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“I’ve got lots to talk about to any political party volunteer who comes a-knocking”

Weather prediction: It’s going to be a very long autumn. In two weeks the season will change, the great big Earth will shift slightly and it will be non-stop federal election campaigning until mid-May. A whole season of stunts.

The hardest thing about any political campaign, said Adlai Stevenson I, former US vice president (1893-1897), is how to win without proving that you are unworthy of winning. How true. When the campaign kicks off, you might be only moderately annoyed by certain politicians, yet by the end, after all the pork-barrelling, sloganeering, bellicose bullshit and buses, you loathe the lot of them.

Last Sunday, with an ominous click of the gate, that hallmark of the election campaign – the volunteer political door-knocker – arrived in my neighbourhood disturbing that sneaky Sunday afternoon nap, long read, or lovely, quiet session in bed. You know how it goes, readers. No sooner do you settle in than the gate clicks, the dog goes ballistic, the feet are on the front steps and someone with a large, sensible sun hat (that’ll be the Greens) or a fedora (Labor), or a trucker cap like our PM (Libs) is on the doorstep. I had one this morning. Earnest more than annoying.

After she left, I thought of what’s to come and resolved to put a small sign down near the gate: “If you are flogging politics or religion or anything to do with the internet, don’t even think about it. Turn around and go away. Thank you.” This seems polite and reasonable and will save them time and energy, so they can annoy other neighbours instead.

But then ... second thoughts. The party volunteers these days have been taught not to just spruik at the voter but to ask, meaningfully, “We want to know what’s important to you?” This is your chance, readers. Have your list of things ready. You can change it around to keep it fresh. At the moment, it may be: 1. Urgent and real climate-change action. 2. Affordable housing to address homelessness in this country. 3. Toondah Harbour at Redcliffe, a local issue that can be solved with the stroke of a pen.

Now, I’ve seen some wildly inappropriate developments in my time reporting in the



AND ANOTHER THING ...

I was reading a newspaper story about a relatively successful businessman, nearly 60, doing something or other, and the very first line stated he is a “[certain private school] old boy”.

This fact didn’t relate in any way to any other damn thing in the story. Good grief. Do we still, in this day and age, define people by what school they attended 40 years ago? Is this a male thing? A tacit nod and wink, signalling that he is “our sort” of person?

Do women do this as much as men? Or do they just wear a Camilla kaftan to signal to other women how much money they have? I’ve stood in bars in this town and heard 50-year-old men introduce themselves to each other with references to the high school they went to. Weird as flaming hell.

At some stage, boys and girls, you have to go out into the big, bad world and accept and define yourself and others based on – I know this is frightening – what kind of person you are, not where mummy and daddy enrolled you at school a million years ago. You can do it.

JUST ONE MORE ...

They’re back. In a world of shouty political commentators,

there’s a distinct pleasure in watching veteran journalists Laura Tingle and Katharine Murphy practise the art of the sly, quiet, yet razor-sharp observation on the ABC’s *Insiders*. The Sunday morning show, hosted by another veteran journalist, Barrie Cassidy, is in its 17th year.

Tingle, who’s been a print journo for 35 years and is now political correspondent with 7.30, also on the ABC, has seen it all before and gives that marvellous impression that she’d really like it if all those polities in Parliament House pulled their bloody socks up and did better.

Also enjoyable are *The Courier-Mail*’s national affairs editor Dennis Atkins, a regular guest, and the cartoonists featured on the program’s “Talking Pictures” segment, with photographer Mike Bowers.

Polities watch *Insiders* to find out what’s happening in their own camp. With a raised eyebrow from Murphy and a twitch at the corner of a smile from Tingle, everything is said. Shouting not needed. noonanistword@gmail.com

days of Keith Williams and Mike Gore, yet how the \$1.4 billion Toondah Harbour development has got this far is utterly bewildering. Or maybe not. Walker Corporation wants to dredge and drain a wetland and build a precinct that includes 3600 apartments, a hotel, convention centre and marina.

There’s nothing outstanding about this development, readers. I’ve studied the plans. Yet there is something outstanding about the wetland. It is listed under the Ramsar Convention, which protects important habitats for migratory birds. Canal estate development has been outlawed in most developed countries and along Australia’s east coast – except in Queensland, NSW, Victoria and Tasmania have banned them on numerous grounds – including transport nightmares, costly long-term maintenance, and rising sea levels.

So, you see, I’ve got lots to talk about to any political party volunteer who comes a-knocking. It is going to be a long autumn.