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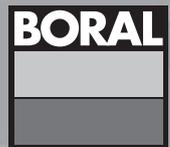
The Sydney Papers

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BORAL



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Photo – David Karonidis

Morris Iemma

The long serving Premier of New South Wales Bob Carr announced that he would retire in August 2005. His successor, Morris Iemma, was elected unopposed on 2 August. On becoming premier, Morris Iemma appeared as a little known member of the NSW government but over half a year on from his election had established his image as very much the leader of both the state and his party. In an address to The Sydney Institute on Thursday 25 May 2006, Premier Morris Iemma took up the theme of equity and fairness in a speech that emphasised his belief that government is both about running an economy and caring for the community.

CIVILISING CAPITAL —

FAIRNESS FOR ALL

Morris Iemma

Last week Moodys reaffirmed our AAA credit rating citing NSW's "well established record of surplus operations, its modest debt burden, and the strength and diversity of the state economy." That conclusion is especially welcome because reinforcing the State economy has been a top priority for this government. That will be reflected, for example, in a major statement on infrastructure I will be making shortly.

But tonight I want to talk about something completely different. I want to talk about my own ideals and plans for a fairer society. Ideals I've developed as an average Australian growing up and raising kids in the suburbs and as a representative of the needs and aspirations of middle Australia in public life.

In my statement as Premier-designate on 2 August last year I outlined a series of social priorities. And I said that if I am in this job for a reasonable time and can't point to progress in these areas, I will judge myself to have failed.

That is why I want a new direction for NSW – a new compact for a fairer and more caring society.

Investing for the future

A key theme unifies and defines this new direction: - fiscal conservatism will not hinder our plans. In terms of infrastructure that will mean greater borrowing to invest for the future. In terms of our social policy agenda it means accepting a temporary deficit next financial year rather than ignoring the needs of our most vulnerable citizens who have waited long enough.

It is precisely because we have paid off debt, delivered nine surpluses worth four billion dollars and have plans to return the budget to surplus that we can afford an early advance on our social agenda just as we can afford to borrow for infrastructure. In fact NSW Labor has nothing to apologise for when it comes to economic and fiscal responsibility.

All NSW Labor governments since McKell have been prudent and sound economic managers. But such a claim is simply the price

of entry in NSW politics. Yes, we must be wealth creators, not just wealth distributors. That was the transforming insight of Labor's reforms in the 1980s. But growth is a necessary condition for the good society, not a sufficient one.

What we stand for

We are not just running an economy: we are building a community. Labor historian Bede Nairn called it the "civilising of capitalism" – bringing fairness and opportunity to all Australians within the context of a growth economy. The test is therefore not just one of fiscal responsibility – that is a given in modern politics. The real test is do we uplift people's horizons? Do we enhance the lives of all our citizens? Do we leave the State a better place than when we found it? To me there is no choice. Labor governments are called to be "enlargers of life" ... to use Manning Clark's evocative phrase: That is who we are, that is what we do.

Others see government as an exercise in book-keeping. We see it as uplifting and enhancing the lives of ordinary people. That means Labor governments will always have a clear set of values at the heart of our programs and policies. A just and fair system of industrial relations opportunity for all – no matter what their means – promoting quality of life through the arts and the environment and, above all, caring for the poorest and most vulnerable. The people who – in Chifley's words – have been struck by the "the shafts of fate".

Fairness, opportunity, civility, compassion. These things requires a fresh realisation that "... the quality of life depends less on the things which individuals obtain for themselves ... and depends more on the things which the community provides for all its members from the combined resources of the community."¹

John Kenneth Galbraith, the great post-war thinker who died last month, called this approach "affirmative government". And I believe we need a renewal of affirmative government if we are ever to meet the awesome challenges in our midst: 1) helping those with a mental illness; 2) looking after people with disabilities; and 3) providing shelter for our most needy. These are challenges that no civilised society should allow its members to face alone. These three priorities are a challenge to the very core of our ideals. They are a basic test of our integrity. Meeting that test requires significant and generous new funding – spending that will be embodied in the coming State Budget and those beyond. But it will take more than just extra money. Our whole approach has to be smarter.

We need policies that create opportunity and avoid the pitfalls of welfare dependency because all too often government intervention solves old problems only to create new ones.

Public and affordable housing

1. Public housing

Shelter is the most basic of human rights, and public housing represents Labor's great charter for fairness in post-war Australia. But public housing has lost its way since the days of McKell and Chifley. We've under-invested in construction and maintenance. And we've undersold tenants by not insisting on the responsibility they owe to themselves and their communities. That is why last year the NSW government announced the most sweeping reforms to public housing since the 1940s - a plan called *Reshaping Public Housing*.

The outlays under the program are massive, including \$2.7 billion over the next five years. The plan also aims to reduce the amount of public housing located in estates, currently at 40 per cent. The government has already demolished one estate at Villawood with more to follow in Macquarie Fields, Minto, Airs/Bradbury and West Dubbo. Fundamental to our reforms is an underlying philosophical shift. For too long people have assumed public housing is a lifelong entitlement with no corresponding responsibilities, fuelling crime and damage to public property - the old 1960s welfare state mentality at its worst. We are changing that.

We are ensuring tenants behave more responsibly and assume the normal duties of tenancy such as paying their own water bills and looking after their homes. Our reforms also end the notion of "housing for life" by moving to renewable fixed term leases, secure long leases for the elderly and the severely disabled and shorter leases for most other tenants - encouraging those people who have improved their circumstances to move out of the system. Public housing will be a hand-up for the future, not a hand-out for life.

2. Affordable housing

Publicly-owned accommodation cannot, however, remain the sum of our social housing commitment. We also need a much stronger focus on affordable housing. Affordable housing targets a different demographic to the traditional model of public housing built and owned by government. Instead it targets people - usually in employment - who are facing housing stress in the private market. Affordable housing targets people on low to moderate incomes, i.e. families earning up to \$70,000 a year or up to 120 per cent of median household income.

In NSW, there are estimated to be 175,000 households in housing stress. Affordable housing is funded and delivered through innovative partnerships between government, community housing organisations and the private sector. It could mean private developers paying a levy which goes to a community housing organisation to buy or build affordable housing. Or a developer might actually set aside some

units within a development and donate these to a community housing organisation. Or it might mean the government giving public land to a community housing organisation which then builds affordable housing on it. The permutations are endless.

It can involve councils, charities, churches, developers all putting land, money or new and existing housing stock into the mix. The community housing organisations then own and manage the stock at the grassroots level.

The British and American experience shows affordable housing can make a positive contribution to housing affordability especially in the bigger cities. In both the UK and USA, urban development planning commonly includes inclusionary zoning which requires developers to contribute to the stock of affordable housing. And in the UK ... the transfer of council-owned housing to community housing organisations has allowed those bodies to raise low cost debt and build even more affordable housing for local communities. There is now around 40 billion pounds invested in this way by private financiers with the annual additional investment in these projects now running at a rate of 2 billion pounds.

Affordable housing is a new frontier for social housing in Australia but we have made some small but promising beginnings. Perhaps the best Australian example is the City West Housing Company set up under Brian Howe's Better Cities program in the early 1990s. City West has already delivered 411 affordable housing units in inner Sydney with another 400 planned over the coming years.

I want to see an increasing amount of affordable housing in NSW and that's why tonight I can announce a new drive for affordable housing. In a modern globalised city like Sydney – as in London and New York – housing affordability is a challenge for many working families. It's time for new models and new opportunities.

Mental health

Mental health has always been the poor relation of the health system and we are finally starting to change that. Since 1995 we've increased mental health funding from 356 million dollars to \$854 million this financial year - a 140 per cent increase, most it weighted in the past few years. Since 2001 we have opened 300 new acute mental health beds with another 300 on the way. We are also opening nine Psychiatric Emergency Care Centres at our major hospitals which are like Emergency Departments for mental health. Four are open so far and the other five will follow over the next 12 months. In March, NSW joined Jeff Kennett's Beyond Blue initiative - a \$1.2 million investment over five years but more importantly a symbolic commitment to take the stigma out of mental health.

Two weeks ago, I announced a \$33 million funding package for mental health research and infrastructure in inner Sydney. The funding package includes \$23 million towards the rebuilding of the Caritas mental health unit at St Vincent's Hospital - a huge boost for a part of Sydney that bears the brunt of the mental health crisis. The package also provided \$10 million in research grants to the University of NSW and the University of Sydney. And last week, I announced a major expansion of our Housing and Accommodation Support Initiative (HASI) which supports 700 people with mental illnesses to live independently in their own homes.

HASI is a remarkable success with 85 per cent of clients retaining their tenancy after one year and the hospitalisation rate falling by 90 per cent. Inspired by these results last week we announced a \$52 million expansion of the program to provide an extra 234 places. That brings the number of HASI places to almost 1,000, helping the mentally ill regain their place in the community and have somewhere to call home.

These are but the first steps on a long road to rebuilding mental health. But we will never get there without a national approach. That's why, last October, I wrote to the Prime Minister requesting him to place mental health on the agenda of the Council of Australian Governments. And so, in February 2006, Australia's leaders for the first time sat down and took responsibility for mental health at the highest national level. That would not have happened without NSW's intervention. I'm delighted to say that in April the Prime Minister responded to our deliberations with a generous package - \$1.8 billion over five years. Our response will be announced very shortly and I guarantee this: NSW took the national lead at COAG; and our package will keep us in the lead.

Disability services

I'll never forget one of my earliest experiences as a new MP. A family came to see me who had a son on the waiting list for disability group housing. As he grew into a young adult, his increasing physical strength was making it hard for them to care for him. They were desperate for help but there just wasn't much help around in the early 1990s. I've never forgotten that family. And I always promised myself that if I could ever do more to help people like that, I would. That's why disability services is one of my three social priorities. And that's why, since August 2005, the government has been consulting widely to reform and revive disability services in NSW.

As with the 1999 Drug Summit and our DOCS reform package, we need a new injection of funds and a new policy framework. I am pleased to say we are delivering both. Tonight I can announce a sweeping plan that will transform disability services in NSW - a \$1

billion strategy to help people with disabilities remain in their own homes, gain skills and be active members of our community. But the plan goes beyond funding and services.

We want to engender a whole new spirit so that people with disabilities are treated as equal fellow citizens, valued and fulfilled members of our community empowered to achieve their full human potential. We take as our starting point the fact that 97 per cent of people with a disability are cared for by their families. Therefore our biggest investment will be aimed at taking the pressure off families. I'm pleased to say we will be increasing community participation programs from three to four days per week, growing to five days for those with very high support needs. That will give parents a better chance maintain employment.

But most importantly, it will give young school leavers more opportunities to learn skills and enjoy the company of others. This will assist nearly 2,000 people next year - an investment of \$235 million over five years.

We want to do more for children too. That's why we will invest \$83 million over five years to boost early intervention and therapy services so kids can maximise their potential, play with other children and young people and prepare for school and adulthood.

Our plan has a massive new commitment to respite care. I've often been humbled by the lengths to which families are willing to go to look after family members with a disability. But even the most dedicated families need a break and that's why our plan includes 1260 new respite care places - 750 to be delivered over the coming year. Another big advance will be the development of alternatives for younger people in nursing homes which includes developing a nursing home specifically for young people. We also want to continue closing older-style large residential centres and shift away from group homes moving instead to more contemporary village-style accommodation.

But the vast majority of people living with a disability can and should be able to live at home and that's why our plan also creates 1,000 additional supported accommodation places and 320 new intensive in-home support places over the next five years together worth half a billion dollars. While our plan includes a massive increase in funding it will also target our assistance more fairly.

From now on, support will be based on need – not age or disability type. And services will be funded on the outcomes they deliver, not on outdated formulas or anecdote. This is a generous and comprehensive package. For the first time it puts disability services where they should be - at the top of our policy agenda.

Conclusion

These measures are not the sum of what we will do. But they are a statement of who we are. They are an affirmation that to be a great society we must first be a good society. And, good society is measured not by its GDP or its budget surpluses but by the care and concern it shows for the weakest and most vulnerable. Yes, we will promote economic activity and create growth. But growth with a purpose and affirmative government that builds and helps and heals.

This will be a new drive for fairness and opportunity that puts mental health, public housing and the disabled at the very heart of government. A new direction we must take if we are to remain true to ourselves. A new direction our opponents would never dare contemplate.

Paul Keating once said that when you change governments, you change the nation. He was right. Politics is about difference and elections really do change the world. The plans I've described tonight make one thing very clear: the NSW election, 24 March 2007, will offer a real choice.

Endnotes

1. Gough Whitlam, John Curtin Memorial Lecture, John Curtin University, 1985



Photo – David Karonidis

Mark Leibler

Tax lawyer Mark Leibler AC, who is also Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia, believes Australia as a nation finally understands how to make progress towards reconciliation and why this is in all of our best interests. What's more, the federal government's new arrangements around Indigenous Affairs offer fresh ways to make it work. It's something for all Australians and there are many points of light. Mark Leibler spoke for The Sydney Institute on Monday, 29 May 2006.

RECONCILIATION:

A JOURNEY FOR ALL AUSTRALIANS

Mark Leibler

I acknowledge that we are standing on Eora traditional country and I pay my respect to the people of the Eora nations, whose age-old, continuing cultures add a unique vitality to Sydney and all her inhabitants and visitors.

I also acknowledge Gerard and Anne Henderson whose Sydney Institute provides the context for important conversations – the kind of conversations we need to have to get a better understanding of our nation and our world. The kind of conversations that encourage us to be honest with each other and that take us outside of our day to day attitudinal comfort zones. Conversations about the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians can challenge people in that way, as we have seen in the last weeks, and it is my honour to have been invited by the Hendersons to speak here during the tenth anniversary of National Reconciliation Week.

The history of this week of reflection and activity is interesting from all sorts of perspectives, not least because it also covers the decade of power of John Howard and his government. This evening, I'd like to say some things about that shared journey and the point we've reached in 2006 as we approach an enormously significant milestone in Australia's democratic history, and in reconciliation. That milestone is the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum, the most successful referendum in the history of our Federation that took place 39 years ago last Saturday.

My belief and my experience is that there are now many sectors of Australian society actively engaged in reconciliation. And unlike even five years ago, when all those thousands of people walked across bridges in a grand gesture of support for reconciliation, today's engagement is strategic and practical. By that I don't mean that it doesn't acknowledge the essential importance of recognition, respect and relationship-building – so-called symbolic aspects of the process. The notion that practical and symbolic measures fit into one basket or another, or that one can be put aside while the other is dealt with, has never reflected the reality of the work of reconciliation. Nor has it ever

been true that reconciliation is purely the responsibility of government as some people conveniently argue. It is a journey for all Australians, not as passengers but as joint navigators.

