

Oh Canberra, Mamma Mia!

SPEAKING FRENCH

DAVID FRENCH
THE INVESTMENT COLLECTIVE



The opening scenes of Mamma Mia! are for me a trigger for remembering everything that was wrong with being a teenager.

The giggling, the angst; God why did I buy a ticket? And then, just as I was working out how to execute a low-key exit, Maddison McDonald launched into her first song.

It heralded a tour de force, full of fun, great singing and acting, that was honestly, up there with capital city best.

What could have been a saccharine-sweet nostalgia trip was transformed into a lusty romp through the bitter sweet memories we all carry.

The three female leads were amazing, more so for the fact that they really put themselves out there knowing they were going to turn up to their families and day jobs.

While Pepper rekindled youthful dreams (which mostly stayed that way) it was Sam who blew me away singing SOS. Cue drop of jaw and tears. The swimming scene absolutely cracked me up!

From the cast to the band, to the props and choreography people, what do you say to all those who gave up so much of themselves to deliver a truly uplifting afternoon?

Not only for me, but also the young man with Down Syndrome whom I sat next to.

And I am not sure if it was the fact that the next day I was hit with a bad cold (got tested - not Covid), or that our holiday plans are stuffed, but the news from Parliament house has dragged me from clapping and laughing to feeling just plain sad.

Around 5000 people work in Parliament House when parliament is sitting.

The building contains 4500 rooms. In line with parliamentary cycles, 1200 or more people can be coming and going. Not public servants, their workplace codes are only determined by the members and senators they serve.

The place is like a small town or a large war-



David French's good mood from Mamma Mia! was soured by the revelations from Parliament House.

ship, except that there is no police force, and no jail. Everyone is a potential threat, and for the most part there is no balance of family or in the case of a naval ship, mateship.

The cocktail of lots of people working in a closeted, high-pressure environment on matters of national significance is heady. Away from home, young, amongst the powerful, many have stars in their eyes. Others are political to a level that would make Machiavelli pale. For them there are no rules but winning.

I have worked in high pressure situations. They can be invigorating. Combined though with a lack of accountability, uncertainty and limited contact with the outside world, it's a sure-fire recipe for bad things.

It takes maturity, a strong moral compass and sense of self to keep on the straight and narrow. And even then, you can become involved in things that start out completely benign, but somewhere along the line cross boundaries (and with peer group pressure, it is not always that easy to extract yourself from it).

I get it, people under pressure need release. Lack of release is one reason we see so much

anger, depression and even suicide. But some types of release just make things worse.

A while ago two young men told me just how 'available' girls are to them. I remember the public telephone box, getting past 'the father', gaining attention somehow. Now, simply swipe. I asked one young person why he bothered with a girl who was clearly not in his league in either intelligence or personality - "dog's gotta eat" he said. Which breaks my heart for both him and her.

Alongside this no-holds barred approach to sex and personal relationships, there is something else. Secrecy. This becomes very powerful when groups of people are operating to some agenda parallel to what you think is normal behaviour.

Consider the use of cocaine.

Reportedly ministers' glass top desks are ideal for cutting a few lines. Out of sight, in the nation's premier building. Getting smashed with alcohol is one thing, and plenty of bad can come of that.

Drugs are not only downright illegal, but

mind-altering in such a way as to make questions of consent ludicrous. Reason enough to keep things on the QT, don't you think?

In partisan fashion, with no care for the legions of hardworking federal members, senators and staff, or people employed in 'that place', the press spouts this stuff with glee.

The government has been completely wrong-footed, first not realising the fuse had been lit, and then apologising for every explosion, regardless of its cause.

From environmental policy, to retirement incomes, taxation reform and domestic violence - neither side of politics has policies sufficient to engage the minds of the public. Wishy-washy policy devoid of big agenda setting ideas, amateurish implementation of the little that gets through, little or no guidelines regarding accountability, young people with lots of say but no experience. Therein, I think you have the real answer to what is going on in Parliament House.

If Morrison has any brains, he will institute the mother of all cleanouts and, in the process, reset the Coalition agenda.

Rockhampton in running for national tidy town award

Rockhampton Regional Council has been announced as a finalist in the 2021 Australian Sustainable Communities Tiny Town Awards.

Councillor Donna Kirkland helped welcome national judge Gail Langley to the region, showcasing first-hand the initiatives which resulted in Rockhampton being crowned Queensland's most Sustainable Community in 2020.

"After taking out the overall state award in December, being recognised in the national finals is a great honour and testament to the

local progress and innovation we've been working hard to deliver," Cr Kirkland said.

"These initiatives demonstrate our commitment to creating a more sustainable future for our region, through the interconnected pathways outlined in our Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

"In just a few short years, and through collaboration with local community groups and key stakeholders, we have been able to deliver some fantastic outcomes for our region.

"It was really important for us to be able

to showcase these initiatives firsthand and to introduce Ms Langley to just some of the people behind them."

From visiting a local primary school and community groups, learning about resource management and recovery at Dale Park and energy efficiency at Fitzroy River Water, to capping the day off with a trip around the magnificent Nurim Circuit in Mount Archer, judge Gail Langley was impressed by the diversity and standard of work going in to making the Rockhampton region a more sustainable one.

"Today was extremely insightful and I want to congratulate Rockhampton Regional Council on all of the work they are doing," Ms Langley said.

"It is clear the pride and dedication you are showing in taking care of the region now and for generations to come.

"We look forward to judging your impressive achievements at a national level and wish you all the very best of luck."

For more information, visit www.sustainablecommunities.com.au

Here to make Gladstone
a better place to
live and work.

 @hereforgladstone

here4gladstone.com.au



Here for
Gladstone

Boyer Smither