

Disaster's not imminent, Prime Minister, but you will pay

Terry McCrann, Herald Sun, November 30, 2017 9:00pm

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THERE'S the old saying that you don't call a royal commission unless you already know the answer. But what do you say in this situation where 'the callers' — PM and Treasurer — almost certainly won't be around when the answer is delivered?

BANKING INQUIRY WON'T TURN THEM INTO SAINTS

JAMES CAMPBELL: ROYAL COMMISSION INTO BANKING HERALDS MALCOLM TURNBULL'S LOSS OF CONTROL

Indeed, there's an even bigger threshold uncertainty: they could even be gone before the RC even gets much underway. And if that happens, it will become a very different RC.

PM and Treasurer were playing desperate 'two minutes-to-midnight' politics in calling the RC that they, sensibly, didn't want and which we, the country and bank customers, most certainly do not need.

But we have an awful — and that word is used deliberately — lot of politics coming up over the next month. By Christmas, we could even be on the way to an early new year election and the near certainty of a Labor government and a PM Shorten with a much tougher anti-bank agenda.

If the government loses the Bennelong by-election next month to Labor's 'celebrity' candidate, former NSW premier Kristina Keneally, and the unknown Coalition rebel carries out his threat to quit, the Prime Minister's position would become completely untenable.

That would mean that the Turnbull-Morrison banking RC could be effectively 'over' before it even got started. Even if Turnbull and his government stagger on somehow, it's going to be a very messy political year in which to be running a major RC — which in turn will only make it all much messier.



Treasurer Scott Morrison and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull. Picture: Kym Smith

Now in a sense, Turnbull and Morrison ‘didn’t really call it’, so you wouldn’t expect them to know its ‘answer’. But no one really does. Other than it most definitely is not going to uncover some vast festering customer rip-off sore that we didn’t have a clue about.

At least, they’ve tried to limit what it looks at; they’ve dragged in super funds as well as the banks; and they demand it report within 12 months. But, good luck to all that, especially the last.

If the government changes while it’s still running, stand by for the terms to be widened and the time extended. If it wants to develop a life of its own, it will. No government will stand in its way — and the current government wouldn’t dare.

What will it achieve? Nothing much — and you will pay a big bill for that.

No, it is not going to lead to some financial disaster. We are entitled to examine the behaviour and performance of our banks and the idea that global

financial markets will be worried and money will pour out of Australia is frankly ridiculous.

Yes the scaremongers are talking their book, but please: both get a grip and look at what's happened to banks around the world in recent years. If the most prestigious banks in Europe and the US — the

Barclays, the Deutsches, the Morgans — can be embroiled in disasters and massive rip-offs, and life goes on, we can survive even a Shorten RC to say nothing of a Turnbull-Morrison one.

That said, there are no free lunches; there will be a cost of our navel-gazing. And perhaps a significant one.