



Objection 488

Michael Hogg

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Have You Been Paying Attention No.6?

If you have wanted the world to stop so you could get off in the past three years, you're not alone. Bushfires, covid, fierce wind gusts, floods, more covid and a Federal election campaign of six weeks with the accompanying television talkfest meant that SBS and Playschool's ratings went up. Escaping to the electorate of Monash was a relief after the mayhem of Melbourne. Monash had a resident politician not ready for wandering off to pasture, however Russell Broadbent, in anticipation, was taking the horse worming drug ivermectin to cover all contingencies. In State politics, like the AFL, the rule was two jobs or no play whereas Federal politics ignored covid restrictions. This placed Russell within an odd quartet. There was the fellow banned by Facebook, Craig Kelly, the fish and chip shop woman, Pauline Hanson, and George Christenson, the off again on again Queenslander standing for a non-existent One Nation Senate place. Of the four, only Russell and Pauline were voted back, so obviously refusing covid vaccines and using a horse medication didn't deter all voters – at least they'll be worm and mite free!

Back in Melbourne, the Kooyong electorate created a few knickerknotters and brought Rupert Murdoch into the election, however it was the seat of Higgins which drew my attention. Having been raised in the electorate, then taught there, I've had half a lifetime to muse over its incongruities. It was created in 1949 and named after a High Court judge, Henry Higgins (no, not Prof), who wasn't a Labor party member. In 1904 he served as Attorney-General in Chris Watson's Labor Government, the first in Australia – indeed the first in the world. Chris Watson was, and still is, Australia's youngest Prime Minister. Moreover, with the 1901 Constitution still newly printed, Section 44 should have been invoked because our third Prime Minister's birth name was Johan Cristian Tanck, born in Valparaiso, Chile. His mother had taken her six month old baby back to Oamaru, South Island New Zealand, and snared an Irishman named Watson. So he attended school in Oamaru as Chris Watson because Mum kept mum his whole life. Thus, having come from a Commonwealth country, he could serve as an Australian Prime Minister. Since Henry Higgins was his friend, he invited him to be Attorney-General in his Government.

Henry Higgins was President of the Carlton Football Club in 1904 and he soon became a High Court Judge. He had attended Wesley College in Ireland, so it was fitting that an ex-Wesley College boy from Melbourne, Harold Holt, became the first to win the seat as Federal Treasurer in the Menzies Government. Harold then became Prime Minister until his Cheviot Bay disaster. John Gorton then won the seat and became Prime Minister - thus Higgins became the only seat to two PMs. There's more though. Peter Costello won the seat in 1990 and in 1996 became Federal Treasurer, thus Higgins was the only seat to have two Federal Treasurers. Some may say a coincidence but there's still more. The recent May election saw Dr Katie Allen removed from Higgins and replaced by – a doctor of course. Dr Michelle Ananda-Rajah won it for Labor. The first time this blue ribbon seat was lost by the Liberals. These triple pairings make Higgins a truly unique electorate out of the 151 throughout the country.

The new Parliament has lost two 2019 members with doctorates, Katie Allen and Fiona Martin, yet never before have there been fifteen members with Doctor in front of their name. Thirteen in the House of Representatives and two in the Senate. The Labor group comprises Andrew Leigh, Andrew Chalmers (both with a PhD in Economics), Anne Aly, Jim Chalmers, Daniel Mulimo and Jess Walsh. The Greens PhDs are Adam Bandt, Anne Webster and Mehreen Faruqi. Helen Haines is the only Independent. The remaining five are actual medical doctors: Gordon Reid, Mike Freeland and Michelle Ananda-Rajah for the Labor Party, Monique Ryan and Sophie Scamps as Independents. Thus, in emergencies, many can respond to the cry, "Is there a Doctor in the House?"

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