



## **My time with the Palmer United Party (PUP)**

Well here is a subject I need to discuss. I want this out in the open providing as much information as I can because I don't want it as a distraction. Anyone who Googles' my name will likely establish that I was the Deputy Leader of PUP at the 2015 Queensland state election. This was during a period where the PUP ship was sinking; rapidly. Languishing just above the waterline, Queensland MLA's Carl Judge and Dr Alex Douglas had already made for the lifeboats, along with Senator Jacqui Lambie and three short lived members from the Northern Territory parliament.

So what went wrong? Many will blame Clive entirely labelling his party a 'play thing' with no one allowed any autonomy. In many cases, at the 2013 federal election, this was true. I was fortunate enough however to have input to certain policies. The rush to endorse candidates in every seat in Australia certainly caused problems. The disallowance to form local branches alienated members and rightly so. Many candidates thought the selection by a billionaire would score them a job in the 'Palmer empire'; some of these candidates went rogue when that fantasy was not realised post the election.

I had a six month hiatus from the party until accepting an advisory role in the office of Senator Glenn Lazarus. Everyone had a title. There was a Chief of Staff, Senior Advisors, Advisors, and an office manager. There was also his wife and obvious close confidant Tess Sanders Lazarus. Tess was employed by PUP however worked out of the Senator's office and spent hardly any time at her place of employment; PUP HQ just around the corner in Queen Street.

It quickly became apparent that nothing happened without Tess' say-so. Many hours were spent researching legislation with recommendations made just to be overruled by Tess. There was also an enormous jealousy of the fame Jacqui Lambie had found and the consequential media engagements she was earning compared to Glenn. A concerted effort was orchestrated by Tess to undermine Jacqui both prior to and post her defection from PUP.

Tess regularly argued with both Clive Palmer's and Jacqui's Chief of Staff's. Jacqui's Chief of Staff was former Queensland MLA Rob Messenger; he and his wife are now engaged in legal action with Jacqui. Rob shot to prominence when he ousted the Dr Jayed Pattel scandal at the Bundaberg Base Hospital. Rob was abrasive to deal with and annoyed me on many occasions, however he was an effective Chief of Staff to launch Jacqui's political career. My assessment is that Jacqui simply outgrew the need for Rob's guidance and the relationship soured as a consequence.



Both Tess and Rob would not back down against each other. It is my opinion that Jacqui's defection was in a great part due to the unworkable relationship between Tess and Rob and this was the beginning of the end for PUP. Following Jacqui's defection, her popularity and media attention continued to amass and this infuriated Tess. Glenn was to be thrust into the public spotlight at every opportunity; sadly these opportunities were few and far between.

Cue the 2015 Queensland election. Clive was surprisingly absent for most of the campaign and the state leadership was granted with a notable amount of autonomy. Despite this, the campaign proved to be shambolic. We were being sent to different parts of the state and would find ourselves passing each other in airport terminals. Western Australian Senator Dio Wang came over to tour the state during the campaign however Senator Lazarus could only be found in one location; on the hustings with wife Tess who was running for the seat of Buderim.

Both were rogue. The Brick with Eyes would not engage himself in rural seats and Tess was simply pumping out media releases with unrealistic promises and without approval or consultation with the leadership team; my personal favourite was a promise for a 30,000 seat in my own seat of Kawana. This was on the exact day I was in rural Queensland bagging the promises of the major parties to build sport stadiums in marginal seats at the cost of other critical infrastructure in safe seats.

Clive would not act; he was torn between losing another Senator if he berated Tess. The campaign took a massive physical and emotional toll on me. It was hard enough to keep myself motivated let alone dozens of candidates throughout the state. Membership support had also waned. Most of our members had become as cold as a mother-in-law's kiss.

On election eve I was invited to sit on a panel of the ABC's 7.30 current affairs program hosted by Matt Wordsworth. Prior to the pre-record, I found myself sitting in the Southbank Surf Club mulling things over a few bourbons and coke. I was talking myself into announcing my resignation from PUP on a nationally broadcast program on election eve; I was even honing my resignation in the men's room mirror. Stuff it I thought; the public needed to know that this whole campaign had turned into a debacle and a vote for PUP was more than likely a wasted vote.

On the short walk to the ABC studios, I was primed to throw a massive spanner in the works. Prior to my appearance I met Katter's Australian Party leader Ray Hopper in makeup. Ray was conceding his defeat and I knew we were in for a poor showing, however my consideration then turned toward those PUP candidates throughout the state that had spent their own money and were about to spend the next 24 hours without sleep placing signage at polling booths, manning polling booths and trying to remain positive. If I made the move I had planned in the company of Jim Beam and the mirror in the men's toilets, I would potentially shatter the hopes and motivation of so many people who were doing this for self-belief and the desire to make a difference in Queensland politics.



Not long after election eve I severed my ties with the Lazarus' and PUP. Shortly afterward I was accused of being an LNP plant. I do recognise however I learnt a lot from my experience with PUP and the Lazarus'; how to do some things and how not to do a lot of things. I made some great friends and some notable rivals.