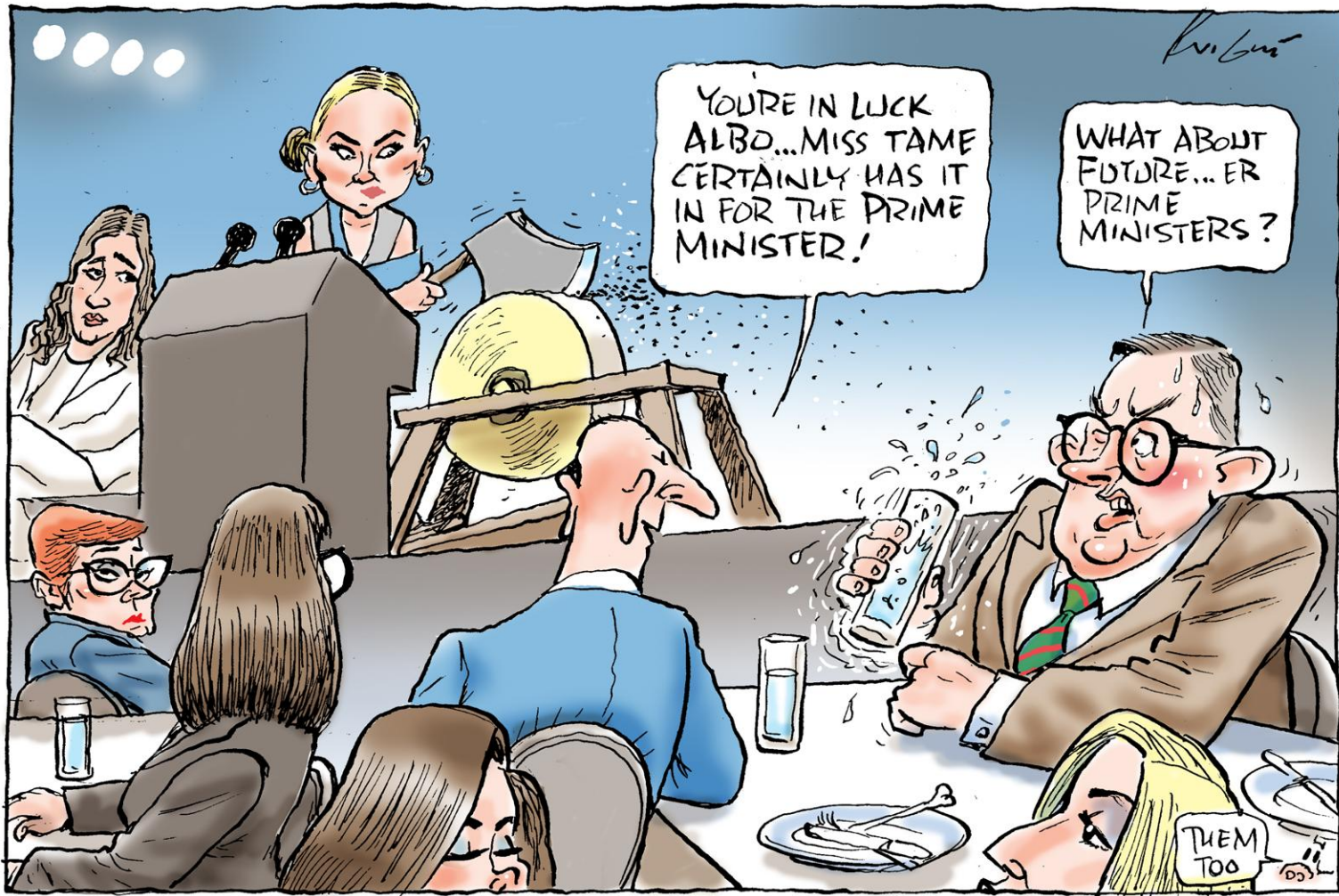


# MARK KNIGHT

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**ADRIENNE HAZELDENE**

## Reshuffle may be an ace move

**T**HE pandemic has made us question a lot about how we live our lives. Without our normal daily distractions, work became the centrepiece around which our days and weeks revolved. Many of us were left wondering: Is this really what I want to be doing? For those with doubts, take comfort in knowing you're not alone. And while we've all heard of the impending "great resignation" seen overseas, this week we saw the government label the Australian experience as the "great reshuffle". Our data backs this up. It shows people don't want out of work, but rather want to make a change. Of those who come to us for career counselling 37 per cent are already employed. That is a significant chunk who don't need help finding a job, but need help in finding something new. Interestingly, the majority of these jobseekers are women, with females making up 60 per cent.

The great news is we've already seen career change success, such as the vet who became a graphic designer or the church administrator who became a personal trainer.

The Treasurer has charged the Productivity Commission with creating a post-Covid "road to reform". Career changes are being encouraged from the top down – they not only benefit the individual, but the nation.

Treasury analysis shows the rate at which people are taking up new jobs is now almost 10 per cent higher than the pre-Covid average and most of those who switch jobs see an increase in pay.

