

We The People

Program 88

Politicians and Public Servants



In Australia it's fair to say there is a high degree of suspicion and cynicism about politicians at all levels of government. Public servants are not far behind in the public's loathing and general distrust of the bureaucracy. I don't believe this is always justified as there are many good people working behind the scenes in government and indeed there are some well meaning politicians who try hard to make a positive difference. However I have observed that the longer the poly is in power and the longer the bureaucrat serves the more the system moulds them with process and political correctness until we have bureaucratic and political grid lock. By gridlock I mean that just as in a congested city no matter what the road rules the flow of traffic is almost stationary despite all the best intentions. As regular listeners will appreciate I have a penchant against waste in government and a predilection to pointing out the vast inefficiencies of bureaucrats and their systems of no consequence. The cost of all this organised mayhem is great and the loss to us as a country is colossal. So what do we actually pay these people for their work and all based on trust of course and as we speak there are 1.9 million employed by the government.

Let's take the Prime Minister whose office does not appear in the Constitution. Well the current PM Julia Giallrd gave herself a pay rise last year of \$129,000 taking her salary to \$495,000 a year or \$9,500 a week. As a matter of interest, that's about \$80,000 a year more than the President of the United States which is arguably the most powerful position in the world. The Leader of the Opposition receives \$352,000 a year while in 2012 the average wage increase across the board for politicians was \$50,000 or nearly a grand a week. Don't forget on top of this there are expenses, travel and massive superannuation benefits. If Julia Gillard retired from politics today she would receive around \$21 million in pension and benefits by the time she turns 82 just as Kevin Rudd would.

Now it's true that comparisons are often made with top CEO's in business and the huge salaries they sometimes attract. However that is often contingent on performance and so the comparison falls short, well short. Politicians are accountable to the people at election time assuming of course the voters care and take the time to educate themselves on issues. An ignorant careless voting public hands power to the politicians and they willingly take it and their parties often set the agenda to the detriment of the people.

The Australian public service is increasingly top-heavy, with 45,000 officials or 29 per cent of all permanent employees now classified as executives. According to The Australian there is now one manager for every 2.5 ordinary workers in the federal bureaucracy. The rise in the top five pay grades in Canberra accounts for almost all of the growth in the public service during the past five years, with an annual cost to taxpayers of \$1.3 billion for the 10,000-plus extra executives. In the past five years the number of permanent public servants has grown by 10,400 in the executive ranks, to 155,000. Who says there's no job growth in Australia.

On the Gold Coast our local Councillors are paid around \$131,000 a year plus expenses while the Councils CEO receives around \$415,000 and the Mayor receives over \$200,000. All this and they have yet to account for losing \$129 million on their computer software debacle, so their accountability and competence must be seriously questioned. Think about your local councillor and ask yourself if they are worth that kind of money. Can they make good decisions, do they know what they are doing and do they have the intellectual horse power required to properly run our city and represent their constituents.

The average weekly wage in Australia is \$56,000 a year. Small business owners probably take far less than that while micro business would be very small. The full pension is around \$18,000 for a single person and the cost of living is driving people into poverty every day in Australia. So let's ask the question.....is all this fair when you consider there are 50,000 people on the Gold Coast living in austere poverty. Listeners, vote wisely and vote well in September it's up to us. **Until next time this is Kent Bayley**