Reconciliation Australia sits in the middle of it all, defining the concept sufficiently for people to understand it but not so tightly that they don't recognise how much they can do, whoever they are, wherever they operate, to help bring it about. Our job is to bring people to the table, broker conversations, facilitate partnerships, create the space to ensure tough things are named and dealt with, tough things like racism. We are a non-government, not-for-profit, non-Indigenous organisation. The Board and staff comprise Indigenous and non-Indigenous people whose complementary skills allow us to operate effectively in a complex environment with limited resources.

Our scope of influence is enhanced enormously by the range of organisations we partner in our project and policy work, and I'm very pleased that representatives of just some of those many organisations were able to be here tonight. And I'd like to acknowledge and thank people from:

- BHP Billiton
- The National Aboriginal Sports Corporation of Australia
- The ANZ Bank
- Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation
- Gilbert+Tobin
- Macquarie Library
- Oxfam; and
- The National Rugby League

A couple of weeks ago, when I first put this address together, I was pretty happy with a draft that talked about an environment of possibility, about a breakthrough in bipartisanship and about growing recognition of success in Aboriginal communities. I haven't rewritten the speech because nothing that's happened over the past week or so changes my perspective on the current environment. But I am concerned that the hope and possibility for reconciliation may have become obscured, not only by the justifiable national distress about violence in Indigenous communities, but by some of the misinformation and blame conveyed in the discussion around violence.

I am concerned that in focusing on the bad news, we ignore high achieving organisations and individuals that present a very different view of Aboriginal Australia. So before I go to the original script, I would like to make the following observations about the current debate:

I share the outrage at acts of criminal violence perpetrated against Indigenous women and children who have the right, like all Australians, to be safe. But governments must acknowledge, publicly as well as privately, that a necessary law and justice response must be backed

up with steady, consistent, properly resourced action to address underlying causes. We must, once and for all, move beyond serial crisis intervention to take the systemic, long term action consistently called for, particularly by Indigenous women living this horror.

I also want to address the suggestion that child abuse is somehow a part of Indigenous culture. This has been one of the most disturbing aspects of the recent debate. To suggest that rape and pedophilia are part of Aboriginal culture is defamation. Whether it's used as an excuse by perpetrators or a cop-out by non-Indigenous Australians who find this explanation easier than facing up to their own responsibilities, it is slanderous and it is wrong.

Similarly, it is wrong to represent the application of customary law as a corruption of justice – one law for them, another for the rest of us. Criminal law in this country has always allowed for mitigating circumstances which take into account a person's background. Cases of inadequate sentencing hit the headlines from time to time and where appropriate, a sentence is reviewed and increased – as it was in the case involving the rape of a young girl that was featured on the front page of last Wednesday's *Australian*.

No level of mitigating circumstances, cultural or otherwise, can justify a one month sentence for such a crime. And this is what our justice system determined. But let's not throw out the baby with the bathwater. Customary law is a factor to consider just like a whole range of other factors which are taken into account in the sentencing of any Australian. The issue here is not whether these factors should be applied but that they must be applied appropriately. I am most concerned that these arguments are a distraction from the serious business of what is to be done to stop the violence and give hope to communities where it erupts in an environment of poverty and despair.

My Co-Chair at Reconciliation Australia, Jackie Huggins, whom I am honoured to have here this evening, spoke to me last week with passion and terrible frustration about the impact on her people of sensational, generalised headlines. Over decades, Jackie has been one of the women crying out for support in stopping the violence. She wants it stopped now, through better policing and protection for the women and children. But she wants it stopped in the long term and this can only be done if Indigenous people are part of the solution.

I feel compelled to refer to Nicholas Rothwell's piece in Saturday's *Australian* which shone a very stark spotlight on remote Aboriginal Australia. It was such a strong piece. Such an insightful, horrifying view of Australia's badlands. Like something out of a Mad Max movie except it's happening in our country. Rothwell exposed the extremeness of the bad news in Aboriginal Australia and offered one essential challenge to the perpetrators of this nightmare. That challenge is

telling the truth. To ourselves and to each other. But we can only start doing that once we've done some seriously overdue work building relationships – within our communities and between them. Because the sort of raw honesty we need cannot be engendered without a relationship. A relationship that lets us work together to identify problems and work together to solve them.

At Reconciliation Australia, this is what we mean by reconciliation. We are acutely aware of the bad news in communities, particularly our Indigenous directors and staff - which is why their active involvement in reconciliation is so inspiring. They tell me they believe in reconciliation, its possibility. And they stay because the truth of what's bad in Indigenous Australia does not negate or diminish what's good. There's so much good out there and it is also the truth.

At Reconciliation Australia, an important part of what we do is to uncover it and analyse it so can we share its lessons and celebrate people's achievements. My original speech from a fortnight ago also talked about a new sense of bipartisanship in Indigenous affairs which is another essential ingredient as we take the next step on this defining national journey.

I'd read a comment made by Tony Abbott about a health issue and thought how well it translated to the Indigenous affairs and reconciliation portfolio. He said: "It's more important to make a difference than to score a political point." Despite some strong public debate in the last two weeks, I can tell you that all I hear privately from the present Minister for Indigenous Affairs Mal Brough, from the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and Shadow Minister Chris Evans, encourages me that the two main parties are working in the same more determined, more necessarily cooperative direction. It really is about time.

The 1967 Referendum was won because almost 40 years ago the vast majority of Australians recognised that something had to change in the way our nation treated its Indigenous peoples. The Australian Constitution contained two brief references to the Aborigines. The first excluded them from the census-taking. In other words, they were not to be counted as citizens of Australia. The second reference said that the Commonwealth Government could make laws for all Australians except Aboriginals who would be "administered" under state law. Those deemed "half castes" existed in a legal no man's land.

In 1967, more than 90 per cent of eligible voters said "yes" to the idea that Indigenous people should be counted as Australian citizens and that the Commonwealth Government should be able to make laws on their behalf. The Referendum is viewed by many as the start of the reconciliation movement in this country. And without a doubt, it opened up a new era of relationship building, based on new standards.

The posters used in the Referendum campaign were all photographs of children – babies and toddlers with big smiles and big brown eyes, black and white children, arm in arm. I looked at the posters again recently and was struck by the expectations reflected in those sweet faces. The children would be in their forties now but in so many ways their lives would not reflect the promise of the Referendum victory. We hear statistics about persistent Indigenous disadvantage all the time, to the point where too many Australians have become numb to their human significance.

But there is one statistic that covers all the rest. The fact that almost 40 years after the Referendum that allowed their people to be counted as citizens of this country, the life expectancy of an Indigenous child is 17 years lower than for a non-Indigenous child. This is mind blowing. And it's why reconciliation is a journey for all Australians.

I've said before that my own sense of responsibility is accentuated by being Jewish and easily able to empathise with a persecuted minority, blamed for their own suffering. What I understand of the aspirations of Indigenous Australians is that apart from securing their just recognition as the First Peoples of this country, what they seek is to be full participants in Australian society while maintaining their cultural traditions and status.

I feel that this is what the Jewish community has been able to accomplish in this country, and it should be seen by all Australians as an absolutely reasonable and absolutely achievable objective for our First Peoples. It is a great honour to me to this day that in 1993 my firm, Arnold Bloch Leibler, was given the opportunity through the late Ron Castan, to act as lawyers and advisers to the Yorta Yorta peoples during their monumental struggle for land justice. A strong bond has been forged between us over the years, built on mutual respect and solidarity. The benefits it brings are very much two-way, as the Yorta Yorta often remind us at Arnold Bloch Leibler, and this coalescence between the moral and the business case for reconciliation is an important part of the current context.

Arnold Bloch Leibler's public interest law practice is an example of how an organisation of professional service providers can take a principled, structured, "whole of firm" approach to working with Indigenous communities for the benefit of both parties. At Arnold Bloch Leibler we take what we are best at in our private commercial practice and mirror it in our long term pro bono collaborations with Indigenous communities. We do not patronise. There is no place for paternalism. And we recognise the mixed motives for doing the work – not only is it the right thing to do, it is good for staff morale, sharpens skills, leads to other work and helps attract the brightest and best talent to the firm. In short, we recognise that these relationships

are very good for business and central to the firm's identity, not just a "feel good" adjunct to it.

Independent economic modelling that Reconciliation Australia will be commissioning later this year will provide another dimension to the business case for reconciliation. It will pull together all of the available figures which show the cost to Australia of not making a serious, long term, forward looking investment in Indigenous Australia. Corporates find this argument most compelling. When it's viewed alongside the demographic that 60 per cent of Indigenous people are under the age of 25, it's not surprising that businesses working in and around Aboriginal communities are, in some cases, well ahead of government in developing mutually beneficial partnerships.

My role as Co-Chair of Reconciliation Australia gives me a great vantage point to observe reconciliation in the multitude of forms it now takes across Australia. We do not expect to find agreement on all issues. But we have found wide areas of agreement based on the desire of most parts of Australian society for better outcomes. And a growing understanding and experience of what reconciliation means, what it looks like on the ground.

When the Prime Minister spoke 12 months ago tomorrow at the National Reconciliation Planning Workshop, everyone there detected a shift in his language and it helped to open up a new set of possibilities for reconciliation. He said: "Reconciliation is about rights as well as responsibilities. It is about symbols as well as practical achievement. It is about the past as well as being about the present and the future." The Prime Minister went on to say: "We can undeniably agree about the special status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as the first peoples of our nation. We can recognise and acknowledge past injustices and the communal interest in and spiritual attachment to land which is fundamental to Indigenous culture. In the name of the Government, I say we will reach out. We will meet the Indigenous people of this country more than half way if necessary because at the end of the day we need together to achieve the goals [of reconciliation]."

Again, in March of this year, on his tenth anniversary as Prime Minister, Mr Howard cited reconciliation among just a handful of priority issues. Those people who truly believe in reconciliation are taking the Prime Minister at his word, and together we are working to realise the opportunities currently available to us to make real progress. Opportunities that were not there five years ago and that may not remain open to us if we don't act now.

There's a long way to go before we'll be in a position to judge the success or otherwise of federal Indigenous affairs arrangements connected with the dismantling of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Commission. What we can say, and what Reconciliation Australia does say, is to the extent that these changes are based on what has been learned from past failures and achievements, they have the best chance of success in the long term.

As the Prime Minister acknowledged in last year's speech, this is a long term venture. Of course, the new principles are not limited to government action. They are universal requirements in building strong, fruitful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people for the benefit of the nation as a whole. They are pre-requisites for the achievement of reconciliation. The first is an understanding that different aspects of Indigenous disadvantage are inexorably linked. It is the principle that underpins the whole of government approach and it explains why closing the gap in life expectancy is not only a matter of investing in Indigenous health, important and underdone as that is.

It explains why stopping the violence is not only a matter of putting more Indigenous men in jail. International evidence from Canada, the US and New Zealand, countries that have all made headway in improving the life expectancy of their Indigenous citizens, shows we must tackle all the things that feed into the statistics, including education, employment, housing and the attitudes of the majority towards the minority population. Another core principle is the acceptance that government or business or civil society organisations like Reconciliation Australia trying to develop or implement policy affecting Indigenous communities without the close, constant and respected involvement of Indigenous people are on a road to nowhere. This need to engage Indigenous people in identifying local problems and developing solutions is very much a part of the government's policy position and is the hallmark of the shared responsibility agenda.

Where I see some difficulty is in the capacity of the bureaucracy to deliver on the policy intent. This is a very different form of engagement from what bureaucrats are used to. Again the international evidence shows us, and so do emerging findings from Reconciliation Australia's governance project work, that shared responsibility must involve shared power and that's a very new principle in the area of Indigenous policy. Government leaders, in Parliament and in the bureaucracy, people like Peter Shergold and Jeff Harmer, must actively work to build the capacity of the people and structures involved in delivering on the new arrangements, not only in Indigenous communities but just as importantly in government agencies.

While it's most appropriate this evening for me to talk about my own responsibilities and those of other non-Indigenous people, I would also encourage Indigenous Australians, particularly those in leadership positions, to make the most of fresh opportunities. Mistrust

is an understandable, lingering symptom of past injustice. And the current violence debate has done little to build trust and hope of new, more respectful relationships.

At the regional level, Indigenous leadership is achieving great things and at the national level, a new generation of savvy, young Aboriginal people is taking on ever more responsibility. The established leadership still wields significant influence. The process needs them, and they need to be pushing the agenda. For them to choose not to would be a tragedy. And that includes the opportunity to pull together a legitimate representative body at the national level to fill the void left by ATSIC.

Indigenous Australians must have this essential conversation about representation among themselves - the role of non-Indigenous Australians is to acknowledge it as a legitimate aspiration. Getting a result will take time but the goal of a broadly accepted representative body created by Indigenous people is a goal worth waiting for. And a goal worth investing in for Indigenous people themselves.

What I've also been telling you this evening is that in observing the reconciliation environment of the last 12 months, and particularly the efforts of Indigenous people, there is a great deal to say about success. The first two rounds of the Indigenous Governance Awards, established by Reconciliation Australia in partnership with BHP Billiton, have uncovered Indigenous excellence across the country. The unexpected quantity and quality of applications for the Awards has included Indigenous initiatives, partnerships between Indigenous people and business, and incredibly creative work involving government agencies working with communities.

When my fellow director at Reconciliation Australia, Mick Dodson, announced the inaugural winners late last year he spoke of the joy of being involved in a program that was all about Indigenous achievement. He described it as one of the most positive experiences of his professional life to see so many "proud people doing proud things".

The good news in Indigenous communities proves to Australians everywhere that reconciliation is an achievable objective. If across the board, we were operating on the basis of best practice examples that are evident in Australia today - high achieving projects in education, employment, health, governance etc, the overall picture would be very different. Nobody gets off the hook any more by blaming the victim, saying it's all too hard, arguing they don't know what reconciliation means or how they can get involved. There are examples of reconciliation everywhere, in every part of Australia and in every context.

On the eve of the 40th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum, Reconciliation Australia is launching a National Program of Commitment, Priority and Action which will sign up organisations in every

sector of Australian society to work towards one overarching reconciliation objective: closing the 17-year gap in life expectancy between an Indigenous child and a non-Indigenous child. The plan will pull together all the threads we know to be out there – ground breaking employment strategies, innovative education models, cultural competency training, enterprise development, consultation and negotiation standards, knowledge, recognition and respect.

And it will use what is already there to encourage new players to the table. This is action oriented, measurable, long term, systemic reconciliation – something to embed into the institutions of our nation. We're long past the point of being satisfied with feel good statements of reconciliation commitment. We have all the experience we need now to turn good intention into action.

To do so on the basis of moral and economic reasoning fused together into one overwhelming, unassailable case for change. If Australia doesn't invest in reconciliation now, the price of achieving it will skyrocket beyond our reach. Each of you is here tonight for a reason, maybe personal, maybe professional. Whatever that reason, I ask you to reflect on the achievement of the Referendum campaigners, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, who worked side by side for a decade.

