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MY OLYMPIC DREAM



TIM GLEASON

This weekend the games of the XXXI Olympiad get underway in Rio de Janeiro. A fortnight ago the bible of sports, Sports Illustrated, predicted the Australian Olympic Team would finish third on the medal tally, behind only the US and China, with 20 gold medals.

I was crushed. Don't get me wrong, I am a proud Australian and sports lover—in fact I was a sports adviser to various political leaders—but still I pine for the results of yesterday.

Those days when the entire nation could name all our gold medalists because there were only three of them. For those two weeks, we were a country of believers and Bruce McAvaney was our messiah.

When most of our athletes completed their events the performance

was usually followed by sentences like "That's a personal best" or "It's a Commonwealth Record".

For those not familiar with such terms, they meant the Australian hadn't progressed out of their heat.

Our medalists today return home in a chartered Qantas A380 to meet the Prime Minister.

Back when I was growing up in the 1980s they couldn't have filled an exit row.

And in Montreal 1976 we finished winless, locked on one silver medal alongside sporting powerhouses Iran, Mongolia and Venezuela.

This result led to the realisation by the federal government that the production line of little athletics and swimming carnivals that had served us for generations was no longer cutting the mustard on the world stage.

The Fraser government soon after established the Australian Institute of Sport.

I remember as an 11-year-old "expert" watching the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics.

We had just bought

our first colour TV, an AWA complete with the wood panelling but sans remote control.

Despite a boycott by the entire eastern bloc, pumped up powerhouses including the USSR and East Germany, we still managed to grab just four golds. To put this in perspective, New Zealand won eight.

But boy what a great four they were: Weightlifter Dean Lukin in

the super-heavyweight division, Jon Sieben in the men's 200m butterfly, Glynis Nunn in the women's heptathlon and our men's 4000m cycling team pursuit, on Malvern Stars no less. These became instant household names. They didn't need a Big Brother stint or a social media campaign.

And there were others who got the star treatment.

Because of our encyclopaedic knowledge we just knew "Deek"—Robert de Castella—would win the marathon in '84. I still remember a nun at Our Lady of the Rosary Primary at Kensington telling me he would win because he won in Rotterdam. And she didn't teach geography or PE.

Because of our lowly position on the medal tally we were united like never before. And I think we sort of enjoyed it a little bit more that way. Although maybe not Deek, who ended up finishing fifth.

In 1988 we got just three golds but again they rattled off the tongue.

Freestyle swimmer

Duncan Armstrong, 400m hurdler Debbie Flintoff-King and the mighty Hockeyroos.

Sadly, from 1992 to 2012 our gold medal tally boomed—71—an average of almost 12 per games.

Such was our success, apart from a few breakout legends—the likes of Kieran Perkins, Cathy Freeman, Suzie O'Neill, Anna Mears, Ian Thorpe and Grant Hackett—most Aussie winners just merged into each other.

If the Oarsome Foursome, who won back-to-back rowing golds in the 90s, did so in the 80s we would know all their middle names. Now we struggle to remember their last.

Recently there has been some hope for us dreamers. Australia fell from 14 gold in Beijing 2008 to just eight in London in 2012.

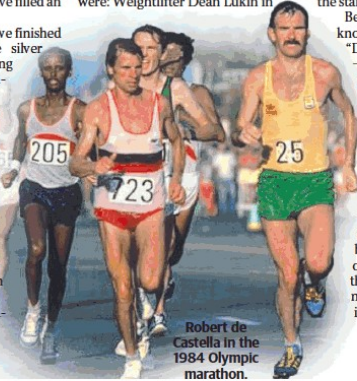
Before the Sports Illustrated article I thought maybe, just maybe, it might fall again.

Instead it looks like we will be waiting for another A380.

Don't get me wrong, I'll be cheering for the green and gold, each and every day.

I'm just saying we don't need to be greedy.

Tim Gleason was a sports adviser to former premier Bob Carr and former prime minister Kevin Rudd



Robert de Castella in the 1984 Olympic marathon.

TIME TO TAKE TURKEY TO TASK OVER GENOCIDE



JOHN ADAMS

The parliament of Australia needs to grow a backbone when dealing with the Turkish government. Across Australia, Australian descendants of Armenians, Assyrians and Greek survivors of the 1914-1923 genocide inflicted by the Turkish-led Ottoman Empire continue to hold commemoration ceremonies to remember the victims of one of the most horrific episodes in 20th-century history.

In echoes of the actions of Islamic State, millions of Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Christians were slaughtered, forced to convert to Islam, systematically raped or sold into sex slavery, had their property stolen or had their Christian cultural, historical and religious monuments destroyed.

