



POLITICS

pork barrel

No Such Thing as Free Tobogganing

ALAN MORAN OCT 24 2026

Broader issues underlie the revelation that the Prime Minister's office, likely with his acquiescence, delivered the “shit list” of funding requests Helen Haines made on behalf of those in her community. These go to the heart of what democracy means and how it is promoted.

The list was compiled and circulated to the media in retaliation for Ms Haines drawing attention to the obvious mis-spending of \$6 million in taxpayer money

to support the Prime Minister's local golf club.

While the PM earns some \$600,000 a year plus expenses to run the country, this is not even the tip of the iceberg. The PM's personal office comprises 60 people costing \$12 million a year. And this is on top of his Department in which 1,400 people are employed supposedly to help him run the country (many are, in fact, part of the re-elect-the-PM project.)

So, without even considering other ministers, "we the people" are giving the PM \$13 million to use whatever legal means that further the party in power's continuing ambition to remain so. Those responsible for founding representative government would see this as the people being required to finance their own political oppression.

The PM's assembled "shit list" is also enlightening about the role of MPs. The cost of the local funding sought by Helen Haines added up to some \$972 million, which would mean \$145 billion from the 150 MPs in the House of Representatives if Ms Haines lobbying is typical.

The list included laudable projects like

◆ Benalla Urban Growth Strategy – West Drainage – **Requested \$10,000,000**

◆ Indigo Shire walkability improvement – **Requested \$3,600,000**

◆ Road maintenance funding – **Requested \$50,000,000**

◆ Wodonga Trunk Sewer – **Requested \$32,500,000**

◆ Albury and Wodonga Campuses Paediatric Unit – **Requested \$6,600,000**

All of these and many others are doubtless worthy of some spending, but why is this to come from taxpayers, especially from the Commonwealth as a whole? These are not "nation building" exercises but expenditures that usually and more appropriately are funded by the beneficiaries or out of revenues collected or allocated on a state and local level.

Other Haines pleas for funding are downright frivolous:

◆ **Up to \$2,000,000** for a Night Tobogganing and Lights Show at Mount Hotham

◆ **Tangambalanga Community Hub – Requested \$10,000,000**

Still others are part of Ms Haines' renewable energy/global warming passion (one shared by her alleged assailant, Brendon Nugent) and already benefit from \$26 billion a year in government subsidies. These include

◆ **Integrated Power Solution – Requested up to \$5,000,000**

◆ **Renewable Energy Power Solution – Requested up to \$5,000,000**

◆ **Foundational energy infrastructure upgrades for reliable power supply – Requested \$30,000,000**

Representation was meant to have decent and honourable people placed as custodians of the nation's interests and guardians of public sector honesty and integrity. The US revolutionaries' slogan "no taxation without representation" was a demand that those being required to pay for government services have a say in their nature and costs. Instead, it seems that getting elected is a permit for MPs to loot the nation both to reward their supporters and to win votes for the next election.

US lawyer Gideon Tucker may have been right when he observed, "No man's life, liberty or property is safe while the legislature is in session".