I ask you to reflect on the late Rick Farley's characteristically wise words in summing up last year's Reconciliation Workshop. Rick said: "I'd encourage us to think in terms of not relying on others to come up with a grand, national plan and all of the resources necessary to implement it. We all have a collective responsibility and we all have an individual responsibility."

The Referendum campaigners and a deeply missed Rick Farley had much in common. They were changemakers and they stimulated conversations about justice in kitchens and factories and town halls across the country. I ask you to join Reconciliation Australia in commemorating the 40th anniversary in a meaningful way that respects their great instinct for what's possible. Now it's our challenge, and as my colleague Fred Chaney describes it: All we have to do is to "join the points of light".



Photo – David Karonidis

Martin Kramer

Martin Kramer is the Wexler-Fromer Fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and Senior Fellow at the Shalem Center in Jerusalem. In a visit to Sydney in 2006, Martin Kramer addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 6 June. A recognised authority on contemporary Islam and Arab politics, Dr Kramer gave a frank evaluation of Iran, Hamas and Hezbollah in the context of both challenge and threat to Israel as a Middle Eastern power while being also part of the West.

HAMAS, HEZBOLLAH

AND IRAN: THE CHALLENGES FOR ISRAEL AND THE WEST

Martin Kramer

About ten years ago, on my first visit to Sydney, I spoke here on Islamic fundamentalism. Since that time, the problems that it poses have grown all the more acute. The reason is that confusion has come to surround our understanding of the subject. Some of that confusion is suggested in the title of my lecture, which I didn't choose. I was struck immediately by one word in it: challenge.

A challenge is a problem you have to solve. Building a bridge can be a challenge; forming a government can be a challenge. A challenge is an obstacle that has to be overcome. If I had chosen the title of my lecture, I would have replaced the word challenge with another word. That word would have been "threat". A threat is something that you must defeat, or it will defeat you. And, together, Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran pose what I believe is a serious threat to the stability of the Middle East, to American primacy in the Middle East, and to the security of America's allies - the West's allies - both Israeli and Arab. If we downgrade this threat to a mere challenge we're very unlikely to muster the resources to defeat it. If that happens, the Middle East will become an even more dangerous place than it is today.

My title presents Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas as challenges for Israel and the West. Why focus on these three - Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran - as a group? After all, there are other Islamists who obviously pose threats. In Iraq there are the Sunni insurgents of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and the Shiite militia men of Muqtada al-Sadr. The Taliban aren't finished; they have resurfaced in Afghanistan. There are a lot of strains of Islamism and some of them are very dangerous. Day and night they plan terrorism and subversion, so why focus on Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran?

The answer is that these are Islamists who have power or a share of it. Their leaders aren't insurgents hiding in the shadows or terrorists hunkered down in caves; these are Islamists who are presidents, prime ministers, cabinet ministers. Hamas and Hezbollah are officially designated terrorist movements by the United States,

and Iran is considered a sponsor of terror. They have used terror to advance themselves and they have never renounced it. Many of their ideas are in fact indistinguishable from those of Al Qaeda, but they have something that Al Qaeda and Zarqawi don't have, and that the Taliban don't have: they have some share of power.

In Iran, Islamists have been in total power since 1979 and they show no inclination or willingness to share it with anyone. In the Palestinian Authority, Hamas came to power earlier this year and every minister in the Palestinian government is a Hamas member. In Lebanon, Hezbollah is a member of the ruling coalition with ministerial portfolios, and it controls a swathe of territory in the south of Lebanon, in tacit agreement with the Lebanese government.

Now we take it for granted that we must wage war against terrorists and insurgents who send aircrafts into buildings or cut off the heads of foreigners. There is at least some measure of clarity about that. But the minute Islam's radicals manage to take power, the minute they control the state apparatus as in Iran or with a parliamentary majority, as in the Palestinian Authority, or a few cabinet posts, as in Lebanon, the clarity is lost. Instead of clarity we get equivocation; we hear policy makers and intellectuals say these enemies, however abhorrent to us, are now legitimate actors. We have to talk to them, persuade them, conciliate them, defuse their grievances. They may have sent suicide bombers to kill innocents, they may inveigh against "Satanic America", they may deny the Holocaust and threaten a new one - no matter. They are powers to be reckoned with, and we must accept the fact that their power compels us to deal with them. And if we do so perhaps they will stop the terrorism and hate mongering that got them in our bad books to begin with. Now that they have power, they are bound to moderate - so the argument goes.

This tendency also draws on another argument which is very much a presumption of post-modern self doubt. It is this: if they hate us so much, if they are so determined to harm us, then perhaps they have a legitimate grievance, perhaps their very existence is our fault. Is Khomeini not the product of our reckless interventions on behalf of the Shah? Is Hezbollah not the result of our misguided attempts to intervene in Lebanon and dominate it? Is Hamas not the result of our refusal to use all of our leverage to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? We are to blame for their excesses; *mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*. We now reap what we have sown. And in penance for our crimes we must appease the genies we have released and so perhaps entice them back into their bottles. This attitude is quite widespread in intellectual, academic, and in policy circles. The far left of course takes it to extremes; it projects on Iran, on Hezbollah and Hamas all of its longings for some popular surge that will defy us and so gratify

the self-contempt of those who are alienated from the idea of the West.

Some quite famous intellectuals have made pilgrimages to the Ayatollahs and Sheiks who run these movements. One of the most famous was the French philosopher Michel Foucault who met with Khomeini during the Ayatollah's exile in Paris and then visited Iran twice and wrote pieces in the newspapers hailing the spirituality of the new revolution. This was so at least until it started executing homosexuals and imposing the veil on women. But you don't have to go back a quarter of century. For example, just last month the man recently voted the most influential living intellectual, Noam Chomsky, visited Beirut where he had an audience and a photo op with Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, the leader of Hezbollah. Chomsky took that opportunity to praise Hezbollah for defying the United States and to denounce the UN resolution that calls for Hezbollah to disarm.

I could regale you with a long list of other intellectuals who just can't find a flaw in Hamas and who won't allow a few bloodstained buses filled with victims of its suicide bombings to distract them from the schools and kindergartens that it sponsors. Of course, as ample precedent for this, Western intellectuals conducted the same sort of romance with Soviet Russia, Communist China and Castro's Cuba. (I recommend Paul Hollander's book *Political Pilgrims* that covers all this very well.) Islamism has replaced communism as the great hope of the anti-West brigade of American and European intellectuals. It is hailed as a force for progressive change and as we fail to see it, that is, so we are told, because of our prejudice against Islam.

You will have gathered from my derisive tone that I regard such ideas to be folly. And there is growing evidence that these ideas are anathema to wider public opinion in America and Europe. They are anachronistic throwbacks to the times that produced Foucault and Chomsky, times when the West looked upon the Islamic world with a measure of post-colonial guilt. The events of 9/11, the terror attacks, the social unrest associated with Islamism in Europe have made for a dramatic shift in public opinion. This is the case not only in America. We see it in a steep falling off in support for the Palestinian cause in parts of Europe, as that cause increasingly becomes identified with Islamism. We see it in the somewhat firmer European attitude towards Iran, especially since Ahmadinejad's election. What is more patchy is the leadership and the policy to translate this sentiment into a strategy for reversing the gains made by extreme Islam and in all three states, Iran, Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority.

Now what is the nature of the threat they pose? Let's enumerate them in the name of clarity. First, there is Iran's bid to become a nuclear military power. Iranian leaders constantly threaten Israel and cast their nuclear effort as somehow designed to counter Israel.

This is a bid to make Iran's nuclear ambitions popular in the Islamic, particularly the Arab, world. But the threat posed by an Iranian nuclear capability much exceeds the threat it would pose to Israel. What is called the Persian Gulf by Iran and the Arabian Gulf by the Arabs is in fact neither. It is an American Gulf, in which the United States preserves order with an overwhelming political and military presence in order to facilitate the free trade of oil, the life blood of developed and developing economies. The Pax Americana in the Gulf serves Europe, India and China. Without it they would have to create a "Pax" of their own. And it also serves the interests of the oil producing states themselves, especially the smaller ones that are not able to defend themselves against aggressive nationalist neighbours. One of them was Saddam Hussein; had the US not intervened to expel him from Kuwait, he would today sit astride the Gulf like a colossus, and it is doubtful there would have been an effort to remove him later.

This is Iran's real objective. It seeks the status of a regional hegemony, transforming the phrase "Persian Gulf" from a description of geography to a reality of power politics.

This would be the second phase of Iran's revolution. The first phase was ridding Iran itself of foreign power influence to the institution of an Islamic system of government. Despite all predictions, that system has proven resilient and entirely resistant to moderating or liberalising reform. The second phase is to transform Iran from an independent Islamist state to a hegemonic Islamist power in an area of vital geo-strategic and economic significance: the oil-soaked gulf. Nuclear weapons are a short-cut to achieve this objective.

Now there are those who argue that Iran seeks nuclear weapons only to preserve the regime against the threat of regime change made by American neo-conservatives. The recent US decision to enter into talks with Iran alongside the EU3 - Britain, Germany and France - is going to be a test of that thesis. The United States, by recognising Iran's right to peaceful nuclear power, by holding up the carrot of economic co-operation, is effectively saying to Iran, "Give up your nuclear plans and we will recognise the rule of your regime in Iran, just as we recognised Kadafi's rule in Libya when he gave up weapons of mass destruction." That is a major concession on the part of the United States, given the record of the Iranian regime in promoting international terror and crushing internal dissent. A lot has been given to Iran already in return for possible reconsideration of its nuclear drive.

But if my analysis is correct, this won't suffice to get Iran off the nuclear track because it isn't why Iran got *on* the nuclear track in the first place. Iran sees itself as a regional power that should dominate the Gulf by right. The nuclear drive is not a bid to preserve the regime; Ahmadinejad is not worried that his regime is any way in danger.

His purpose is to expand Iran's sway. A nuclear Iran would lead to a coalition comprised of Shi'ite-dominated Iraq plus the Gulf countries, eager that Iran not intervene on behalf of their own disaffected Shi'ite populations. Iran in this coalition would be the natural counterweight to US influence in the Gulf, and Iran with a major say in matters of Gulf security would be an entirely different Iran - the first Islamic and Islamist power to be reckoned with in world politics. The last to try and gain this stature for a Muslim country were Nasser, who promoted Egypt as a nucleus in the united Arab world, and Saddam, whose invasion of Kuwait was meant to give Iraq dominance over the Gulf.

A shift of this magnitude in the power alignment around the world's key pool of energy would have unpredictable consequences for the lives of each and every person who depends on the free flow of oil at reasonable prices. Today this includes not just the West, but also China, whose growing demand for oil assures that the Gulf will remain a prize well into the twenty-first century.

As we know, it doesn't take much to disrupt price. The price of oil is supersensitive to political risk, and at the end of the day there is a direct correlation between US-guaranteed stability and reasonable price. If the Pax Americana frays in a series of crises over an empowered Iran, prices will rise to new heights, economies will face a crunch, developing countries and maybe even Europe will fawn over Iran, and Iran will use the windfall income to fund even more ambitious military projects. That's the threat posed by Iran's nuclear ambitions.

When I read in the press that only Israel is pressing for a confrontation with Iran over its nuclear plans, that the rest of the world can live with a nuclear Iran, and that a nuclear Iran wouldn't constitute a threat to US and Western interests, then I know I'm reading someone who is short on imagination, short on an understanding of economics, and short on geo-strategic sense. This is why I believe that, in the end, Iran's drive will compel the West to impose a regime of sanctions and that, if that regime fails, to embark on some form of military action. Iran - certainly this Iran - cannot be allowed to cast a nuclear shadow over the Persian Gulf, over the American Gulf, for if it does Iran will inevitably blackmail the West over smooth access to its most essential commodity.

Hezbollah is a smaller threat but it is an extension of the Iranian threat. Hezbollah is that Shi'ite movement in Lebanon that was established over 20 years ago under Iranian impetus. It is the oldest extension of Iranian-style Islamism into the Arab world. Hezbollah also likes to justify itself as the vanguard of Islamist resistance to Israel; it played that role while Israel occupied part of Southern Lebanon. Some five years ago, Israel withdrew from Lebanon to

the Israeli-Lebanese international border as certified by the United Nations. The resistance should have ended. Yet Hezbollah refuses to abide by UN Security Council resolution 1559, which calls on all militias to disarm in Lebanon. Hezbollah also continues to deploy militarily along the Israeli-Lebanese border, a zone that should have been made over to the Lebanese army on Israel's withdrawal. Hezbollah's excuse is that Israel might attack, and to make that more likely, Hezbollah continues to provoke Israel along a particular stretch of that border. Hezbollah also independently controls what it claims are over 12,000 rockets and missiles that can be fired at Israel or at anyone else in range.

One reason Hezbollah remains armed is to deter Israel and the United States, not from attacking Lebanon, but from striking Iran over its nuclear ambitions. This would turn Lebanon from a sovereign state, a great majority of whose citizens have no interest one way or another in Iran's nuclear plans, into an Iranian missile launcher. The extent to which Hezbollah would lend itself to such an offensive is very much an open question, and it complicates calculations not only for Israel but for the United States.

But even if these worst scenarios don't materialise, Hezbollah poses another threat. By keeping its weapons, Hezbollah means to dominate Lebanon itself and to keep it out of the orbit of the United States. Lebanon is a small country but it is an important entry point for Western and American influence in the Arab world. There is also a very large Lebanese diaspora. Beirut is home to such institutions as the American University of Beirut. It has also been an arena of profound French influence and interest. In the 1980s, Iran and Syria succeeded in driving out the United States and France through bombings and abductions. Now both countries are seeking to return Lebanon to its historic role as a bridge between the West and the Arab Middle East. It is also a place where a tradition of tolerance and democracy and a free press might be revived under the right circumstances. That could influence other parts of the Arab world.

Over the past few years the United States and Europe and particularly France have worked together to engineer the departure of Syrian forces and the restoration of Lebanon to sovereignty. Lebanon is again on the rise. Iran and Hezbollah would seek to hold it back by taking the country hostage to intimidation and fear and keeping it needlessly on a war footing. The bottom line, then, is that Hezbollah is a very real threat to a number of Western objectives in the Middle East, from containment of Iran through democratisation. It isn't merely Israel's problem by any means.

I come now to the third element of the threat: Hamas. The major achievement of several generations of diplomats - from America, Europe, even some Australians - has been to move Israelis and

Palestinians in the direction of two states for two peoples. This is the solution envisioned as the problem all the way back to 1947 in the United Nations Partition Resolution. It is the only solution with any international legitimacy. Partition was rejected by the Arab states and the Arabs of Palestine back then, and Jordan and Egypt prevented the emergence of a Palestinian state on the territory allotted to it. Since 1967, Israel has occupied that territory, and since 1993 and the Oslo accords, Israel has committed itself to a two-state solution, to be negotiated with a legitimate Palestinian leadership committed to the same.