Unlike the Germans, who have publicly recognised and shown remorse for the horrors of the Holocaust and Nazi Germany, the Turkish government not only refuses to acknowledge the genocide, but seeks to punish foreign governments who do.

Of the 21 countries that

have recognised the genocide, which includes France, Russia, Canada, Italy, Poland, Greece and Germany, the Turkish government, in response, has regularly launched sharp diplomatic criticisms, withdrawn their ambassadors and even placed travel restrictions on foreign nationals who wish to visit Turkey.

Despite attempts to have the genocide officially recognised by the federal Parliament, successive Australian governments have kowtowed to pressure from Ankara, fearing that official recognition may result in Australians being blocked from visiting the shores of Gallipoli during Anzac ceremonies, among other bilateral repercussions.

Such cowardice is out of step with Australian values and historical parliamentary practice.

Australia's respected international reputation as a good international citizen is derived from being a peace-loving nation that is also willing to stand up against injustice and atrocities that have occurred across the world.

Whether it be the Holocaust, Kosovo, Tiananmen Square, Rwanda, Afghanistan, Tibet, East Timor or more recently Syria, Australia has not hesitated to identify and condemn acts of genocide or systematic

human right abuses wherever they have occurred.

Our longstanding position has been that failure to acknowledge systematic human rights abuses risks providing

the licence for other would-be rogue governments that such action is accepted within international practice.

The Australian parliament should also seek to officially recognise the direct contribution of Australia's military forces who served in WWI which helped prevent further mass slaughter of Assyrians during the genocide, including the heroic actions of Australian Army Lieutenant-General Stanley Savige, who was part of the British secret operation named Dunsterforce, volunteered with the British High Command to lead a force of only eight men under his command which successfully rescued and transported 60,000 Assyrian refugees to safety against Turkish military resistance.

The Turnbull government should not fear a deterioration in Australia-Turkey relations.

Recent actions by the Turkish government demonstrate that Turkey is neither a friend to Australia nor a nation that shares common interests or our values.

Turkey has played an instrumental role in facilitating the growth of the Islamic State,

despite this being against Australia's national security interests. It has done this through the purchase of stolen oil seized in both Syria and Iraq by IS, which the Turkish government has either actively participated in or turned a blind eye to.

Moreover, the recent mass arrests of academics, journalists and members of the judiciary critical of the Erdogan regime, coupled with the suspension of civil rights, the closure of over 130 media organisations and social media platforms as well as the intermingling of radical theology with public policy demonstrate that Turkey has abandoned its longstanding embrace of secularism, Western institutions, protections of minorities and democratic practices.

As a result Christian Turks, among other minorities, have become subject to increasingly physical violence, attacks on their churches and even murder.

Without Australia standing with the international community to condemn previous Turkish atrocities and the actions of the current Turkish government, our inaction risks passively facilitating a repeat of history.

A century ago Australia's finest gallantly took on the Turks. It is time we now do it again.

John Adams is a former Coalition adviser.



“ THEY SAID IT

“For too long, wealthy individuals and corporations have wielded an extraordinary amount of power over our political process.”
Greens Leader Richard Di Natale before the election.

“Accepting a donation from an individual who has personally won money from gambling is a different prospect to accepting a donation from organisations that profit at the expense of problem gamblers.”

Australian Greens co-convenor Penny Allman-Payne after it was revealed that the Greens accepted a \$500,000 donation from a high-end gambler.

“Pauline Hanson’s honesty, courage and persistence are inspiring and I look forward to joining her on the Senate floor to speak bluntly using empirical data, solid facts and common sense.”

Incoming One Nation senator Malcolm Roberts.

“ISIS-linked attacks against the West have been responsible for more than 1600 casualties since 2014. The three highest-casualty attacks all occurred within the past year, including the November assault in Paris (480 people), the attack in Brussels (335 people), and the recent truck massacre in Nice (286 people).”

A US House Committee on Homeland Security report on terrorism.

“The soil is warmer because of global warming and the plants are under more stress and therefore using more moisture. So even the rain that falls isn’t actually going to fill our dams and our river systems.”

Former Climate Commissioner Tim Flannery (pictured) in 2007.

“Australia has just had its wettest May to July period on record.”

The latest weather news.



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COSTCO COFFINS? OVER MY DEAD BODY



RACHEL CORBETT

Milk, toilet paper, bread, coffin for Nan. That’s what our shopping lists could look like now

Costco has proven you really can discount everything, by introducing cut-price coffins.

I’m sure the already dearly departed are rolling in their graves ... enjoying the softness of their full-priced lining.

While I appreciate funerals are a considerable expense, there’s something about getting out the discount card after a loved one has passed away that seems to cheapen, quite literally, the passage to the afterlife.

