

Ode to Comrade Allan



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Forget the potholes – they are annoying, but I can always swerve to avoid them. What is much more worrying living in Melbourne town is the growing crime rate and the general lawlessness of the place.

I was recently up at our local shopping centre located in a middle-class part of the city. I'm not sure I was concentrating on what I was doing – shopping is not my strongest suit – but I did notice a major kerfuffle going on close to the supermarket.

There were security guards and some police officers yelling out instructions. Indeed, there was a lot of yelling going on, more generally. I asked another bystander what was going on.

It turned out that several young people – I think they are officially called 'youth' – had attempted to steal a variety of items from Woolworths but had been caught in the act and detained. They looked very young. They were all reasonably well dressed, although face-disguising hoodies were de rigueur.

It turns out that these sorts of events happen regularly at this shopping centre although, by and large, the felons simply run off with the loot. The checkout staff are advised not to confront the offenders or chase after them.

Shoplifting aside, the growing incidence of home invasions and carjacking does concern me a great deal. Indeed, there was an attempted carjacking incident in an adjacent suburb to ours. A dad, mum and bub were entering their driveway when a group of hooded thugs demanded the keys to the car. Quick-thinking dad quickly reversed and drove to the nearest police station – some five kilometres away.

There are plenty of stories of gangs prising open back doors and ransacking houses, even when the owners are home. While they are often after the car keys, they are happy to grab anything that might have value and make an unnecessary mess in the process. Needless to say, this is very distressing for the affected residents as well as nearby neighbours.

But, you say, the police are surely on to this disturbing trend and doing everything required to lock up the offenders? OK, that question was posed in jest. You are lucky if the police even come around when you report a burglary. They are too busy supervising the pro-Palestine demonstrations being held every weekend in the CBD.

Mind you, I have a degree of sympathy for the police. No sooner than a young crim is apprehended, than the offender is released on bail the same day, often to reoffend immediately. It doesn't provide the local constabulary with good incentives.

I particularly love the story of the 13-year-old boy who has had nearly 300 interactions with the police this year. He has been given bail five times, having been charged with ten home invasions, five aggravated carjackings, three armed robberies and 25 car thefts. Such a nice lad – I assume he has gotten in with the wrong crowd.

On the most recent occasion, the presiding magistrate reluctantly agreed to lock him up, even though his lawyer maintained that he was too young to know what he was doing. Yeh, right. He is clearly a professional felon, with all the appropriate clothing and gear. In all likelihood, he will be back on the streets quite soon.

And what has our current leader, the Premier Jacinta Allan, been up to while this crime wave hits the state? She has been visiting the People's Republic of China, of course, accompanied by four Labor backbenchers who just happen to have many China-born residents living in their electorates. Of course, the political spin doctors tell us that there is nothing to see there.

Obviously, Comrade Allan didn't bother to check in with her federal Labor counterpart before jetting off to Shanghai. She might have been informed that China is seen as a significant geo-strategic threat to Australia and any interactions need to be handled very delicately.

She might have also been told that the federal government is attempting to cap the number of international students. Any freelancing by a premier promoting higher international students from China is a serious case of skiing off piste. In any case, it is the federal government that allocates student visas, not state governments.

But, what the heck. Comrade Allan no doubt shares the frustration of Comrade Andrews – he was also recently in China, attending the gala military parade and shaking hands with President Xi – about the cancellation by ScoMo, former PM, of Victoria's participation in China's Belt and Road project. (This was one of the better things Morrison did – it's a very short list.)

Comrade Allan's attitude is essentially to ignore this decision and to push on with securing highly dubious funding from China for her preferred projects. This includes the completely bonkers Suburban Rail Loop (SRL) which will cost so many billions of dollars that no one can accurately estimate the final figure.

Thankfully, no local private investors are having a bar of stumping up dollars to help the Victorian government fund this boondoggle of all boondoggles. There is some vague idea that it will be funded by the state government, the federal government and what is euphemistically called 'value capture', but money is short to cover the rapidly escalating costs.

The value capture component involves taxing the bejesus out of any residents who happen to live near the SRL stations, probably through massive surcharges on council rates. This won't be popular, but Comrade Allan will probably have joined Dan the Man in a lucrative post-political career by then.

The fact is that the SRL hasn't come close to meeting any business case known to humanity. No one currently travels on the SRL route laid out, so why they would bother to catch a train to do so is completely unclear. The only obvious rationale is that the massive high-rise apartments to be built close to the new stations will lock in the Labor vote for years to come, including in some areas that might be held by the Liberal party. (OK, that last bit is probably a joke.)

In the meantime, the financial position of Victoria deteriorates rapidly, with government debt heading to the \$200 billion mark. It's truly astonishing that the international rating agencies haven't downgraded the state. They may be assuming, wrongly or rightly, that the federal government would bail out – gosh, there's that word again – Victoria rather than allow the state to default on its debt repayments.

(Interesting, the ACT government has recently been hit with a credit rating downgrade. Bear in mind that the ACT government is exceptionally incompetent, incapable of restricting spending as well as 'investing' in its own light rail shakedown.)

Victoria's decision to tax everything that is locked down and a few things that aren't means that the state is the highest-taxing state in the nation. People and businesses are fleeing, but hey, these things happen.

The only thing driving growth is higher population through migration. No wonder Comrade Allan wants more Chinese students. In the meantime, the opposition demonstrates as much power as a lame handshake, although it is trying to talk up its crime-fighting skills.

Many Victorians are now spending money on extra home security and making sure all the doors are locked and bolted. Now that's a growth industry.

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