But while the world community and Israel see the two-state solution as the ultimate objective - that is, the creation of a Palestinian state alongside the state of Israel - the Palestinians themselves continually waver. As many as half of them in the West Bank and Gaza, and perhaps more elsewhere, believe that they can somehow eliminate Israel at some future point in time. In anticipation of that point, they refuse to recognise Israel or endorse a process that would lead to a permanent settlement of the conflict.

There were elements of this kind of thought also in the approach of Yasser Arafat, although he was careful to conceal them at key moments in his stewardship of the Palestinian cause. But the Islamist Hamas movement has never hidden its vision of a Middle East without Israel. It has used this to encourage waves of suicide bombers whom it sent out to destroy any vestige of a peace process. In an appalling set of miscalculations by the United States, by Israel and by the Palestinian Authority of Abu Mazin, the door was thrown wide open to Hamas in the Palestinian political process without demanding a single quid pro quo. Hamas entered elections, armed and dangerous and totally and irrefragably opposed to any kind of agreement with Israel that would constitute Palestinian acknowledgement of Israel's own rights. The result has been a political disaster of the first order and one that will be difficult to reverse. All the diplomatic magicians are now busy trying to come up with some magic formula that will turn the Hamas frog into a Palestinian prince or at least into a frog that looks kissable.

So far these efforts have failed abysmally. There is a struggle underway to see who will blink first, which reality is stronger. Is it the reality of the international community which has demanded Hamas must change its attitude to Israel, or is it the reality of an elected Hamas which demands that the international community change its attitude to Palestinian Islamism? Which fissures are more significant? Those governments that have a stake in the peace process, the United States and Europe, have been steadfast in putting up a boycott of the Hamas regime while Russia, Turkey and China have moved to legitimise it. Or are the fissures that allegedly exist among the different wings and leaders of Hamas more significant still? Will they

break under the pressure, to say and do what international consensus demands of them? All of these questions are open.

What is certain is that if Hamas continues in power and is allowed to spread its message of a world without Israel to the next generation of Palestinians, through its control and domination of the education system, then Palestinian and Israeli relations will enter a new phase. In that scenario, Israeli unilateralism will become a habit and the international interest in a Palestinian state - effectively a Hamas state - will wane. This will compel all the parties to look for new approaches. Israel will continue to survive and flourish even in this scenario, but the loss of the peace process will be a blow to the international consensus and to international legitimacy. For that reason, manoeuvring Hamas out of power is a prime Western interest.

Let me return to what I said earlier. The threats posed by Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas are especially dangerous because they are posed by extremists who hold power and who enjoy some legitimacy as such. But all three of them, it is important to remember, are also serial defiers of international law and international legitimacy. Iran has deceived the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and has done so systematically over years. Hezbollah continues to defy UN Resolution 1559 calling for the disarming of all militias in Lebanon and the restoration of control of all Lebanese territory to the sovereign government of Lebanon. Hamas has rejected all the agreements entered into and signed by the Palestinian Authority with Israel, and rejects the most basic UN resolutions that call for peace based on mutual recognition.

Those who defy international legitimacy should in turn be denied international legitimacy, and those who credibly threaten to destroy what order there is in the Middle East should be met by credible threats from those whose supreme interest is upholding that order. If that is to happen, we need to perceive the matter with clarity. Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas wish to dominate the Middle East and to wrest control from the United States and its regional partners. They wish to do that by building up arsenals while we deliberate, by insinuating themselves in political systems, by presenting an ideological alternative to the Pax Americana which I would call the Pax Islamica, and which is ultimately predicated on driving the West from the Middle East, on ending its military supremacy, its system of alliances, and its cultural influence. The West deludes itself if it approaches these threats individually, or sees them as Israel's problem, or relegates them to second place while chasing Osama and Zarqawi.

This is a broad offensive which, if it succeeds, will leave the West weaker in every respect and which will empower the most radical forces on the world stage today. I confess to a bias. I am not a follower of Chomsky or Foucault. I happen to believe that a Middle East

dominated by America and its allies, for all its problems, is much to be preferred to a Middle East dominated by Iran and its allies. This is the choice. It is a stark one. And there is no way to avoid it. I simply ask you: will we have the clarity of mind to see the choice and then make it?



Photo - David Karonidis

Elizabeth Fletcher

Dan Brown's *Da Vinci Code* has now sold more than 60 million copies worldwide. Its thesis, that the Catholic Church is built on a lie involving the true story of Jesus in order to keep its power, has mesmerised readers. But, according to Bible scholar Elizabeth Fletcher, the novel's credible reworking of myth as truth and its thriller style plot, apparently uncovering the secrets of labyrinthine networks, has caught the world unaware. The study of Christianity, now at an all time low, has left a gullible public believing fiction can be fact. And this has consequences which are unfortunate. Elizabeth Fletcher, author of *Women in The Bible*, addressed The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 7 June 2006.

DE CODING THE

DA VINCI CODE

Elizabeth Fletcher

Let's start with the positives about Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*: it's one of the most cleverly constructed books I've ever read. It may not be well written, the characters may be cardboard cutouts, but its design keeps you turning those pages, with one puzzle after another and a constant smattering of anagrams to solve and hidden jokes to decipher, giving the reader the pleasant feeling that they are clever enough to be in on the joke.

That said, I'll have to admit I agree with Bruce Boucher, the art historian who suggested *The Da Vinci Code* should be made into an opera instead of a film, since "if something is too silly to say, you can always sing it..." And I wasn't 20 pages into the book before I remembered that line in the film *A Fish Called Wanda*, where the character played by Jamie Lee Curtis insists to her idiot brother, that no, the London Underground is *not* a political movement. Dan Brown has much in common with that brother. His *Da Vinci Code* is a scholar's nightmare, packed with so many errors that were it not for its extraordinary popular success, no reasonable person would pick it up, let alone wade through its 600 pages.

The root of the problem lies in Dan Brown's statement, at the beginning of his book and in many subsequent interviews, that "one of the many qualities that makes *The Da Vinci Code* unique is the factual nature of the story. All the history, artwork, ancient documents and secret rituals in the novel are accurate". This bland statement, preceding as it does hundreds of details that are patently untrue, has been like a red rag to a bull – the bull in this case being every historian, biblical scholar, architect and art historian who has come into contact with the book. The story is full of statements of supposed fact that are either invented, or the result of extremely superficial research. When challenged about his knowledge of biblical or church history, Dan Brown says that his contacts in the world of scholarship and in the Christian churches prefer to remain nameless. I bet they do.

Though the choice was difficult, I offer some examples that irritated me the most:

- **Example 1** – *The assertion that the Emperor Constantine invented the divinity of Jesus and foisted it onto an unwilling empire, who wanted to revere Jesus as a holy but entirely human prophet.* In fact, the early Christian martyrs were killed precisely because they insisted, with a sort of lunatic obstinacy, that Jesus was God. Pliny the Younger, reporting to the emperor Hadrian, described with some irritation how he had politely asked accused Christians to sacrifice to the emperor not once, but three times. Each time they had refused, whereupon Pliny reluctantly imprisoned them, not so much for sacrilege as for bad manners. Brown also asserts that Constantine was a reluctant Christian, being baptised virtually against his will as he lay dying. In fact, people at that time waited until death was imminent before being baptised, believing that baptism cleansed them of all the sins they had committed during their life, and that therefore it was better to be baptised immediately before death, so that one could step into Paradise in pristine condition, whiter than white.
- **Example 2** – *The ancient sex ritual Sophie Neveu is supposed to have witnessed between her grandfather and his post-menopausal wife could never have happened in ancient society.* These rituals were always about fertility and procreation, what the old Irish priests used to call “fockin’ in the fields”. The rituals were never about sexuality or love in the modern sense. A post-menopausal woman would never take part in a fertility rite, because it simply wouldn’t make sense, since she could no longer conceive. The ritual described in *The Da Vinci Code* offers safe sex, pseudo-sex, aimed squarely at the middle-aged women readers who form the backbone of the book-club circuit.
- **Example 3** – *Dan Brown says that “the quest for the Holy Grail is the quest to kneel before the bones of Mary Magdalene”, something that would surely have surprised Sir Galahad, and might have saved him a great deal of trouble had he known. Brown also finds significance in the lack of a chalice on the table in Leonardo Da Vinci’s “Last Supper” and declares that the implied chalice is Mary Magdalene’s womb.* In fact, there is no chalice or special cup in the mural because Da Vinci was painting an entirely different moment in the story of the Last Supper, the shocking moment when Jesus says he will be betrayed by one of the people sitting around him. The incident appears in each of the four gospels, but in John’s gospel there is a disciple reclining at the table beside Jesus, and this disciple was assumed to be John himself. Granted that Da Vinci’s John in *The “Last Supper”* is feminine-looking to our eyes, as is Da Vinci’s “John the Baptist”. Both are shown with long curling hair, softened

features and no shoulder or arm muscles. But this was the conventional way of painting a saintly young man at that time. It was an artistic conceit that the natural product of a holy life was physical beauty, and that a holy person would thus be beautiful, something that, sadly, we know is not true.

- **Example 4** - *The statement that Da Vinci's "Last Supper" contained a subtle message about the relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus, which only those in the know would understand.* If Da Vinci was painting just such a coded message, where might he put it? In a Dominican monastery, on the wall of a refectory where monks had time to think as they ate their meal? I think not. The Dominicans, after all, had been founded to counter heresy, and they counted some of the cleverest minds in Europe among their members. Are we to believe they would not have spotted heresy on the wall of their own refectory?

These mistakes – I have mentioned only a few – are so frequent and so blatant that one begins to ask why no editor picked them up. True, editors are a vanishing breed these days, and a writer is expected to present a manuscript that is virtually ready for publication. But even so, surely somewhere, someone with even an average education must have glanced at the manuscript in pre-publication and spotted the fact that the book is literally dotted, on every few pages, with statements of fact that are not only incorrect, but easy to prove as incorrect.

For that reason, one begins to ask, not what the errors are, but why they are there. Is Dan Brown merely a lazy researcher who has accidentally hit on a winning formula? Or is this book a cleverly baited hook fishing for publicity and controversy?

Brown's interviews suggest that it is the former - his blandly pompous words remind me of Heck Dexter, the American diplomat in Nancy Mitford's *The Blessing*. Heck is able to pronounce authoritatively and at length on Europe and all things European even though he has hardly ever spoken to a European, and disapproves of them *en masse*. Dan Brown, or rather his researcher/wife who incidentally seems to have been air-brushed out of the picture, (rather ironic, given his outraged claim that Mary Magdalene has been air-brushed out of the Christian story) has confined himself to about ten rather shonky sources, and yet feels himself qualified to pronounce with awful authority on all things religious. Then again, there are all sorts of hints that the book has been cleverly baited. It is peppered with self-mocking jokes: in one scene, the hero Langdon lunches with his editor, who reminds him (read Dan Brown), that he is a scholar, not just some "pop schlockmeister looking for a quick buck". I could not help thinking there was an extremely astute editor lurking somewhere

in the background, egging Brown on to play as many jokes as he could on the hapless reader.

How does Brown get away with the hundreds of historical errors in the book? To be blunt, religious education in the 1970s and 1980s was so appalling that hardly anyone today is equipped to dispute Brown's errors. He can say virtually anything and get away with it, because none of us was educated properly in our own religious culture and history. Our lack of knowledge makes us gullible.

This is borne out in Brown's central theory, that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married, and that she had Jesus' child – was in fact pregnant at the time of the crucifixion. But when she tried to assume her place at the center of Christianity after Jesus' death, she hit an apostolic glass ceiling: the Christian communities and later the early Church devalued her and played down her importance in Jesus' life, for fear of "feminine power". Never mind the fact that she was later made a saint by the Church, and became the most widely venerated woman after Jesus' mother, or that another Jewish peasant woman, Mary the mother of Jesus, was virtually worshipped as a goddess by medieval Christianity. These are facts that Brown chooses to ignore, so we'll let them pass, and turn to the real Mary Magdalene.

Who was she? Unfortunately, she was not the gorgeous red-haired woman so often shown in paintings of the crucifixion, nor was she a repentant prostitute. Sadly, she was just a middle-class Jewish business-woman from the town of Magdala, a town noted for its dried fish and wool dyes. She seems to have been financially independent, and able to offer financial backing for the itinerant rabbi called Jesus of Nazareth, and his group of disciples.

She had suffered a severe illness, which Jesus cured. Subsequently, she became the leader of the group of women who sometimes travelled with, or met up with, the group of men headed by Jesus. Men's and women's groups often travelled together, for example on the annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem, but they kept strictly within their own group. We know this from the story about Jesus being lost in Jerusalem when he was a young boy. Mary and Joseph did not realise for some time that the boy Jesus was missing, when he stayed behind in Jerusalem. Each separate group thought he was with the other.

Jesus of Nazareth would not have been a comfortable person to know, but Mary Magdalene was loyal and stubbornly brave, and stuck by him when others deserted him. As long as he stayed on his home turf in Galilee, away from the capital Jerusalem, the Roman authorities viewed him in much the same way that John Howard views the Islamic imans in western Sydney: a possible source of trouble that had to be monitored. But when he deliberately came into the over-crowded city of Jerusalem at the significant feast of Passover, and allowed himself to be hailed as Messiah, the authorities had to clamp down to

avoid a possible riot. They arrested Jesus and got rid of him quickly and efficiently, as only the Romans could do.

Mary Magdalene was a key figure in the horrific final hours of Jesus' life. She saw the crucifixion, she prepared his dead body for burial and a few days later she was the first witness to the mysterious event we call the resurrection. Her status as first witness became the basis of her great significance in Christianity.

How do we know Jesus didn't have a sexual relationship with Mary Magdalene? Chiefly because his enemies never accused him of sexual misbehavior. If your enemies make an accusation that is recorded, it usually means that the accusers are confident they will be believed. In the years after his death, enemies of the early Christians accused Jesus of two things:

- illegitimacy; this was a serious charge, much more so then than now, because a religious teacher had to have an impeccable family background, and have parents who were esteemed in their community
- being too fond of eating and drinking, especially with the wrong kind of people.

To counter the first accusation, two of the gospels (Luke and Matthew) go to considerable trouble to explain the unusual circumstances of Jesus' conception and birth, with the stories of the Annunciation and Joseph's dream of an angel/messenger. To counter the second accusation, all of the gospels emphasise Jesus' enjoyment of people and social gatherings, but are careful to place them within the context of his ministry to disadvantaged people.

The enemies of the first Christians would certainly have accused Jesus of sexual misbehavior if there had been the slightest hint that this was a charge that would stick. Yet there was not one charge of this kind ever laid against him, which suggests that such a charge of this nature would not have been believed.

