

We The People
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We the People Burning the Furniture to Stay Warm



Good day to you. That old saying "**burning the furniture to stay warm**" is revealing. It means incinerating your own furniture will keep you warm in winter for a while but then what. Once it's gone you will need help from others or endure cold winters without furniture. I acknowledge some thoughts from journalist Madonna King in today's offering.

For most of our short life as a nation we have proudly run foreign aid programs to help less fortunate nations with their needs for education, roads, clean water and functioning health systems. In effect, we've been willing to invest in those nations for little to no financial return because they can't afford to themselves. Why? Partly a sense of that it's the right thing to do and partly as a form of soft diplomacy and partly because of flawed left wing ideology of wealth redistribution, which does not work.

The NSW Government no longer feels it can meet community needs through the normal forms of taxation and fees. It has a big asset in its electricity system but the returns it provides are less than reasonable. Its options are to jack up electricity prices or to reduce the costs of running the system or to find someone willing to accept the lower returns and a lump of cash in return. Enter the Chinese state-owned enterprise recently a front-runner to take up the sale. Because of a public outcry just a few days ago Scott Morrison decided not to approve the sale to the Chinese because of national security issues. Nevertheless, let's see what the future holds just in case there is a fresh application more politically acceptable as yet another state asset is sold off. Expect new roads and stadiums aplenty in NSW over the next half decade as the overseas money lands in the State treasury. The question, of course, is whether these are **needs** or simply **lures** to keep an increasingly demanding community off the government's back. What next, a foreign government running our hospitals and schools, so we can spend the money on even more stadiums. Or maybe we could outsource the Medicare payments system or have a foreign government run the next census because the feds can't even do that.

Mr Morrison has a complex decision to make on the sale of AusGrid. He has indicated that national security issues will be part of his consideration and there's little doubt the Chinese Government will see the rejection as a sign of Australia's mistrust of China's growing influence in this region. The Pacific version of the Great Game has China and the US positioning for power dominance in this part of the world. Australia sees itself as an honest broker but may ultimately have to choose a side in a diplomatic showdown. So, how would that work if a Chinese Government agency ran the energy supply to our largest city. What happens if part of its armoury is to switch off the "foreign aid" of investing in this country that no longer wants to or struggles to fund its own essential services. Foreign investment in Australia is a fraught issue - always has been even though our major industries have relied on foreign support.

The grazing industry, the mining industries, the tourism industry and what's left of manufacturing would not exist except for the foreign seed capital and enterprise that started them. However, these were all start-up industries, not established services traditionally provided by government. Their funders were corporations motivated by financial imperatives, not governments increasing their influence in pursuit of diplomatic or worst case, **not so diplomatic objectives**.

Australia should at times welcome foreign investment if it is properly considered investment for investment's sake but not if it's to serve another purpose. Foreign aid is meant for the needy and we're still well short of that. The idea of selling a major NSW power grid to another countries government also has a profound psychological effect on 'we the people', so it's not just a financial decision. As to the census, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull should stop talking about innovation and the digital revolution and demonstrate how his government can get it right. The census was one chance to do that and he's blown it so are we to trust their decision making with selling off the furniture to stay warm and allow a foreign government to control the electricity of Sydney. It seems governments cannot run anything efficiently but those services common to the nation's well-being must be government controlled and not exposed to the whims of free enterprise. In the meantime I have far more faith in the drovers dog running this great country.

Until next time this is Kent Bayley