

Terry McCrann: For goodness' sake, Malcolm, it's time to wake up and smell The Donald

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MALCOLM Turnbull *still* just doesn't get it: 16 months after the US presidential election, he is still acting as if Hillary Clinton won.

Even more disturbingly — after all, Turnbull and his disbelief are on the brink of vanishing into the dustbin of history — the entire policy leadership in Australia; the politicians generally, the bureaucracy, academia and some (most?) parts of business, are also behaving as if she did.

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Now this might seem a very odd thing to say about the Prime Minister in particular, so immediately after his return from revelling — and you could see, he (and wife Lucy) really were revelling — in the Oval Office glow of President Trump and wife Melania.

If there's one thing Turnbull has always liked is a good celebrity and power smooch, starting with the late Kerry Packer and never looking back.

But while he's literally shaking hands with and exchanging witty bon mots with Donald, it's as if it's really Hillary under a Trump mask and comb-over.

The cleverest thing said about Trump's campaign was that his opponents, including almost the entire global media, took him literally while his supporters took him seriously.



It's time to accept that a President Trump will not act with conventional presidential behaviour. Picture: AP

Since his election, we've seen a version of that with Turnbull and the downunder policy elite. Yes, yes, we know it's a President Trump, but he'll behave just like a president Clinton would have in two crucial ways.

First, like a conventional president would; when they say something they mean it, so they generally don't say anything substantive. With Trump? Forget it; he'll tweet anything And it'll 'mean' exactly what it means at the time of the tweet and no more.

Secondly, that as president, he would abandon his campaign promises and behave like a conventional president; embracing all the essentially bilateral multi-national international agreements and processes.

So the day after Trump won, Turnbull went out of his way to kick off on exactly the wrong foot, by making a very big deal — lining up both Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg and Foreign Minister Julie Bishop — to announce Australia's formal commitment to the Paris Climate Accord.



There's no president Clinton in the White House, accepting the multilateral policy deals and processes. Picture: AP

Trump had said he would take the US out of the Paris accord; Turnbull acted as if that was all just blather and that President Trump would come round to behaving exactly the same as a president Clinton.

Maybe he'd even notice Turnbull's global leadership and recognise the error of his ways. Certainly couldn't hurt.

On the latter Turnbull would have been right; Trump couldn't give too hoots what Turnbull said or did. For heaven's sake, has the PM noticed how Trump has blown off all and sundry? Trump has gone ahead and signalled he will stick to offing Paris.

Donald 1, Malcolm zip.

Next was the grand TPP trade deal. Again Trump said he was going to take the US out; Turnbull's attitude was, of course, he would end up doing what a president Clinton would have and stayed in. He didn't.

Donald 2, Malcolm zip.

Talk about flogging a dead TPP horse. It's the big Pacific trade pact that doesn't include the *two* biggest economies, the US *and* China.

Then we come to last week's move by the US to slap tariffs on imports of steel and aluminium.

Surely a US president of either party wouldn't do that, in this era of generally free trade? That threatens to take us back to the 1930s and trade wars?

Well yes, a president Clinton wouldn't have; but the one that's actually in the White House doesn't behave like every other president we've known.

But surely, after last week's White House smooching, even this President Trump would exclude Australia from the tariff hit? Well, actually no. Make that 3, no 4, for Donald and, well, still zip for Malcolm.

Come-on guys, wake up: It's long past time to understand we don't have a president Clinton in the White House, accepting the multilateral policy deals and processes, with conventional presidential behaviour.

The real president is going to be there for three more years; it could be seven more. It's time to accept that reality; time to start taking him seriously and not literally; time, to adjust *our* processes and policies to the presidential reality not the conventional expectation.

This takes on added urgency with what's happening in China, where President Xi is also acting very unconventionally.

Forget about framing our policies and processes on a 'normal Chinese president' and conventional policy and political behaviour; refocus to reality. That means being hard-nosed but not gratuitously offensive or aggressive.

It's a tough and complicated world out there — made more complicated but not impenetrably so by two presidents named Trump and Xi.

SAPUTO SAYS IT'S SERIOUS

Saputo's instantaneous decision to 'not fight City Hall' and give the ACCC 100 per cent of what it wants shows that it is deadly serious not just about buying Murray Goulburn but making a very significant long-term commitment to Australian dairy.

There are two very different flavours to that commitment. The narrow one is to end Ian McLeod's (and Gary Helou's) \$1-a-litre milk. That's respectively, former Coles boss and former MG CEO.

The second is to build on Helou's — ultimately flawed — vision of building MG into a high-margin export major.

Helou thought it could be underpinned by the (volume) dollars of \$1 milk; it quickly ended by being crippled by them. The big, big difference is that a Saputo-supported MG will have the balance sheet strength that Helou's MG did not.

Yes, consumers will take a hit from the end of \$1 milk. But out of it will come a much stronger export-focused dairy growth industry.

Saputo will deliver on my prediction that it will be good for dairy and good for Australia.