

Who is to blame? Where does the power lie?

There is little limit to what you can achieve in politics as long as you are happy for others to take the credit. Some people have considerable influence but are happy to let others take the starring roles and to decide and implement the new ideas. Some with influence are civil servants, some are consultants, some are serving politicians. Much of government is a slave to the ideas of old economists and other thinkers. Much of modern government is driven by consultants who come in to recommend courses of action, design media strategies, and then take on the role of helping implement the decisions. The public never knows who they are.

Some politicians define their roles by the media. This became an acute preoccupation with New Labour, and has continued with many in government since. Some politicians have the strange idea that they can manage the media. They get upset when their agenda is displaced by events or someone else's agenda. Too much concentration on the media can divert their attention from the day job. Often the reason they are doing badly in the media is not media mismanagement, but mismanagement of a part of government which then attracts justified public anger. They need to spend more time trying to fix the real problem, and less time trying to fix the media.

Advisers advise, and politicians decide. The media reports decisions and reactions to them. That is the constitutional theory. Sometimes it works out like that. There are frequently other models. Sometimes officials decide and politicians do not realise what is going on. Sometimes officials recommend strongly and politicians acquiesce. Sometimes politicians do query an approach but are told it is the only technical, legal, practical or safe way to proceed. It then takes a strong minded and well informed politician to insist on a different way of proceeding. Sometimes the media have their own agendas and want to make the politicians follow them.

There are government Ministers who take a Manifesto or political agenda and drive it through, using officials to improve and implement. There are other Ministers who are but actors and actresses voicing the lines of departmental officials, both within and outside government.

We see in the questions about who is to blame for the Tower inferno these same issues of responsibility, knowledge and advice in local government. Is an elected Councillor allowed to rely on the technical expertise of his Council's Building Regulation Department and the Fire Department? Does he or she ever need to challenge their technical advice and decisions? If he is told of what they are doing does that make him to blame if it is wrong? Or is he to blame even if he was not informed and it was handled as a delegated matter? Should a Councillor approving expenditures to improve the thermal insulation and look of a building have to do enough research to satisfy himself of the safety, or can he rely on the professionals designing and

procuring the building to do that? The Councillor wants to take the credit for the improvement, so should he therefore take the blame if it goes wrong?

These are difficult issues. I would be interested in your views. The danger is we make the role of the Councillor too difficult so no-one good will want to take it on. The other danger is we expect too little, and the Councillors' collective power to challenge and to improve the work of professionals and officers lapses or fails to do its job. In the worst cases in the public sector no-one is to blame. They all become good at laying off the risk, because they can claim that no one person ever took the decision. It just happened.

Beijing police destroy seized narcotics

Beijing police on Sunday destroyed 1.4 tonnes of narcotics, which had been seized in various operations between 2014 and 2015.

The haul included heroin, methamphetamine, cocaine, ketamine, and caffeine.

The drugs were destroyed at Beijing Cement Plant, incinerated in furnaces up to 2,700 degree Celsius.

In 2016, Beijing police arrested more than 10,000 suspects in 1,366 narcotics cases.

Beijing has over 36,000 registered drug addicts, most of whom use synthetic drugs like methamphetamine, according to Liu Yi, deputy director with the municipal narcotics control commission.

"Beijing police face a tough battle against drugs and therefore have 'zero tolerance' for drug-related crimes," said Liu.

State Council appoints, removes senior officials

The State Council, China's cabinet, announced the appointment and removal of several officials on Monday.

Sun Yao was appointed vice education minister.

Ni Yuefeng was named deputy head of the General Administration of Customs.

Yang Xiaowei was appointed deputy director of the Cyberspace Administration of China, to replace Wang Xiujun.

Sun Dawei was removed from the posts of deputy director of the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine, and director of Certification and Accreditation Administration.

Government investment in AFP to protect Victorians from gang crime

The Turnbull Government is throwing the full might of the Australian Federal Police's forensic and intelligence capabilities behind efforts to stop gang-related violence in Victoria.

Victorians, like all Australians, deserve to feel safe to go about their daily lives without fear or intimidation. Plainly, the status quo is not enough.

These street gangs and criminals rely heavily on the illegal drug trade to make a profit, with no regard for the pain and damage they leave in their wake.

To crack down on these violent gangs, the Australian Federal Police (AFP) will now provide Victoria Police with additional assistance in the fight against street crime.

This is part of the Coalition Government's additional \$321.4 million investment in the AFP that we announced in this year's Budget, the largest single funding increase for the AFP's domestic policing capabilities in more than a decade.

This funding will unlock greater access for Victoria Police to the AFP's world-leading forensic, intelligence and high-tech crime fighting capabilities and expertise.

Together, Victoria Police and the AFP will be able to identify, catch and prosecute these violent criminals faster than ever before. It includes measures such as:

- A dedicated AFP out-posted intelligence officer to support Victorian anti-gang investigations;
- Advanced forensic examination capabilities and criminal intelligence mapping to support investigations; and
- Direct access to the AFP's National Forensic Rapid Lab to fast-track

evidence collection and analysis to better target criminal gangs.

The Prime Minister, the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, and Justice Minister The Hon Michael Keenan made the announcement during a visit to AFP headquarters in Melbourne.

This will work hand-in-hand with the multi-agency National Anti-Gangs Squad, which received \$3 million in additional Federal funding last year to allow them to continue their work until June 2019.

This investment will assist police to track down and arrest violent offenders and disrupt their criminal behaviour.

The Coalition Government will not waver in the fight to protect our nation and our way of life.

[Declarația cu ocazia Zilei Internaționale pentru Sprijinirea Vic](#)

On the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture we call once again to stop torture in all its form and to respond the plight of all those that have been exposed to this terrible and inhumane practice, and of their families and loved ones. Our thoughts also go to all those who engage tirelessly in combatting torture, raising awareness and caring for its victims, sometimes putting their own safety and lives at risk. Listening to the victims of torture makes us understand better how to fight it.

Torture is unequivocally prohibited under international law, under all circumstances and without exceptions. Still the fight to eradicate it is far from won. The EU's firm commitment to fight torture and ill-treatment wherever it occurs is enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights and reconfirmed and outlined in the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy of 2015-2019. To achieve this objective, the EU is actively building coalitions with partners and civil society. Only Last December we marked Human Rights Day organizing the 2016 EU-NGO Human Rights Forum with a focus on preventing, prohibiting, and redressing torture globally.

Fighting torture is not only about raising awareness, it is about effective action. The EU continues to work towards promoting victims' right to rehabilitation and to other means of redress; introducing safeguards at all stages of deprivation of freedom, opening up all places where people are detained for monitoring; investigating allegations of torture effectively and independently and bringing perpetrators to justice. The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) is a leading source of funding for rehabilitation of victims and the prevention of torture worldwide. In 2017, it will finance several new civil society projects devoted to the fight

against torture and ill-treatment for an overall amount of EUR 13.5 million.

Today, we also want to express the EU support for the work done by the UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, by the UN Special Rapporteur and the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and urge partners to contribute to their work. The EU promotes the objective of the Convention against Torture Initiative to achieve global ratification and implementation of the UN Convention against torture by 2024, aiming at the full eradication of torture.

It's our conviction that respect for fundamental freedoms and rights, promotion of inclusive societies and support to open and vibrant civil societies is the only way to guarantee sustainable stability and security. The EU will continue to work together with our international and regional partners to make torture a thing of the past and to be at the forefront of the global and united efforts to eradicate torture.