But there is another reason why I doubt that there was any intimate relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. There is a scene described in John's gospel immediately after the resurrection of Jesus, when Mary sees Jesus for the first time. She is utterly distraught at the fact that his body is missing from the tomb, and then she encounters someone in the garden outside the tomb. She does not look up at this person, does not realise that it is Jesus, until he says her name, "Mary". When she looks up, she is confronted by someone whose dead body she had recently washed and laid out for burial. With her mind unable to process what she is seeing, she responds with "*rabbouni*", which is Aramaic for "rabbi" or "teacher". At this moment of extreme mental confusion, she does not call him by his own personal name of "Jesus", which she surely would have done if she and Jesus had had the sort of intimate relationship that

is suggested in *The Da Vinci Code*. She uses the word she had always used as his name, “*rabbouni*”, teacher, signaling to me that though she undoubtedly loves him, she has never had an intimate relationship with him.

But why is Mary Magdalene presented in so many artworks as a beautiful ex-prostitute? Probably because it made a terrific story, one with beauty, lust and suitably edifying repentance. As time went by, Mary became confused with the woman with the alabaster jar, described in Luke 7:36-50. The story of this other woman comes just before Mary Magdalene is first mentioned. The woman with the alabaster jar has the characteristic features that were later transferred onto Mary Magdalene: long flowing hair, tears of repentance, and a “past” She is described in Luke 7:37 as a “sinner”, a word which was interpreted by the early Church fathers as “prostitute”. In fact, when Luke describes an actual prostitute in 15:30, he uses a different word altogether. But never mind the facts. The new improved version of her story took hold of the popular imagination. Another reason was that later celibate male interpreters of the gospels linked Mary’s illness, her “demons” (Luke 8:2) with her sexuality, and Mary became confused with the woman who has committed adultery, in John 8:1-11.

As well, the idea of Mary Magdalene as a beautiful ex-prostitute probably caught on because it created a dramatic contrast to the Virgin Mary, the perfect virgin/mother. This contrast mirrored a philosophical idea popular during the period of the early Church, Platonic dualism. Plato had proposed that everything in the universe had an equal and opposite other; for example man/woman, logic/emotion, good/evil, light/darkness, etc. People of the time used this intellectual frame-work to shape their view of the world, including their religious myths.

In the centuries following Jesus’ death, Mary Magdalene became everything the Virgin Mary was not: a reformed, flamboyantly beautiful whore who was the perfect foil for the modest virgin/mother Mary. As the Christian myth took on a life of its own, the original, more mundane reality was left behind.

The truth is that Jewish crowds would never have paid any attention to a rabbi who consorted with a woman who was not his wife, or who had a “secret” marriage. This would have instantly destroyed his credibility as a teacher. Jews expect a high standard of behavior at all times from their rabbis, who must be constant role models to their followers. In fact, the historical Jesus was more conservative than people realise. If you look carefully at the stance he took on some issues, you realise that, had he been alive today, he may even have voted Liberal.

Again contradicting Dan Brown, if Jesus had been married the fact would never have been hidden. Marriage would have been seen

as a plus. Jesus was Jewish. The first commandment in the Jewish Scriptures is to “be fruitful and multiply”. Jews take this commandment so seriously that they have always endorsed marriage and sexual love, and rabbis are expected to marry. The only exception to this was a man who chose to devote himself to the study of Scripture, although even then he was encouraged to marry. It is not impossible that Jesus had been married as a young man and was a widower. It is more likely that he had chosen the second way of life, teaching and studying Scripture, and had not married because his itinerant way of life made this impossible, in that culture at that time. Christianity in a later period endorsed celibacy as a way of life, but as a Jew, Jesus would have been perplexed by the idea.

Filled then as it is with factual errors and inaccuracies, why is *The Da Vinci Code* so popular? Well, sex sells, and weird sex sells even better. And this book is clever: it offers forbidden sex with a touch of the occult. Dan Brown lingers lovingly over the bedroom flagellations of a crazed monk, and taps into vague New Age theorizing about goddess worship and the rituals it may or may not have entailed.

Another reason for its popularity is that it attacks Christianity, currently a popular pasttime. *The Da Vinci Code* is blatantly anti-Catholic, encouraging bigotry on almost every page. This plays to the current double standard existing in Western culture. There are groups that can be attacked, and others that are sacrosanct. It’s open season on Christianity at the moment. What would be the popular fallout if, for example, *The Da Vinci Code* attacked the doctrines and founder of Islam instead of Christianity, or if the murderer were black instead of albino, or better yet, a black homosexual? The author would be stoned by an outraged populace. But Christianity can be demolished with impunity, and the monk in the story can be portrayed as something akin to a circus freak. It is prejudice disguised as entertainment. The unpleasant truth is that without its attacks on religious institutions and beliefs, the book might not even have been published, or been published and had a short run before quietly disappearing.

Why is Christianity being attacked like this? The timing of the book is good of course, following so closely on the heels of scandals about pedophile priests. But I think it goes much deeper than that. It may be that the Christian portrayal of God as Father seems no longer to satisfy large sections of the Western world. Christians have dropped away from church attendance, I believe, not because of pedophile priests or the AIDS/condom debate, but because the Christian image of God no longer works for them.

One of our problems is that as twenty-first century people we had to deal with the after-effects of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries’ scientific revolution, which demanded that the scientific method be applied to everything. By the beginning of the twentieth century,

people expected to be able to test the truth of anything. If it could not be observed, named and tested, we were uneasy about it. Frankly, the gospels about Jesus do not stand up to this type of scrutiny. They were never intended to. They were written to persuade rather than to prove. They were not historical biographies of Jesus, and they were never written for that purpose. So they do not satisfy this twentieth century expectation of ours, to know for certain. In effect, we are asking something from them that they were never designed to give.

It is not that people do not need religion any more – perhaps even the reverse. Surveys show that people still believe in God and still pray when they are frightened. So people are in a quandary. They need to believe in something, to get them through the night as the song says, but traditional beliefs have been discredited. So they are willing to search for an alternate myth, even if it means searching in the rubbish dump. People will fill a spiritual void with trash if nothing else is available or appetizing, rather as they will eat some greasy morsel of fast food, and with much the same consequences – a quick fix, then you are left with something rather disgusting in your system. In fact, *The Da Vinci Code* has been called fast food for the soul.

The trouble is that people would not accept this fast food if the churches were not offering the equivalent of unappetising vitamin tablets as an alternative. Since the Reformation, the Christian churches, even the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council, have been intellectualised. I believe we have over-intellectualised Christian worship. Once, Christianity was a religion of the senses, with worship that catered to the senses: music, paintings, incense, all the sensual splendor of a medieval liturgy. People were comfortable with the fact that Christianity was essentially a mystery religion. Now the churches cater to the intellect: congregations read the Scriptures and do good works. It is all very worthy, but it doesn't seem to be working. I am not decrying intellectualism itself, far from it. One of the great strengths of religion is that it has unflinchingly grappled with difficult intellectual concepts such as the meaning of life and of death. But what seems to be missing today is a sense of mystery, of reaching for profound but hidden truths, and this is what *The Da Vinci Code* provides – in buckets.

To date, *The Da Vinci Code* has sold 60 million copies, which must mean that it has reached at least that many minds. And surveys show that about 60 per cent of the people who read the book believe everything it says. That's a lot of power for a book with so many errors in it, and it worries me. To paraphrase Caligula, a man I'm rather fond of (you just don't see politicians like that any more), "I wish the Roman people had but a single throat" (that I could cut). I wish this book had but a single page, that I would rip out... Unfortunately for Western

culture it has 600, and the damage has already been done. People who don't believe in anything, will believe anything.



Photo – David Karonidis

Cassandra Pybus

Historian Cassandra Pybus is one of Australia's most admired writers. Her *Gross Moral Turpitude*, a controversial study of Australia's first sexual harassment case, won the Colin Roderick Award for the Best Australian Book in 1993. In her most recent research and now book, *Black Founders: The Unknown Story of Australia's First Black Settlers*, Cassandra Pybus has revealed that black convicts were among our first fleet settlers – a fact which profoundly complicates our understanding of race relations in early colonial Australia. Cassandra Pybus addressed The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 14 June 2006.

RACE RELATIONS AND

EARLY AUSTRALIAN SETTLEMENT

Cassandra Pybus

In 1912, a young man named Thomas Conquit was shot by police in a remote mining hamlet in the Snowy Mountains. In view of Conquit's description as part Aboriginal, this was unremarkable. What took the case out of the ordinary was the police explanation that they were arresting Conquit for lunacy because he had declared that he was on a mission to kill the police who were part of a worldwide conspiracy to murder all black people. Putting aside the issue of whether or not this perception was dangerously paranoid, I find it astonishing that in 1912 an Aboriginal person might regard himself as part of a worldwide black community.

The man's distinctive name of Conquit makes his ancestry easy to trace in the colonial records. His grandfather was Thomas Conquade, a white convict transported from England to Australia in 1819, whose common-law wife, Frances Martin, was described on his death certificate as Aboriginal. She was the daughter of John Martin, transported from England on the First Fleet in 1788, and Mary Randall, whose father and mother were also transported from England on the First Fleet. With these parents, Frances Martin could not have been Aboriginal; but she was black. Her father, John Martin, and her grandfather, John Randall, were both African-American. Her grandson correctly understood himself to belong to the African Diaspora, even if the authorities did not. Another of John Randall's many grandchildren became active in the struggle for social justice for Aboriginals during the latter part of the nineteenth century. Among the Randall-Martin descendants there are many who are now accepted as Aboriginal.

I found out about this as a result of a landmark Federal Court case in 1997 in Tasmania, where several Aboriginal women took an action against eleven people who had stood for the ATSIC election on the grounds that they did not meet the ATSIC definition of proof of descent from an indigenous person or recognition by the Aboriginal community. I gave evidence as an expert witness that there was no historical support for the claims that these people were descended

from tribal Aboriginal people. Further, I presented my view that in contemporary Tasmania a great many more people were claiming Aboriginality than could possibly demonstrate descent from an indigenous person.

The judge was clearly bemused. If that were so, how then could I explain the oral histories referred to by the respondents in which their colonial ancestor was identified as having been black? I had a glimmer of an idea. During the hearing a friend confessed to me that her brother told her that they were Aboriginal. I sent her off to the archives. A week later she was back, clutching print-outs of the pioneer index. She did indeed have a black ancestor, but not Aboriginal. He was an African seaman who jumped ship in Launceston in the 1830s, moved south, Anglicised his name and married a white woman. With this in mind, I boldly volunteered to Justice Merkel "there must have been other black people in early Tasmania". He sent me off to comb Australian colonial history for any evidence.

I found plenty. Between 1788 and the middle of the nineteenth century, almost every convict ship carried people of the African Diaspora to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. Settlers and soldiers brought African servants, while some settlers were themselves of African Diaspora. Each of the port communities of the colonies included plenty of African-American and Afro-Caribbean sailors. And even though it failed to fully persuade Justice Merkel, I could see how this had the potential to significantly alter our understanding of the racial mix of Australia and show that the colonial race relations were more complex than the Aboriginal/white divide which has been tacitly assumed by Australian historians. I could also see how this flawed historical reading of racial identity in colonial Australia, as being either Aboriginal or European, had complicated what was shaping up to be the fraught social issue of twenty-first century: what constitutes Aboriginality.

The First Fleet carried eleven black convicts to Australia, all of them sentenced in England to seven years "transportation beyond the seas": John Randall at the Manchester Quarter Sessions for stealing a watch-chain; John Martin at the Old Bailey for stealing a bundle of clothing; Daniel Gordon at Winchester for the theft of clothing; James Williams at the Old Bailey for the theft of clothing and shoes; John Coffin at Guildhall for stealing plates and some other things; John Williams at Kent Assizes for stealing a wooden cask of liquor, silver, clothes etc.; Thomas Orford at the Old Bailey for stealing some items of clothing; Samuel Chinery at Exeter in Devon for the theft of a linen shirt; George Francisco at the Old Bailey for stealing clothes from a man who allowed him to sleep in his shop; Caesar at the Kent Assizes for the theft of twelve shillings; and John Moseley at the Old Bailey for impersonating a seaman in order to receive his wages.

It was a matter of amazement to me that these distinctive first fleters, and the steady trickle of black convicts and free people who followed, have been completely whited out of Australian colonial history. Take the most recent and most carefully nuanced historical account of early Australia, Inga Clendinnen's *Dancing With Strangers*. Her organising image of dancing is culled from a painting by Naval Lieut. William Bradley and concerns an incident on 29 January 1788, when a crew of marines and sailors were surveying Port Jackson and Bradley witnessed his men dancing with the Aborigines. Bradley loftily informs us, "these people mixed with ours and all hands danced together". Bradley's "these" and "ours" are automatically read as black and white. Clendinnen finds this inter racial dancing a surprise. Yet there is nothing surprising about it. Dancing is what mariners do, and these sailors and marines had been at sea for over nine months. Moreover, most of the sailors would have been at sea for many years, on and off, making landfall, time and time again, in places where they would have danced with the locals. The polyglot maritime culture of the eighteenth century ship readily acculturated to the customs of the indigenous people they continually encountered. Some of these sailors were themselves black or tawny.

Clendinnen sees the incident as significant because it was only three days after landfall in Australia, she says. It was actually ten days later. She has not noticed that only a day or so after landfall at Botany Bay, the same William Bradley described how convicts from the *Scarborough* landed at the bay to cut grass for the livestock. He records how the Aboriginal inhabitants were intrigued to find a black man among the interlopers attacking the landscape with strange weapons. Bradley thought that the Aborigines were "much pleased" to see a "man of their own complexion". They called out to him and appeared puzzled that the black convict failed to understand their language. When the convicts returned to the *Scarborough* the Aborigines indicated that the man should stay with them, and they followed his longboat as far as they could. In this interchange "these" and "ours" were both black. I would have thought this rather more surprising.

That Clendinnen has failed to notice this incident is no special failing on her part; it has been passed over by every historian of colonial Australia. The man in question was probably John Moseley, who was transported for impersonating a sailor in order to receive his wages. I have tracked him back into the American colonies to establish that he was a slave in Virginia in 1775 who ran away to join the British Army during the Revolution and then signed on as a seaman with the British fleet returning to England. It is the common story of our black founders, almost all of them were slaves who had attached themselves to the British military during the Revolution.

Here is another matter persistently overlooked by Australian historians who rarely look beyond Australia and who generally write about the first settlers as if they stepped out of the Tardis, without any past. No one has paid much attention to the fact that nearly all the officers had served in the American Revolution, including George Johnston, David Collins, Watkin Tench, Robert Ross, Williams Dawes, John Hunter and Phillip Gidley King. Bonds forged during that war ran deep. For the black runaways from America who had served with the British, such a connection may have stood them in good stead as they began a new life at the other end of the world.

