

## Strewth: A hopeful hero

[James Jeffrey](#), Strewth Editor, 12:00AM September 10, 2018

With the NSW Liberals' rout in Wagga Wagga adding to the whiff of looming cataclysm, talk of mortality is to be expected. There was a bit of it on offer yesterday when Josh Frydenberg — federal Treasurer since The Incident — went on the ABC's Insiders to chat with Barrie Cassidy.

Cassidy: "All right, the national energy guarantee is dead. Declared so by the Prime Minister. Now, given how hard you fought for that, how does that make you feel?"

Frydenberg: "Well, no one is more disappointed than I am about that ... "

He pushed on with the aid of a Bismarck quote, but Cassidy returned him to that cold slab in the policy morgue.

Cassidy: "You got the policy through your partyroom three times."

Frydenberg: "We did."

Cassidy: "With significant numbers."

Frydenberg: "We did."

Cassidy: "And it's dead."

Frydenberg: "And it is."

For this one glorious moment of frank resignation, nothing shone through so brightly as Frydenberg's Hungarian heritage. Faintly detectable in the member for Kooyong's tone was the voice of a distant Frydenberg ancestor by the Danube, watching the Ottoman forces running riot through the streets and conceding with a well-what-can-you-do shrug that things have indeed gone arse-up and Buda has fallen. What option did the Treasurer have but to fall back on this ancient spirit?

"The life of the hero of the tale is, at the outset, overshadowed by bitter and hopeless struggles," wrote the Hungarian poet and novelist Gyula Illyes. "And yet truth and courage prevail ... This hope helps them bear the burden of their destiny." Cleaving to this spirit, Frydenberg gathered hope about him and began an ode to reliable electricity and the simplification of power bills. Perhaps it would have been successful if Cassidy hadn't then steered the topic to the

lopping of Malcolm Turnbull. Once again, Frydenberg's eyes appeared to fill with the terrible vision of triumphant Turks.

### **Why is it so**

Or perhaps he was just seeing Wagga reproduced on a national scale next year. At any rate, when Frydenberg was initially pressed to spell out why Turnbull got rolled, expectations were high. After all, we've already had Craig Kelly (the Liberal member for Hughes and Sky News) agree it was inexplicable, and Finance Minister Mathias Cormann venturing — possibly in a state of delirium — that it was about achieving party unity. Frydenberg chose a line that was as flimsy as it was courageous: "I'll leave that to the commentators." He may as well have tried to catch an avalanche in a thimble. This exchange followed.

Cassidy: "You're deputy leader of the Liberal Party. Just tell the people of Australia why Malcolm Turnbull was sacked."

Frydenberg: "I think that the focus for the Morrison government ... is on delivering more jobs, lower taxes and the essential services."

Cassidy: "Why was he sacked? Why was he sacked?"

Frydenberg: "I'll leave that to you on the couch to discuss that as part of Insiders."

Cassidy: "You've got a leadership role now."

Frydenberg: "Yeah."

Cassidy: "So surely it falls to you and Scott Morrison to explain to the country why he was sacked?"

Frydenberg: "Well, every Australian is more interested in ..." And so on. Elsewhere, in a benighted corner of the land, a groan emanated from the dirt as the corpse of "This is a good government that lost its way" turned in its grave.

### **Nicknaming rights**

Since Morrison got the keys to the Lodge, a minor debate has been throbbing away over his nickname. While the PM seems happy to push the use of ScoMo, some argue it's beneath him — possibly because it lacks the prime ministerial gravitas of, say, "Hawkie". Anyway, the subject got an airing on Triple M on Friday. Hosts Wil Anderson and Eddie McGuire did more than anyone to lay it to rest.

Anderson: “Now PM ScoMo, I had to say it, PM ScoMo ...”

Morrison (with poorly veiled enthusiasm): “Feel free, anyone, that’s quite fine by me.”

McGuire: “See, I reckon you should give ScoMo a rest.”

Anderson: “You don’t like it? I like it. I feel like I’m a ScoMo-sexual ... ”

Mirth followed. And yet ...

### **Back in the house**

Moving right along, parliament is sitting today for its first full day since the regime change. Among the MPs returning to the halls of power and glower is Labor’s Emma Husar, who has been absent due to ... events. In the spirit of the old gag, “Apart from that, Mrs Lincoln, how was your night at the theatre?”, welcome back to the joint.