I’ve unfortunately been through the bizarre process of shopping for a coffin when my mother passed away.

There was something so sad and odd about the whole

experience of pacing around a room trying to make a purchase decision at a time like that. But I can’t imagine what that feeling would have been like, if out of the corner of my eye, I could see a frozen meats section and a toiletries aisle.

I’m a pretty practical person when it comes to my own fate and I understand for some people the cost of a funeral can be crippling, but we live in the age of the internet so couldn’t Costco have popped this arm of the business online instead of in aisle three?

And if we must have them in store, could we find a better name than the Coffin Kiosk?

The other thing I’m interested in is — when are people buying these things? I’m all for being realistic about mortality and, since the only things that are certain are death and taxes, we all know we’ll need one eventually but I don’t think there’d ever be a good time to buy.

If you’re taking the sensible approach and reducing the burden for your loved



ones by purchasing one well before you go, how do you explain that to the mates when they come around for a BBQ and it’s propped up next to the whipper snipper in the garage? And what if you’re not buying it for yourself, what kind of a message does that send? Your wife goes out to buy some toilet paper and comes back with something she thinks you’d like to be buried in.

If, on the other hand, the idea is that most customers will purchase them on those trance-like days between someone passing and their funeral, I can think of no

place I’d rather be less than standing in line at Costco. At least if you’re shopping for a coffin in a funeral parlour they’re used to people breaking down in the middle of their sales pitch.

Sure, sometimes it’s because of the prices, but you don’t feel weird about doing it. However, there’s something about mourning the loss of someone you love in the 12 items or less aisle that sends shivers down my spine.

Grieving is a weird sensation that sends you into a

parallel universe where you’re no longer operating in the same space as those around you.

Anyone who has, like me, tried to go to the shops to distract themselves during this time will know a retail environment is the worst place you can be. I’m pretty sure there’s still a shop attendant at the Sportsgirl in Caloundra who’s been scarred for life after coming to check on me only to find me sobbing all over their merchandise.

Since death and funerals are a fact of life and an expensive one at that, there’s no doubt there’s a market for this kind of product. I’m just not sure it’s the supermarket.

@RachelCorbett

YOU KNOW IT MAKES CENSUS



JANE FYNE-CLINTON

It’s a survey, for goodness sake. A massive count, granted, but a vital one. An assessment of who Australians are and how we live now. A record for the future. Why have we made the census our latest windmill to tilt at, our latest civil convention to hate?

Goodness knows we have enough real threats to our safety without creating imaginary ones. We need this survey. Every cent of funding that trickles from federal government to state counts on it. Infrastructure and services are built on the information

that comes from this data. The census detects shifts in our collective situation and behaviour, helps decision-makers to understand our emerging needs and explains society to itself. We should embrace the chance.

Why then is there such a concerted effort to renege and derail?

Why is there a movement to demonise and conspire when we will only harm ourselves?

The update to the collection process has set the cat among the pigeons, it seems. We see online interaction as scary when it suits us, but whine about being time-poor and environmentally conscious when old-fashioned face-to-face delivery and paper items are required.

We bank, communicate and do business online and suddenly we are worried about a government-secured survey? And this time we are outraged because the Australian Bureau of Statistics requires our name and address? What a load of pish-pish.

We complete tax returns and have Medicare cards, home, CTP and car insurance, internet, power and gas connections, mobile phone contracts and health insurance — all with our personal details.

And then on social media, we post snaps of ourselves out and about, at home, with family and housemates.

A 13-year-old with basic computer skills could work out who lives at your house and we are meant to be frightened of the census? Oh, please!

Some scaremongers are using terms like “unconstitutional” and “human rights infringement”. It is neither. Others say that just because the government has this information, we should not make it easy for them by laying it out plainly.

But why be contrary just because we can? Are we toddlers?

The other question gaining attention is on religion. For the first time, choosing no religion will be the first option but, oddly, this seems to have

sparked a push for us to appear devout. There is an online campaign encouraging pushing anyone non-Muslim, even if they are irreligious, to register themselves as Christians. It is as if there is fear the sector of our community that is Muslim will be so huge they will take more than their share — although share of what, no one seems to know. The campaigning has dazed and confused too many.

Perhaps the recent federal “protest election” has left us in a contrary state of mind. But let us not forget how well that worked out for us: we chose a government that seems destined to be hamstrung because we made it so.

We need a full, complete and honest picture of our nation. We have nothing to hide.

So, please, on Tuesday, just hand it in. And for Pete’s sake, quit the ridiculous paranoia.

Dr Jane Fyne-Clinton is a journalism lecturer at the University of the Sunshine Coast