That was certainly the case for John Randall, a runaway from Connecticut who had served as a drummer in a British regiment. Within the first year or so, John Randall was appointed one of three game shooters. Governor Phillip employed the white convict, John McIntyre as his shooter, while Major Ross, employed Patrick Burn. John Randall was the third convict licensed to shoot game, probably employed by George Johnston, the governor's aide-de-camp. Johnston may have known Randall from a long time before. As a mere boy of 14, Johnston took a commission in the regiment of his patron, Lord Percy (late Duke of Northumberland) which was stationed in New York. Lord Percy particularly encouraged black recruits into his service, several of whom he took back to England when he left America in 1779. Even if Johnston had not personally encountered Randall, he must have become familiar with the runaway slaves during this very formative period in his life.

These three game shooters were permitted an enviable freedom to move as they wished through and beyond the settlement. Randall and his two colleagues operated with little or no supervision, ranging at will through the bush, tracking and shooting kangaroo. They were often out for days at a time, with bountiful occasion to procure fresh meat for themselves and their close associates. They were regularly included in the governor's exploratory sorties. John Randall and John McIntyre were, almost certainly, the marksmen who, in April 1788, accompanied Governor Phillip, Lieutenant Johnston and a bevy of officers on the second expedition to Broken Bay, north of Port Jackson. They were probably the armed convicts who escorted Phillip and Johnston to Botany Bay in May 1788, while Randall was surely the black tent-carrier mentioned on the third expedition to Broken Bay in August 1788. At an encounter with a large group at Manly Cove, soon after landing, Randall gave one stocking each to two Aboriginal men "with which they seemed much pleased". Significantly there was no indication that they made any distinction between black Randall and his white compatriots.

Consideration of Randall brings me to a key incident at the heart of Clendinnen's *Dancing with Strangers*, concerned with the spearing

of the governor's gamekeeper, John McIntyre, and the punitive expedition that followed it. McIntyre was speared at Botany Bay in a deliberate ambush by the warrior Pemulwuy. His two companions, Burn and Randall, were left unmolested. They were then employed as guides on the punitive expedition to kill Pemelwuy and bring back ten heads (reduced to six). This expedition was a ludicrous disaster. Determined to have an element of surprise; the guides were told to find the quickest route and they led the military through a swamp where they became mired in quicksand. The soldiers would have smothered had not the ropes intended for the Aboriginal victims been used to pull them free. When they reached their destination there was no sign of the Aborigines who had been gone for days.

Randall was one of the few to benefit from this fiasco. Having failed to lead the head-hunting marines to Pemulwuy, he incurred no personal enmity from the Eora and continued to hunt unmolested. At the same time, Randall had demonstrated his trustworthiness and loyalty to the governor, which stood him in good stead. He was permitted to live in almost absolute independence, armed and at liberty to move outside the settlement. When not hunting, Randall enjoyed the pleasures of a family life at Parramatta, which had now become a substantial village. As one of the "convict families of good character", John and his second wife Mary were permitted their own separate hut. Even after he was emancipated and given a land grant Randall was employed as a game-shooter for the commander of the New South Wales Corps. Rather than farm, he continued to invest his energy into his client relationship with the senior officers. In 1794 he was technically employed as the shooter for Lieutenant Colonel Grose, who now lived in England.

In reality, Randall was most probably in the employ of Major William Paterson and, after Paterson's departure in 1796, of Captain George Johnston, who became Governor Hunter's aide-de-camp. Second only to the paymaster, John Macarthur, Johnston was the most successful entrepreneur in the corps. By 1799 he was the wealthiest man in the colony. In 1797 Randall appears to have been living at Government House and enjoying the patronage of both Johnston and Governor Hunter. Even after he was caught red handed stealing glasses from Government House he was generously forgiven by the governor. The incident revived memories of another Hunter favorite who, as his principal servant, had been engaged in a criminal racket fencing items stolen from Government House.

By the time Hunter was removed from power, Randall was back at Parramatta, acting as a retailer of commodities and spirits on behalf of the New South Wales Corps. The officers always used soldiers and trusted ex-convicts for this purpose, as gentleman could not be seen to engage in anything as tawdry as trade. He then was permitted to

join the New South Wales Corps and continued to hold a privileged position as a member of the regimental band formed in September 1801. His life in the New South Wales Corps was singularly untaxing; to all intents and purposes, playing in the band was all that was ever required of him. Randall was never rostered on guard duty, though other band members were; when members of his company were detached to Parramatta or Norfolk Island or Port Dalrymple, Randall always remained in Sydney, lounging about the barracks, or engaged in some informal activity which was not recorded in the regimental ledger. His company almost permanently lacked a senior officer in charge, since most of those officers appointed to that role were either on extended leave or under arrest awaiting court martial. Still, some senior officer ensured that Randall's soft billet continued. Almost certainly that person was George Johnston. It was only after Johnston's arrest and court martial for deposing Governor Bligh that Randall's career took a determined downward slide. His status in the colony was also evident in his marital success. In a colony where men outnumbered women four to one, Randall married three times and had several other de facto relationships, and all of the woman appear to have been white.

I can rattle off that fascinating material about Randall (actually, I have a lot more) because I deliberately went looking for him. It is a truism about historical research that you don't see what you are not looking for. So perhaps we can forgive the myopia of generations of Australian historians, except that in at least two cases the black settlers were notorious in their own day and the subject of repeated comment in the well-known sources. Hard to miss them, I would have thought.

Let me return to Clendinnen and consider her comment on the development of "the dangerous new tribe of convict cum bushrangers" in early Sydney. Of the most notorious of these bolters she writes:

Black Caesar a famous convict, repeat escapee and local legend was at loose in the bush again, with armed men about him...it had become essential to put an end to his dangerously glamorous career.

Accordingly, she says, a reward of five gallons of spirits was offered. End of story. Astonishingly Clendinnen does not seem to have noticed that this famous convict, prototype of that iconic figure, the bushranger, is called Black Caesar because he is a black man and because he has only one name: Caesar, a slave name. He is not just a serial absconder, but a runaway African slave. Watkin Tench took a sympathetic view of the man, insisting that Caesar was behaving like the maroons of the West Indies in trying to ingratiate himself with the indigenous people. On the contrary, his career was marked by antagonistic relationships with the Aborigines. On one occasion he was

brought into the settlement at Sydney bristling with spears. Just prior to announcing the reward for his capture David Collins reported that Black Caesar, “a savage of a darker hue, and full as far removed from civilization,” had almost redeemed himself by killing the Aboriginal warrior Pemulwuy. When it became apparent that Pemulwuy did not die - though it seems he *was* shot by the black bushranger - the huge reward for Caesar was offered. The persistent rejection of this black convict by Aborigines, and the almost fatal confrontation between him and Pemulwuy, at the same time it was known that several white convicts were living among the Aborigines, has been ignored.

Surely it is not just me who thinks it is significant that Australia's first bushranger was a black runaway slave. After all, the potency of the bushranger's story of resistance has always fired the Australian imagination. Russel Ward and Robert Hughes have both read the early bushrangers as a manifestation of a peculiarly Australian mystique. In *The Australian Legend*, Ward maintained that the early convict bushrangers, embodied more of the Australian character than any other participants in the nation's white history. Following his lead, Hughes observed in *The Fatal Shore* that in taking to the bush, the convict bolter left England and entered Australia. Peter Carey said he thought the bushranger “resonates through Australian history into the present,” and in Ned Kelly's life he claims to have found “the ultimate Australian story”. Yet how much better Caesar's act of rebellion fits the archetype of the bushranger who would “scorn to live in slavery, bound down by iron chains”, as the song goes, than a murderous horse-rustler like Ned Kelly. What a powerful foundation story Black Caesar could provide Australians if only we knew about him. Or if we knew that African bushrangers have a long history in Australia including John Goff, a black seaman born on the Isle of Wight, Robert Abbott an Afro-Caribbean slave transported from the West Indies, and Peter Haley, a Khoikhoi man from the Cape Colony.

The other black foundation figure who recurs in the prominent sources is the first ferryman on Sydney harbour, Billy Blue, after whom Blues Point is named, as is the Old Commodore Hotel on Blues Point Road. Blue was a very old man in 1834, when he became the subject of two portraits. By then he had been an inhabitant of the penal colony for three decades. The first portrait was an oil painting by J.B. East, an artist of some renown who had exhibited at the Royal Academy and was a recent arrival in the colony. The second portrait was a lithograph by the recently emancipated convict Charles Rodius. East's painting captured a tall, graceful black man with intelligent eyes and a beatific smile, standing at the monument known as Lady Macquarie's Chair in the Governor's Domain. The choice of setting was an acknowledgement of Blue's patron, Governor Lachlan Macquarie, while the distant harbor reminds the viewer of Blue's

position as a waterman nicknamed “the old commodore”. Sometime in the same year, Rodius drew his version of “the old commodore”. In both portraits, Blue is dressed in rag-tag clothes, with his signature top hat, carrying the accoutrements of a bag slung over his shoulder and a carved stick.

Blue was a runaway slave from New York. After a long career in the British forces, he had arrived in NSW as a convicted felon in 1801 and since his emancipation in 1803 was convicted of smuggling spirits and again of harbouring runaways. These subsequent convictions had little to no effect on his position and standing. Like Randall, Blue had significant patronage from the governors Bligh and Macquarie, as well as other significant colonial figures. Apart from the harbour ferry, he had substantial landholding at Millers Point and Blue’s Point. By the late 1820s he was famous in Sydney for walking about wearing a travesty of a naval uniform with a top hat, twirling the carved stick he always carried and calling out in a preemptory fashion to all and sundry that they must acknowledge him as “the commodore”. He had also adopted the habit of boarding ships that arrived in the harbor to welcome the captain in his official capacity as commodore. As such, Blue expected to receive “suitable homage from all of His Majesty’s subjects, as befitted a man of his position”, so the *Sydney Gazette* explained. Twirling his stick and declaiming “True Blue forever”, the old man demanded that men salute, children doff their hats and women curtsy. Any who failed to respond suffered a cascade of salty abuse. This highly subversive performance, calculated or not, had the curious effect of endearing Blue to all levels of Sydney society. When someone criticized Blue in the *Gazette*, the editor and several other correspondents sprang to his defense as a “privileged person”. The author Alexander Harris took it in good part when Blue told him that he had rowed across the harbor a good many times that day, so Harris must pay the fare to row himself to Sydney, and Blue would pull the boat back again. With bemused good humor, Harris accepted this odd bargain, reflecting that the old ferryman was “considered to possess a sort of universal freedom of speech”. Just weeks before Blue died in 1834, Baron von Hügel landed in Sydney to be confronted by the old black man standing in the middle of the street with a sack over his shoulder, “saying something crazy in a loud voice at every passer by”. Addressing one passing gentleman, Blue was slyly conspiratorial: “[w]ho is that long legged beauty, Your Honour? I won’t say anything to your lady.” On enquiring about this disreputable apparition, the European aristocrat could scarcely believe his ears to be told that this was “the old commodore whom Governor Macquarie appointed port captain”.

Within days of Blue’s death, the *Australian* newspaper announced that East’s portrait “ought to be preserved in Government House or

some other institution". The *Australian*, and the other two colonial newspapers, placed affectionate obituaries of Blue in prominent positions, with the *Sydney Gazette* producing two full columns extolling "the gallant old commodore" as a foundation father of New South Wales, whose memory would be "treasured in the minds of the present generation, when the minions of ambition are forgotten in the dust". Indulging in high-flown praise, the editor of the *Sydney Gazette* told his readers that "the reign of Billy is coeval with the foundation of the colony".

One could scarcely miss the racial characteristics of this historical figure. Yet by the twentieth century commentators entirely overlooked the fact of Blue's African heritage and black complexion, in order that this foundation legend, who lent his name to several Sydney landmarks, could be read as a white man. In the 1970s his biographer found it impossible to ignore the evidence that Blue was not European, but still she insisted he wasn't really black. Despite the evidence of three portraits that show Blue to be unmistakably African, she argued that he was "not predominantly Negro". His children must have been white because none of them "ever seem to be referred to as coloured". The daughters were described as "two of the most attractive colonial born young women of their time" so by implication were white, since it was unthinkable that such complimentary remarks could be made about a colonial woman unless she had a European complexion.

The concept of "white Australia" fashioned during the intense racial anxiety of Federation had no capacity to encompass currency lads and lasses who were black, and no comprehension that there might exist Australians of African descent. The foundation narrative of the new nation promulgated an uncomplicated racial divide: white settlers (civilisation) displacing black Aborigines (stone-age savagery). The tendency to read late nineteenth and twentieth century racial assumptions into early colonial Australia is now almost universal among historians and social commentators, regardless of what side of the history wars they fight. In any discussion of the foundation of Australia it is a given that racialisation was at work from the beginning, with white settlers confronting black Aborigines.

My research suggests a rather different scenario. A white game shooter was deliberately speared, but a black game shooter went about his business in Aboriginal territory for many years without incident. A black bushranger was persistently rebuffed and attacked by Aborigines at the same time as white convicts were living with them. The black convicts, John Randall and William Blue, enjoyed a level of patronage and special privilege far beyond the expectation of convicts in general. There is no fixed racial binary to be discerned in any of this.

The settlement of Australia was a multi-racial process that took place at a time when the notion of "race" was a highly malleable

construct, understood in ways very different from the modern sense of innate nature, and the binary of black or white was not a reliable way of conceptualising difference. Among historians of empire, there is a common view that the decades between 1780 and 1830 – the formative decades for the colony of New South Wales – witnessed a sea change in attitudes toward race and identity that would solidify into fixed racial categories only in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Australians need to understand how diverse and multi-racial our society has been from its inception and that a multiracial society is not some politically inspired project of the late twentieth century. In the face of a rancorous and reductive public debate about race thinking and Aboriginality in Australia, there is an urgent need for dispassionate scholarship to provide a richer and more nuanced understanding of Australia's colonial beginnings. The polemical assertion of Keith Windschuttle that race was not a driving force in Australian history is not conducive to the understanding of a complex history. Derogatory attacks by him and others on historical scholars have not helped to explain the past to Australians. Whether or not colonial Australia was a race-based society remains to be established. By complicating our understanding of race in early Australia, I hope to challenge the prevailing historical view that Australia has always been a racially based society, driven by racially determined policies. By revealing that a descendant of a black person is not, ipso facto, Aboriginal, I hope I can help to clarify the thorny questions that coalesce around the subject of Aboriginality.

