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LIBERALS WILL ABOLISH PETROL COMMISSIONER ROLE

Tony Abbott, Leader of the Opposition, has indicated the Liberals will abolish the role of the Petrol Commissioner should they win office. He has stated such a move will save the government around \$4 million over a two year period.

The current Commissioner – Joe Dimasi operates as part of the ACCC.

It seems that the downstream petroleum industry response to the Libs proposal has been well received.

Unfortunately, the role appears not to have provided any real benefit or protection to consumers, although that is generally felt not to be the fault of the Commissioner, but rather the ineffective guidelines he has to work under.

In our often expressed view, the Commissioner role should be expanded and separated from the being under the umbrella of the ACCC.

The petroleum industry, being an essential service, has a number of vital areas where a

an independent Commissioner, or in our preferred model – an Ombudsman, should be appointed to cover not only the areas of consumer price protection, but be given the power to impose “cease and desist” orders on any downstream petroleum activity that is considered not in the public interest. Such orders would need to be subject to appeal to a Federal Court if considered inappropriate. The areas of most concern within the industry at the present time relate to:

- The monitoring and detection of both predatory and exploitive pricing
- The government’s current ill-conceived consideration of banning independent price monitors such as – Informed Sources, MotorMouth and Fueltrac.
- The increasing need to improve petroleum energy security as the importation of refined product increases



KEVIN M HUGHES
Editor

hehpetrol@bigpond.com
www.hehpetrol.com.au