

Back

News

World

News

Opinion

Business

News

Feat

The Sunday Times No sign WA Labor has lost us yet

It is generally acknowledged that the longer a government is in power, the harder it is to stay there. Perhaps they run out of ideas, or out of talent as members retire.

Or hackbenchers waiting for a shot at promotion run out of patience. If it's a Labor administration, maybe the factional wars get destructive.

And the "It's Time" factor — a slogan used with effect by Federal Labor to win in 1972 — remains powerful.

A year ago, Labor won a third term of Government in WA, and so far it has managed to keep those issues under control. It is still sitting a long way ahead of its rivals.

Polling shows that if an election was held this weekend, Labor would still romp home.

One significant factor is that the Cook Government is swimming in cash, courtesy of billions in iron ore and gold royalties, as well as annual GST distributions that since 2019 have totalled \$43 billion.

In the first six months of this financial year, Labor has already recorded an operating surplus of \$2.3b — on track for its eighth consecutive surplus since winning office in 2017.

Its good fortune to be in power when the resources sector is pumping cash into Treasury gives it some flexibility to pivot quickly to areas of need.

One area where that has been necessary has been the trouble spot of health.

An appalling lack of maintenance work at Perth's public hospitals, highlighted by the media, has given the State Opposition strong ammunition to attack Labor's record in health, and ambulance ramping has been a constant pressure point, with the 4892 hours ambulances spent in limbo outside hospital emergency departments last month making it the worst February on record.

Getting enough homes built to keep up with WA's rapidly growing population remains a major headache, and Labor is also vulnerable on the issue of public housing, with more than 23,000 people on the public housing list.

Pet projects, including the racetrack and sport and recreation precinct at Burswood, and a contentious ferry terminal on the Swan River at Matilda Bay, are also causing waves.

For its part, the Opposition under Liberal leader Basil Zempilas works hard and has made some progress.

But such is the secure position in which Labor finds itself that the idea of winning the next two elections does not seem impossible.

For now, Roger Cook seems entrenched and has declared he will lead Labor to the 2029 election.

That puts the spotlight on the leadership ambitions of Treasurer Rita Saffioti and Energy Minister Amber Jade Sanderson.

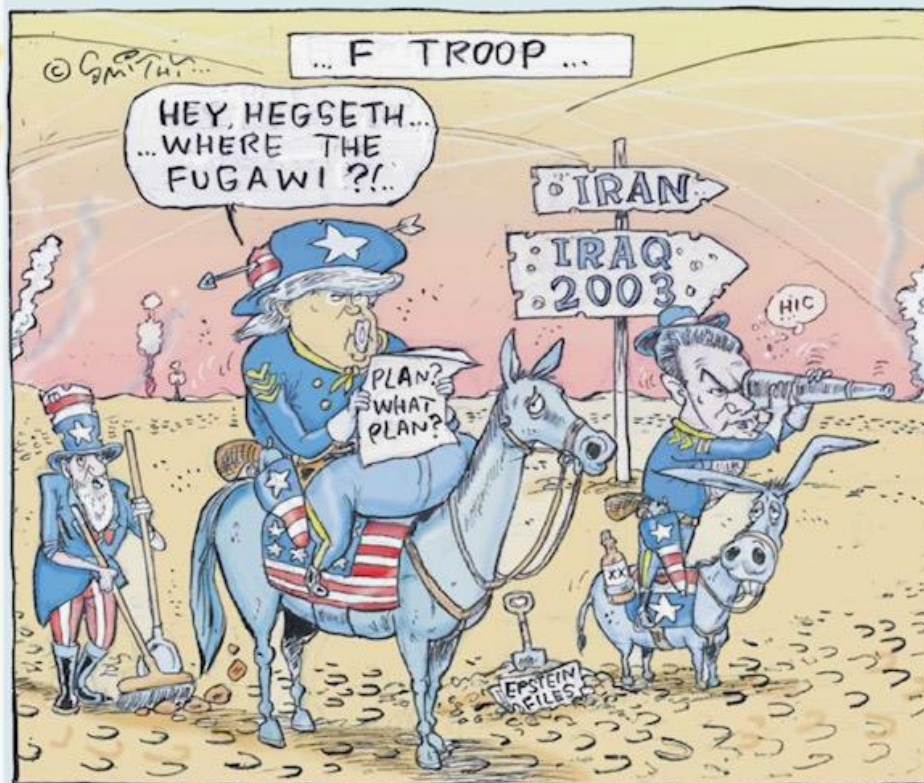
It remains to be seen how long they are prepared to wait in the wings, and whether Mr Cook will run out of puff.

He will also have to manage the expectations and ambitions of those on his large backbench.

But there is no compelling evidence Labor is about to succumb to third-term blues.

SMITHY ON SUNDAY

Greg Smith's cartoons can be purchased online at westpix.com.au.



Dennis' calling was to enrich our lives

WA lost a good one this week. In fact, the nation lost someone very special.

During a week in which the media cycle was rightfully dominated by the escalating war in the Middle East, the passing of Dennis Cometti cut through to make headlines across Australia.

Dennis was an Australian icon. His dulcet tones in radio and television telecasts of footy and other major sporting events — including the Olympics — were easily recognisable to most Australians.

As a Perth-based journalist I had the privilege of speaking to Dennis a few times about this and that, either in a formal interview or when I bumped into him at a cafe or at some other place.

And the thing that always

JOE SPAGNOLO



coach of West Perth in the WAFL when he and his wife Velia decided to venture south for a few days.

They were in a small country town (the name of the town escapes me now) when they decided to go and see a flick at the indoor picture theatre.

When he and Velia sat down, the few people already there broke into loud applause.

Dennis was chuffed, thinking they were applauding his appointment as coach of West Perth.

When the flick finished, Dennis approached one of the locals who had clapped on his

nothing to do with you being West Perth coach. We needed two more people to arrive before they'd start the picture."

Dennis' wit and clever one-liners — which captured many a moment in sport ever so perfectly and turned an amazing on-field feat or achievement into something even more special — have been spoken about many times this week.

West Coast Eagles premiership player Peter Wilson, whose famous goal in the 1992 grand final was made even more famous by Dennis' call — "Wilson, like a cork in the ocean, over his head, oh my word" — this week told The Sunday Times of the effect that line had on his life.

"I won't say on a weekly basis but on a fortnightly basis, I'd have someone mention the cork in the ocean," Wilson said.

said of Dennis' passing. "He made a lot of footballers famous, and I couldn't argue that this one piece of my career (Dennis' description of his goal) made me a lot more famous in my football career."

Wilson said that over the years Dennis had remained very humble about his contributions to athletes' careers, or to footy in general.

"He sent a letter to me once in which he said he wanted to apologise that his commentary didn't do the goal justice, which I thought was amazing," Wilson said.

"It showed the humility of one of the great commentators of our time. One of the special things I found of Dennis was that he was an absolute gentleman, as well as an iconic commentator."

Dennis will join the list of WA greats whose names will be



Pages



Article List



Overview