FUNCTIONS - 2006



Photographer: David Karonidis



Photo – David Karonidis

John Hirst

Historian John Hirst has changed his views from left to centre over a number of decades. In his latest work, *Sense and Nonsense*, he writes: “The great majority of the historians of Australia over the last 40 or 50 years have been left-leaning, progressive people. I was taught Australian history by them ... My sense of how the world works and my political allegiance were at first those of my teachers. They are now different.” Hirst has written of why he changed and how he came to see his teachers’ views as a “sort of debased Marxism”. To evaluate the history wars being waged over the interpretation of Australian history, Dr John Hirst addressed The Sydney Institute on Monday 19 June 2006.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE

HISTORY WARS

John Hirst

Australia has been in the midst of the history wars. I am literally in the middle of the battlefield because in the matter of the key dispute over the settlement of Australia I am at odds with the two leading antagonists, Keith Windschuttle and Henry Reynolds. Reynolds is the historian of Aboriginal resistance, which he claims in some cases amounted to a war. Windschuttle claims that violence on the frontier has been much exaggerated and that even in the Tasmanian case Aboriginal resistance never amounted to a war, though the term Black War has been widely used for this conflict. I will set out my own position on this dispute and then suggest that we would do better in Aboriginal affairs if we looked at a different history.

Windschuttle's promised three volume study of European-Aboriginal relations began in 2002 with the publication of a volume on Tasmania. The series is entitled *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History* and this first volume deals with Van Diemen's Land from 1803-1847. Windschuttle's chief concern is to rescue the reputation of the nation and the British civilisation on which it is based from the accusation that some sort of genocide or holocaust was visited on the original inhabitants of this place. His counter claim is that "The British colonisation of this continent was the least violent of all Europe's encounters with the New World" (p.3).

Windschuttle's success has been to show that by wilful or careless misuse of the sources some historians have exaggerated the death toll in particular clashes between Europeans and Aborigines. He also shows that far from harbouring a genocidal wish to exterminate the Aborigines the authorities and some of the respectable settlers were concerned to preserve them, an attitude he ascribes to the restraint of Evangelical Christianity, enlightenment thinking and the law. The intent to destroy a whole people was simply not present - at least, I would add, at the official level. Some of the academic historians targeted by Windschuttle claimed that they had never used the terms genocide and holocaust - this they passed off as the work of crude popularisers. I think Windschuttle has now shown that these terms

were in fact used by historians who claimed that they had not used them.

Windschuttle's book was conceived as a weapon to destroy other people's accounts; on the way it offers an alternative account, which in my view is poorly integrated and unconvincing.

To put an end to exaggeration and guess work in the matter of Aboriginal deaths, Windschuttle determines not to count an Aboriginal death unless he has credible documentary evidence for it. He will count the bodies, one by one, and the answer he reached in his book was 118, which he has now revised to 120 - much fewer than the white deaths. His critics have said that this is an absurd exercise since on the frontier settlers and more particularly their convict servants killed with impunity and left no records. Windschuttle pounces on this: why did they leave no records? - because the government was opposed to killing. The official restraint must have been working, something which the critics say made no difference. You can't have it both ways says Windschuttle: you can't have the law and Christianity making no difference and a reluctance to keep records. I can escape from this dilemma very easily. Let us agree that if the government had openly sanctioned or encouraged Aboriginal destruction there would have been more killings. The official opposition to killing made some difference - enough on the frontier to restrain some people and to make others careful about advertising their deeds but not enough to stop their performance. And record keeping is not a universal trait. Even if the government had been indifferent to Aboriginal deaths, a group of convict bushrangers is not going to kill Aborigines and then enter the fact in their diaries.

Windschuttle rightly warns against interpreting Aboriginal violence against settlers as a battle to defend their territory. He says we must base our interpretations on the Aboriginal world-view and not rush to characterise Aborigines as third-world freedom fighters. Of course. But then he proceeds to use European categories when he describes Aboriginal attacks on settlers simply as murder, plunder, arson - as if Aborigines were not a distinct people whose territory had been recently invaded but were fully integrated within the society and had now perversely taken to a life of a crime.

Windschuttle characterises Aboriginal attacks on the settlers as motivated in part by vengeance. This, he insists, was not war even though at the time the authorities and the settlers described the battle as war. War requires political motives, says Windschuttle. But the vengeance was comprehensive—the Aborigines had determined to kill every white person if they could. So this is not traditional limited vengeance; it is new and directed against the new-comers. To decide to kill all the invaders looks like war to me and certainly if the Aborigines had succeeded there would have been political consequences. All

or part of Van Diemen's Land would no longer have been held by the British. But even if we allowed Windschuttle his point about war, what has happened to his claim of Van Diemen's Land as the least violent European conquest? The Aboriginal experience of disruption and slaughter has been such that the Aborigines now plan to kill all the Europeans.

One of the virtues of Windschuttle's book is that he lays out key parts of the evidence in full. To resolve disputes about settler attitudes to Aborigines he sets out all the press opinion, all the answers to an official questionnaire, the full debate at a town meeting. Historians who wanted to represent settlers as having harsh attitudes to Aborigines have quoted from these sources selectively. Yes, concedes Windschuttle, sometimes a few voices call for the extermination of the Aborigines, but these are very much in the minority: the usual majority view is very different. But while this honest proceeding settles one matter it unsettles another. Some of the settlers who hesitated to condemn the Aborigines outright ascribed their violence to the terrible things being done to them in the woods by convict servants, a phenomenon which in the rest of the book Windschuttle is always doubting unless there is documentary evidence for particular deaths that he finds persuasive.

I accept Windschuttle's starting point: the accounts of violence done to the Aborigines inflated into genocide and holocaust have been part of a movement to delegitimise the Australian state. But I don't think his book will stop that impulse. The amount of violence is not the only issue. By one means or another in the space of 40 years a whole way of life in Tasmania had been eliminated. Nearly all the Aborigines were dead and the few survivors were corralled on off-shore islands. Windschuttle describes the British empire in Australia as benign but even good empires believed in conquest – which is the apt term for what happened in Tasmania, a very complete conquest. Somehow the Australian people have to come to terms with that fact.

At the Melbourne Writers Festival in August 2003, I was literally in the middle of the history wars because I chaired a debate between Keith Windschuttle and one of his chief critics, Robert Manne, who had edited the book *Whitewash*, which was a series of essays highly critical of Windschuttle's work. In the debate there was lot of argument over the number of Aborigines killed in Tasmania. In question time afterwards, a woman in the audience declared that she was sick of this dispute; even one death, she said, was one too many. This remark was met with spontaneous applause, which though not universal was nevertheless revealing. The woman and those who applauded believe that it was possible to dispossess the Aborigines without bloodshed. The woman did not speak of dispossession but she and her supporters were located in the Malthouse

Theatre, Melbourne, which stands on land that formerly belonged to Wuradjeri. I call this the liberal fantasy view of our origins. It avers that the conquest could have been done nicely.

We are all beneficiaries of the conquest of the Aborigines. It used to be a puzzle to me how people could enjoy all the benefits of modern Australia and yet denounce their ancestors for seizing the land from the Aborigines. The worse they made their ancestors appear, the better they seemed to feel. There is great satisfaction in presenting yourself to the world as morally superior, but perhaps these people really do believe that they will give radical Aborigines all they demand in compensation when the rest of the population becomes as high-minded as themselves. Hypocrisy is the word you are tempted to reach for, but usually that is not an adequate explanation for what seems contradictory behaviour. The liberal fantasy solves the puzzle. There are people who have persuaded themselves that modern Australia could have taken its present shape without the Aborigines being harmed.

This belief is sustained by the thought that all would have been well if Aboriginal rights to the land had been recognised in 1788 and treaties negotiated with the Aborigines. But would all have been well? The desire of the white invaders for Aboriginal lands would have been no less. The clash between Aboriginal hunting and gathering and European pastoral pursuits would have been as stark. What would have happened if the Aborigines on being fully appraised of the invaders' intentions had refused to negotiate any of their land away? Even if each tribe had been persuaded to yield half their land, Aborigines would still have regarded the invaders' sheep as fair game and white shepherds would have misunderstood what was involved in their acceptance of Aboriginal women—two potent sources of conflict in the world as it really happened. It is very hard to envisage a settlement history without violence. From all that we now know of what the land meant to the Aborigines they would not have fought for it where they could.

The history of treaty making with the Indians in the United States is instructive. From 1823 the US Supreme Court laid down that the United States had sovereign control over the whole land mass but the Indians had the right of occupancy over their lands until it was extinguished. Indian land was officially only able to be yielded up by treaty. But the Indians were not free to make or not make treaties. They were pressured into treaty-making after they had been defeated in battle or in an attempt to save some of their lands from the onrush of the settlers, who did not wait for official sanction before pressing into Indian country. Under these treaties Indians in the east had to agree to be moved westward and the Indians in the west were confined to reservations. The treaties provided that on the reserva-

tions they should be supported in money or goods, but the Indian agents frequently robbed them of their due. Their reservations were always subject to incursions by settlers. If the Indians fought back this was an "uprising" that the US army would savagely suppress. The area of the reservations was reduced by the policy of allotting farm size plots to each Indian family and opening the rest to the settlers. The process of Americanisation of the Indians required that children be forcibly removed from their parents and placed in boarding houses. The recognition of an Indian right in land did not save the Indians from dispossession, harassment, slaughter and oppression.

One might have thought that Henry Reynolds, the author of the classic work on Aboriginal resistance, *The Other Side of the Frontier* (1981), would be proof against the liberal fantasy. Yet it sustains one of his later books *This whispering in our hearts* (1998), which deals with those few colonists who opposed the disruption and destruction of Aboriginal society. One or two of these dissenters thought the Aborigines could be saved only if the colonists left. Most thought that colonisation could and should proceed by "purchase, treaty and negotiation" (p.249). This view Reynolds endorses without considering how this process would have been implemented and what difference it would have made. Who in Aboriginal society would have the power to negotiate land away? How many Aborigines would have understood and accepted this loss? If it could have been achieved what would its effects have been? The dissenters were all opposed to punitive expeditions. Reynolds himself is very definite that punitive expeditions were "indiscriminate and disproportionate violence" (p. xvii). So the historian who celebrated Aboriginal resistance and wanted their battles to protect their lands honoured in the War Memorial now thinks that milder measures - a bit of deft police work, perhaps - would have been enough to make the Aborigines give up the fight.

There is an odd meeting point in the arguments of Windschuttle and Reynolds, these two antagonists in the History wars. Windschuttle declares that the conquest was done nicely and Reynolds says it could have been done nicely. You will have already detected my own position. It was not done nicely and it could not have been done nicely. There might have been more or less direct killing, but the seizing of Aboriginal land was going to debase and marginalise its previous owners.

I have held this view in some inchoate form for some time. A few years back I stumbled on a passage from Rudyard Kipling that crystallised it for me. Kipling was replying to a letter he had received from John Farrell the editor of Sydney's *Daily Telegraph*, who thought himself a poet. In 1897 he wrote a poem to mark Queen Victoria's jubilee and sent it to Kipling, hoping for praise and endorsement. Kipling lighted on the passage in which Farrell regretted the bloody

excesses of the empire's conquests and took Farrell to task for his easy moralism. He declared:

A man might just as well accuse his father of a taste in fornication (citing his own birth as an instance) as a white man mourn over his land's savagery in the past. (John Farrell, MS Poems, A86, Mitchell Library)

You see the point. The critic is fully implicated in the deed he criticises.

In my view, this is the only honest approach: to recognise the conquest as conquest and not to give any utilitarian defence of it - like that the land under European control was able to provide food and fibre to the rest of the world, a view which Geoffrey Blainey advances. Our ancestors were not ourselves. In the European world of the late eighteenth century conquest was accepted as a perfectly legitimate way to acquire territory; what dispute there was concerned the treatment of the people already there.

A position of hard realism about the nation resting on conquest does not require that we avert our eyes from what happened to the Aborigines after the invasion. We must understand what Aborigines have experienced since 1788 if any policy-making in Aboriginal affairs is to be effective.

The history disputed in the history wars has been most unhelpful as regards policy-making. Its focus has been on the rights and wrongs of the invasion and the extent of the violence. Policy has been guided not by an assessment of Aborigines and their needs now but by a desire of progressively-minded people to undo the invasion. If there was not a treaty in 1788, let there be a treaty now. Aborigines have been assessed not as people who have been living in close proximity to European civilisation for two hundred years and heavily reliant on its goods and services, but as if they were tribespeople newly dispossessed. Two striking facts about Aboriginal society are constantly overlooked. The Aborigines are more likely to be practising Christians than the rest of the population and their sexual partners in the majority of cases are not Aborigines.

Recently I entered the debate on what is to be done about the appalling conditions in remote Aboriginal communities. I drew on my knowledge of history, not of frontier violence between Europeans and Aborigines, but of the accommodations they have reached after the conflict was over. It is notable that Aborigines in some circumstances have formed close bonds with powerful European figures; it may be a pastoralist, a missionary, or a superintendent. Henry Reynolds identifies the character of these bonds: "Long-term bosses were not seen as masters so much as *de facto* kin - as classificatory uncles or brothers" (*With the white people*, pp. 97-8). The bosses by the standards of the wider society were exploitative, but Aborigines did not mind this

toughness so long as it came with some respect for themselves and their way of life.

I suggested that we should draw on that experience and create a High Commission to the Aborigines with one Commissioner being in charge of two or three Aboriginal settlements with a population of a few thousand people in total. The Commissioner would visit regularly and know the people well. One of the constant complaints of Aborigines is that civil servants come and go; they consult but they can't promise; they come and then someone else comes in their place. The knowing of a particular person, which is of high importance to Aborigines, is not possible.

Commissioners would be in charge of all government spending in the area in all programs. Except there would no longer be programs. The Commissioner's brief would be to spend the budget the best way possible to improve the social health of these places. One commissioner might concentrate first on getting kids to school; another on getting houses repaired. If a Commissioner could start getting change in one area, any area, then change would be more possible in others. A Commissioner would make decisions on the spot by direct observation; what is working and what is not.

The central fallacy in Aboriginal administration is that change must come through the Aboriginal community. But if a community is dysfunctional it cannot help itself. That there is no true community is the essence of the problem. Yet the Northern Territory government is still committed to a "whole of community" approach. That is, it is committed to failure. The Commissioners would not work through the "whole community". They would find the people or groups in an Aboriginal settlement where there was a willingness to take responsibility and work for change and back them - so long as they made a difference.

Our anthropologists have developed a sophisticated understanding of Aboriginal society. We know how the obligations of kin work; there is a great deal of sharing, but only with kin. There is not a general ethic of sharing. Hence the Aborigines were least suited to run their affairs through co-operatives which were imposed on them from the 1970s. An Aboriginal girl at the check-out of a community store is expected to let her uncles and aunts pass through without paying. An Aboriginal man who becomes a store manager will be expected to pass out goods through the loading bay to his relatives and to employ them in the store no matter what their suitability or commitment.

One of the disadvantages of being an Aborigine is that in many places you can only get a house or get it repaired through the housing co-operative. Housing means politics and small-scale, personal, bitchy politics. Even a healthy community might become dysfunctional under the burdens we place on the Aborigines.

