

In 1903, two American bicycle repairmen: Orville and Wilbur Wright successfully trailed the first heavier than air motorised airplane. They were private citizens, tinkerers in their spare time, and they succeeded in doing what scientific and government experts assertively argued at the time was against the laws of physics and impossible!

This true-life amazing tale reminds us of what ordinary humble citizens can achieve when left free to experiment, innovate and play.

In 2020, the Victorian government headed by Premier Dan Andrews oversaw the worst industrial accident in modern Australian history: The COVID hotel quarantine disaster. The Andrews government with a budget of nearly 100 billion annually, and countless teams of experts and highly experienced bureaucrats, through negligence and incompetence, caused the death of 801 people, 20 times more than the next most disastrous workplace accident in Victorian history, The Westgate Bridge collapse. An official enquiry failed to ascertain who was responsible or culpable. None of the senior bureaucrats, managers or overseers were fired or prosecuted, though one secretary and one minister in the government resigned before the enquiry report was handed down. This sorry tale illustrates the dangers of a government that is so big and powerful that when it fails to follow its own rules or any process of competency, there is little accountability as it also controls the processes of analysis, compliance and review. The perverse incentives of a too big government reward the incompetent and fail to hold them accountable, and the public gets 'mugged'.

The current process of rapid digitisation that is occurring through the collaborative work between government and big business and is the reason for the current legislation -has a heady feeling of urgency to it. Fintech talks about windows and ambitions that are time critical. And yet, and yet, and yet.... I want to propose that we should be slowing down with this and not speeding up. Those arguing and lobbying for digital ID are fixated with the granular aspects of this process, and rapid implementation. We are not looking so well at the macro, the multidimensional, the big picture.

I wish to make two big picture points here. Point one is that big govt, when it gets too big, can't help but trip over itself and the citizenry. Point two is the defining politico/corporate arrangement of our age, the public/private collaboration -is a corrupt model which is degrading our political, corporate and social culture. My concern with the proposed legislation is that it will provide a turbo-charged incentive for big govt and big business to exploit big data at the expense of the ordinary citizen in ways unanticipated and unprecedented.

So firstly, and with respect, can I say that from the Andrews' government quarantine hotel debacle, to the Perrottet Govt QR code data bungle, to the appalling Robodebt disaster and a list too expansive to further include here, we can arrive at a rational observation that big government in the nascent age of algocracy is making big mistakes, and the aggregate consequences for these mistakes fall disproportionately on the citizenry rather than the decisionmakers (political, corporate or bureaucratic). Which means there is ultimately little incentive for the wrongdoers to course correct. Most poignantly the sobering emergent realisation of our current era is that contemporary big government, in the age of COVID, has been appallingly incompetent and untruthful, and this should give us all pause for reflection on the macro issue -that we should be slowing down and reducing the power of big govt

rather than exponentializing it through big legislation. Whether or not the proposed legislation promises qualitative or quantitative improvement to people's lives, the empirical evidence suggests a period of slow down and reflection on this era of government would be wise.

Secondly, an allied point, is that the current era is defined by the 'public/private partnership' and the 'commercial in confidence' arrangement. The cozy confluence between the interests of big govt and big business in the current age, is becoming less and less aligned with the interests of the public taxpayer, who is locked out of the decision making and knowledge loops here, whilst being ultimately financially responsible. Taxation without representation is an inherently dangerous practice in a sophisticated society and it is a barely concealed practice in such arrangements which are becoming part and parcel of contemporary business and govt practice. We would be wise to pair back this practice which will I fear will be turbo charged by the proposed legislation.

Information is money and information is control. The current proposed legislation, under the auspices of providing better online safety and streamlined online services, as part of its shadow agenda, also amasses the greatest cache of massed data on a population that has ever been envisioned, and places it in the hands of a narrow set of gatekeepers who have not proven themselves to be competent to safeguard such a treasure. In fact, the perverse incentives to take this 'data treasure' and exploit it for profit or political ends are virtually irresistible. The emerging and conceptualised arrangements described above are reversing the foundational modern democratic concepts of 'public' service and 'private' citizen. We should not think, as a society, that such corruptions of the democratic order will be without consequences.

Despite my limited specialist knowledge of the domains covered by the digital ID legislation, I cannot see why we could not, if online safety and identity is the aim here, construct a platform that mirrors the bitcoin blockchain technology, which has over the course of the last 15 years, proven itself to be an un-hackable, true ledger of account with a market cap of \$853 billion. That is, bitcoin is the world's first true ledger that describes truly and 'unhackably' the identity and sovereignty of nearly a trillion dollar's worth of human action and value. If such a treasure trove could have been corrupted and compromised it would have by now and that has not happened. Bitcoin might be the answer we are looking for if we wanted true online safety and sovereignty. The bonus to an encrypted blockchain solution is that it would also lock out government and big business from undue influence and control and relegate them to a legitimate and not undue influence on the emergent playing field. Though for some this might not be a bonus, and it is precisely such thinking that the entirety of this document warns against. I implore the govt to shun such power and allow the new digital economy to emerge uncorrupted and free.

Let the tinkerers and citizens back into the fertile spaces of our economy and our civil ecology. Stop the interests of mass power and influence continue to be unfairly subsidised. Reject the digital ID in its current form and let us rather, take some time, to pause, slow down and reflect on how we might remember, after such a period of big government and big business, what got us to the wealth, functionality and peace of complex democracy...why it's always been the weekend tinkerers like Orville and Wilber Wright rather than the top-heavy incompetence of the Andrews Govt.