So if you're among those considering a career change in 'the great reshuffle' there are several key steps to success.

These include completing a skills and value assessment, brainstorming the criteria for your ideal role and getting busy networking. Where possible, try to job shadow to see if the idea of what you want to do actually aligns with the reality, or re-skill through a short course.

And always remember there are professionals who can help. Career counsellors are experts in ensuring you've brushed up on your interview skills and drafted the perfect cover letter, and can help crack the clues that lead to employment success.

If pandemic living has left you wondering about your career choice, now may be the perfect time to play your part in "the great reshuffle".

As they say change is as good as a holiday, and after two years of pandemic living, we could all do with one of those too.

**ADRIENNE HAZELDENE IS PROJECT MANAGER WITH THE JOBS VICTORIA CAREER COUNSELLORS SERVICE**

# Treating elderly like an afterthought shames us

**L**AST week, in a mea culpa designed to reboot his government for an election year, Scott Morrison outlined several mistakes he had made – a notable feat for a politician not fond of doing so.

He acknowledged he unreasonably inflated people's hopes for a Covid-free summer after last year's lockdowns, wished he had he put the military in charge of the vaccine rollout sooner, and conceded authorities were unprepared to protect aged-care residents "when the storms of Covid hit".

Morrison specifically recalled how he had to send troops into Melbourne's St Basil's nursing home 18 months ago, when all staff were suddenly sent home because of Covid isolation requirements and residents were left without care.

"It was one of the hardest days of the pandemic," the PM said.

At the time, the great shame of St Basil's was authorities should have seen it coming. This summer, we have seen an even greater shame – it has happened again and again and again, right across the country.

Three months before St Basil's, at the beginning of the pandemic, a Covid outbreak at Sydney's Newmarch House aged-care home put 87 per cent of the facility's staff into isolation. This happened over several days, unlike the blanket quarantine order at St Basil's that sparked chaos overnight, but it exposed a lack of planning to ensure continuity of care amid sudden workforce shortages. This breakdown, horrific as it was



**TOM MINEAR**

for the residents and their families, was not unsurprising given the speed with which Covid was rewriting the rules of healthcare.

However, by the time Omicron hit this summer, there was no excuse not to be prepared – and yet aged-care facilities nationwide have been severely short-handed, leaving residents without enough food, unable to dress themselves, and even sitting in urine and faeces.

Morrison's solution has again been to send in the troops. But that move was only announced on Tuesday, almost three weeks after aged-care providers and unions issued an unprecedented plea for the Defence Force to assist.

The government rightly argues the ADF is not a shadow workforce that can cover skilled care roles, especially as any reservists with medical experience are already working on the frontline.

But 18 months after St Basil's, and the mistakes Morrison admits they made, why did they not have better contingency plans in place?

There are no easy solutions here, and anyone who suggests otherwise is naive.

The aged-care royal commission exposed problems that could not be

solved overnight, even in the absence of a raging pandemic.

That said, as the national cabinet spent months last year preparing plans to live with Covid once Australians were fully vaccinated, they spoke in meeting after meeting about the preparedness of hospitals.

They examined all options to ensure there would be enough staff to keep the system running as Covid cases inevitably climbed.

It is both baffling and outrageous that a similar national effort was not applied to aged care.

Sending in the troops again – and only now, not three weeks ago – looks panicked, not reassuring. It is too little, too late, and it should not have come to this.

### LITMUS FOR LABOR

THE brutal realpolitik of this week's religious discrimination debate is it is a litmus test for Labor's preparedness to govern.

Equality and human rights groups have blasted Scott Morrison's legislation, saying his effort to prevent religious discrimination will in fact enable "state-sponsored discrimination" of Australians based on their gender identity and sexual orientation.

Some Labor MPs agree and would dearly love to vote against it. Their fears were summed up by frontbencher Stephen Jones in a powerful speech in which he spoke of the suicide of his gay nephew and worried about the safety of his teenage son, who he said "wears heels that give me vertigo and has more handbags than his sister". "I know that the love and

protection he enjoys ... with his friends and family is very different to the reception he may receive in the world outside," Jones said.

And yet, even after Jones's colleagues shared his speech all over social media, they could not bring themselves to block the Bill. Instead, they agreed to "insist on" a series of amendments in parliament.

If their amendments fail, they will be confronted with a critical choice: support what they believe to be an imperfect law, or reject it and risk a backlash in faith communities.

Labor's review of its disastrous 2019 election defeat made it clear devout Christian voters had walked away from the party. They cannot afford for this to happen again.

Labor leader Anthony Albanese maintains his team supports the legislative protection of religious freedom.

Over the parliamentary debate to come, he will have to demonstrate significant resolve to keep his MPs locked into that stance.

Succeeding will be another step to winning the election – and then tweaking the laws in power if required.

The Prime Minister told colleagues this week he had spurned pleas to use the issue to attack Labor, saying he wanted to "bring Australians together".

But the debate is a trap for Labor – and it is surely no coincidence Morrison waited until the eve of the election to bring it on.

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