it should review and debate and compromise to ensure good government.

A previous Prime Minister said and I quote.... 'We got the mandate, we got the authority, we got the votes of the Australian people and we intend to press ahead'. Fair enough but does that mean every last thing said before the election forms a mandate, I don't think so. At the time the Australian newspaper reported...."The **mandate** is the link, the trust, the bond between the ruler and the people and if the **mandate** is killed, then you kill the central means of keeping governments honest. The government has a right to implement its policies; but it has a responsibility to honour its promises. A government that breaks its promises is abusing its **mandate**. An Opposition that denies a government **mandate** denies any expectation that its promises will be kept".

The concepts of **mandate** and '**broken promise**' are the opposite sides of the same coin in the Australian political game, but all players know that policy commitments are always open to various interpretations and that some must be adjusted or abandoned as circumstances in the political, legal, economic, social and technological environments change or as new information becomes available.

So should the senate try and prevent the government passing legislation on a certain issue when that's not their role. Paul Kelly rightly said.....The entire Senate wasn't even elected. The Senate can't claim a **mandate** because this was a half-Senate poll. The arrogance for the people held by some senators who claim **mandates** when half their numbers didn't even face the voters is as breathtaking as it is contemptuous. The **mandate** is the trust between the elected government and the people and can't apply to the Senate because the Senate doesn't determine the government and the Senate as a whole didn't go to the election". We can't vote for a political party only for an individual who may well declare they are part of an organised political group so we get their parties manifesto by default. Surely the individual has a mandate for the people they represent and this applies to all members on all sides of politics. To claim a broad overarching **mandate** though is a bit rich in my view because that claim is so wide and so all encompassing it takes liberty for granted. I believe the **mandate** is in fact the right to govern well and for the benefit and happiness of the people. The government has a **mandate to meet its promises** based on the political platform they expressed during the election. They have a responsibility to meet those promises and the opposition has a **mandate** to test their validity. The Senate has the responsibility to review and ensure fairness, affordability and due process in the interest of we the people but it does not have the authority to create its own agenda.

Now let the new government get on with governing and meeting their promises through the democratic process of review and for goodness sake pay down some debt. **Until next time this is Kent Bayley**