The Commissioners would take charge of housing. They would be responsible for building houses, allocating houses, collecting rents, inspecting houses, organising repairs and disciplining poor tenants. This is a large power you might say. But housing elsewhere is treated in a fairly hard-headed way by bank managers, landlords and land agents, and tenancy tribunals. But their clients have the freedom to deal with these bodies without having to form a committee of other householders in the neighbourhood.

The present style of administration means that Aborigines are excluded from the management of their own affairs, even though policy is meant to promote self-management. This is because administration is committed to programs, for which there are guidelines and reporting obligations. When programs don't work the standard administrative procedures are applied; there must be a mission statement and full financial accountability. The aim of policy in the last thirty years seems to have been to produce an Aborigine who is a cross between a hippie and an accountant. Since Aborigines cannot manage the paperwork, the running of Aboriginal affairs falls necessarily to whites.

Powerful Commissioners would paradoxically involve Aborigines more closely in their own affairs because they would deal with them face to face without paper work. The salvation of this ancient people will not come through bureaucratic devices. It is the Commissioners who would report to headquarters on their activities and be held responsible for making improvements. They would not be like the old style missionaries or superintendents who were sometimes a law unto themselves.

Another power might be given to Commissioners - to vary or suspend welfare payments for people in remote settlements (which might be defined as places where over 50 per cent of the people receive the bulk of their income from welfare). This too might at first sight seem an extreme power but in the rest of Australia people on welfare are "breached" if they fail to fulfil certain obligations and they have benefits cut off if they fail to take up opportunities to earn income. This might be the mechanism for encouraging some people to leave the remote settlements and seek work or education and training elsewhere. But I am not advocating, as some now do, that these places be "shut down".

If this proposal has any value it derives in part from a study of Aboriginal history, but not the sort of history that has been at the centre of the history wars. I hope we can soon step back from that and stop agonising over the European conquest and think more creatively about how we can now live together on better terms.

FUNCTIONS - 2006



Photographer: David Karonidis



David Burchell



Julie Owens

Photo – David Karonidis

The western suburbs of Sydney have been a jewel in Prime Minister John Howard's electoral crown over a decade. These aspirational lower and middle class western Sydney homeowners, that once were solidly behind the Hawke Labor Government, in 1996 swung to the Liberals and have stayed that way, increasingly so – except for Parramatta in 2004 when Labor's Julie Owens wrested the seat of Parramatta off the Liberals. David Burchell is the author of *Western Horizon – Sydney's heartland and the future of Australian politics* (Scribe Short Books). He has surveyed the evidence about western Sydney's aspirations and social attitudes – a community numbering half the population of Sydney. On Monday, 3 July Julie Owens MP and David Burchell addressed The Sydney Institute on the politics of Sydney's West.

CAN THE WEST BE WON

AGAIN? LABOR AND SYDNEY'S WESTERN SUBURBS

David Burchell

I'm going to begin with a platitude, I'm afraid – though it's always a necessary one. "Western Sydney" is not a place; it's a collection of places. Because of its size and diversity, indeed, it's arguably more difficult to talk about Western Sydney as a coherent entity than it is Sydney as a whole. In terms of the present debate, its political identity is more a negative one than a positive one. When people talk about the political significance of the West, they mean in effect a series of seats in which the Labor vote has eroded badly in recent years. That's not true of all the West, of course – as Julie Owens can tell us.

But it is true of a series of seats – especially Lindsay, Macarthur and now Greenway – which describe an arc around the city's western fringe. And while those seats are all different in character and makeup, they do have certain broad things in common. Mostly they're old-fashioned suburban in character, with relatively large land titles and broadly homogenous populations, both socio-economically and culturally. Commonly their populations have moved into the area from somewhere further east (if not overseas). Mostly they're areas where people have had to make it by themselves – family assets are fairly modest, and levels of post-school education are relatively low. On the whole there are lower than average proportions of professionals and administrators among their populations. And yet they are mostly also areas in which incomes – both from work and home values – have been growing steadily in recent years, in common with many other parts of the country.

In all of these respects, the West is not actually very distinctive at all. It's actually more or less a snapshot of outer suburban and provincial Australia writ small. In certain respects, it's true that it may seem to resemble other parts of Sydney 30 or 40 years ago – the sense of homogeneity, neighbourhood solidarity, even insularity, perhaps. In other respects, however, it may seem to point towards the future – a future in which many people whose parents identified with trade unionism, public education, the public health system, and so on, feel

far less strong attachments to those old totems and, instead, see themselves as making their own way, more or less unaided, in the world.

Partly, it seems clear, this is why Labor has had so much trouble in the outer West in recent years. Despite the homilies to that effect, the West never really was a Labor “heartland” – rather, it was where people went to make a new life for themselves and their families away from the social and cultural turmoils of the inner cities. Labor arguably didn’t lose many of these people – it never won them in the first place. It made assumptions about the inter-generational transmission of political allegiances which were simply wrong.

At the same time, Labor itself has changed strikingly as a party in recent decades. As we all know, Labor today is in large measure a party composed - in its membership at least – of professionals and para-professionals. The “old timers” are old and getting older. And the “young people” are often ambitious young folks from the inner city. Not so long before Greenway swung to the Coalition I was kindly invited to speak to the ALP’s federal electoral council for the area about my thoughts on the region. The meeting was lively, thoughtful and engaged – unlike some university tutorials, I might add. But virtually no-one in the room was under 50.

And so the gulf between where people in the outer West stand in their lives and life-courses in the West, and the Party which would once have hoped to secure their allegiance, has been growing apace. Many of the most impassioned debates in public life – and particularly within the ALP – in recent years have been dominated by the arguments and testimony of lawyers, psychologists and social workers, and the character of those debates have reflected that fact.

The asylum-seekers crisis of 2001 very quickly became polarised between the position of the federal government and the passionately-held views of human rights lawyers and social workers. To the outsider there must have seemed no middle ground between a highly idealistic rhetoric of “open borders” and the cold logic of state sovereignty – even though many Australians share both a commitment to humane treatment and a belief in the necessity for an orderly immigration policy.

The case of David Hicks, and of other terrorism suspects in Australia, have also been caught up in a political-emotional tug of war between cold-blooded statecraft, on the one hand, and the claims of the legal fraternity to speak for human rights and decency, on the other. In all of these tussles it’s not obvious why traditionally-minded suburbanites - who don’t speak the languages of human rights and compassion in the same way that highly-trained professionals do – would feel any instinctive sympathy with their cause. Especially since state sovereignty, law and order, and the policing of borders how

commonly been seen as the friends of ordinary working Australians in the past.

That's not to say that professionals and experts shouldn't be important parts of those debates. Or that Labor should ditch what are nowadays called social conscience issues – even though that term is sometimes used rather selectively – simply in order to be seen as hard-headed and tough. Indeed, it's equally foolish to imagine that older-style suburban Australians are somehow devoid of a social conscience, or a sense of fair treatment and human fellowship – fashionable though such a view is nowadays. Australians have always been ready to be appealed to on the grounds of human solidarity and fellow-feeling. But it's important that the argument is advanced in terms that make sense to them, and which seem real. Not worlds without borders, or universal sympathy, or grand gestures of solidarity with the global "other". But, rather, good neighbourliness and fair treatment. It's in the apprehension of this simple fact – rather than any instinctive personal rapport with "battling" Australians – that the political skill of the prime minister lies.

But it's also worth stressing, that the problems of Labor in the West are in a sense simply part of a much wider problem – a problem even wider, perhaps, than most of us can readily apprehend. Increasingly public debates across the West are being fought out between the most articulate, the best-educated and the best-resourced. To some extent, of course, this has always been true. Yet as the economic arguments become more abstruse and expert, and the social arguments more global and consequently invisible – the expertness of public debate becomes ever more striking. This impoverishes our democratic life, and it tends to marginalise most those whom social-democratic parties once took as their natural constituencies.

Paradoxically, though, in this environment it's often conservative parties, rather than social democratic ones, who are best capable of reducing political problems to readily-understood, uncomplicated formulas, and of focussing convincingly on the locality and the nation, rather than the globe. If you asked most federal Labor MPs nowadays for their vision of Australia's social strengths, and its best future, I'd wager a small bet most would answer in highly abstract terms that they'd blush before using in front of their constituents. This isn't just a linguistic problem: it's a political one.

I don't have a crystal-ball, and so I'm going to be frustratingly unhelpful in answering the pithy question: "Can the west be won again?" Personally, as you may have gathered, I'm rather pessimistic about that. I think it's more likely that the west will be dragged along with the rest of the country, more or less willingly, should their be a tidal shift towards Labor in the next ten years or so.

Of course, there is one bright star in Labor's firmament right now – and it twinkles over the Western horizon at night-time too. The industrial relations laws just now coming into effect couldn't in any way be described as a populist measure on the part of the prime minister, even by his sternest critics. Rather, they're a return on many promises made to the peak business bodies over the last decade of Coalition rule. And their timing owes less to political calculation than to a lack of any further excuses for delay, now that the obstacle of an obstinate Senate has gone.

The IR laws aren't an unqualified fillip for Labor in places like Sydney's West. After all, the West as much as anywhere is enjoying a boom in contracting, in highly skilled manual employment and in those other areas of the workforce where AWAs may seem like a positively smart thing. And yet they do provide Labor with an unparalleled opportunity to reconnect with the stuff of ordinary family and working life – with dinner-table debates over the balance of family working-hours, how much dads are seeing of their kids, and why it seems to take two full-time wages nowadays to service a mortgage when once-upon-a-time it only took one.

And yet they also present Labor with numerous temptations to blow this opportunity. There's a constituency within Labor which would love nothing more than to believe that the good old days are here again – that suburban mums and dads are going to metamorphose into paragons of militancy, and that the barricades will be drawn up across suburban streets. There's another view that suggests – probably quite erroneously – that the campaigning influence of the ACTU is going to help Labor to electoral success.

Yet the opportunity presented to Labor by the IR laws is really of a different character entirely. The more Labor nostalgics turn it into an industrial debate, in the old sense, the more they'll narrow the terms of the debate, raise its language into the realms of abstract polemic, and miss the opportunity. Unionisation rates have fallen precipitately in the West in recent decades, and the new bastions of the union movement – the white-collar public-sector unions – are relatively thin on the ground there. The language of "workers' rights" no longer has any kind of magic-wand appeal. In the West – as elsewhere, really – Labor's task is to turn a narrow industrial conflict into the basis of a broader social debate, one which can involve non-unionists as much as unionists, mums as much as dads, the striving and the upwardly mobile looking as much as the embattled and fearful. It may be Labor's last throw of the dice for some years to come.

CAN THE WEST BE WON

AGAIN? LABOR AND SYDNEY'S WESTERN SUBURBS

Julie Owens

Winning the west will take a lot longer than fifteen minutes but that's all I've got tonight so I'll try.

I represent a marginal seat in western Sydney. Most people don't hear a great deal from members in marginal seats because we're working very, very hard in our electorates. Most of the people you hear from, Ministers and Shadow Ministers, tend to be in safer seats, so sometimes the views of people in marginal seats are a little different from what you hear from those in safe seats. The press exacerbates this disparity because they spend most of their time talking to Ministers and Shadow Ministers, the people who tend to hold safe seats.

From my perspective, I see things that concern small groups in the electorate. I'm much more focussed on small issues and trends that make up the final result in an electorate like mine so I will start by talking about how small the numbers are in marginal seats which will give you an idea of why people in a marginal seat think as they do.

I hold the seat of Parramatta by 0.7 per cent. That's 600 votes, meaning that if 300 more people change their vote from Labor to Liberal than the other way, I'm gone. That is 300 out of 85,000. And mine is not the most marginal seat in the country by any calculation.

When I was running for Parramatta and during the campaign, before I had won, the focus was on getting enough votes to win. As a Member I concentrate on doing a good job for my constituents, providing the services that they need and the representation that they want and hope that that translates to votes at the election. Any person could end up being one of the 300 that decide the fate of the electorate.

I remember during the campaign someone said to me, "You'll never win that particular group, they're all Tories." (I won't name the particular group) But I didn't need to win them all, I only needed a 1.15 per cent swing and if there were 3000 of them, I only needed 16 to change their voting preference to the ALP and I had that swing.

These are tiny numbers we're talking about in marginal seats. Take a soccer club of 100 members, only one of them needs to change his mind and that's your swing, five people change their minds and it's a landslide. So, under those circumstances, you really do have to be aware of where all the different groups in your electorate are and how they communicate with each other, how they think and what issues are important at a very local level.

In short, you need to understand and be a part of your local community.

To me it's an odd question: "Can the West be won again?" because I don't see the West as homogenous. I don't believe there is one "West". In some ways that opinion comes from my background of working in niche markets. I've always had the suspicion that the mainstream market doesn't really exist unless you go down to quite a low common denominator. On the whole a community is made up of a whole range of people who think differently from each other. If you go low enough or simple enough you can find commonality but, even then, they will still have slightly different views and motivations.

I do not believe there is any sub-group in "the West" that votes as a block. In my electorate, public housing areas might vote 60 per cent Labor but that means they vote 40 per cent Liberal. Not everyone with a mortgage votes Liberal; in the union movement, 40 per cent of union members voted for John Howard at the last election. So, even within subgroups, you can't assume that people are voting one way or another. In a marginal seat you can't afford to ignore any of the 40 per cent that don't vote with you. The numbers are very small and because of that, every single person is very important and no group can be taken for granted.

The idea of there being a common group, that you could win to win the seat, would make much more sense in the more homogenous seats on the North Shore, or in some rural areas. But it doesn't make a great deal of sense in areas like Parramatta or "the West" in general which is incredibly diverse.

I know that Parramatta "nets" marginal, but I don't see my seat as marginal in its elements. Every booth votes one way or another, every sub-group votes tends to vote one way or another. To the north of the electorate is a safe Liberal seat, and to the South is safe Labor, but in Parramatta there are wealthy areas, public housing areas, there's a strong CBD, there are a lot of trade qualified people and, ethnically, it's incredibly diverse. So when you work out all the communities of interest and people of different economic status and different backgrounds it nets out as marginal, to just under 600 votes.

There were booths in the north where there was a 10 per cent swing to Labor, and other areas where there was a 10 per cent swing against Labor. There's no way in the world you can look at a seat like

mine and say we won or we lost because of any one particular issue, it's just not the case.

Sydney's West is probably the most diverse place you'll find in Australia. You will find the self-funded retiree in a house that they've owned forever and paid off while next door there'll be a new family on their first mortgage; over the road there'll be a renter. And all these different households live side by side. That creates diversity.

In the north there was a swing in some areas of 10 per cent towards Labor. I saw these votes coming from people who had held secure jobs most of their lives in largely public service or government related work, and probably with tenure; people who had been able to move in and out of work around their children, who had married early, bought a cheap house in an area which became quite valuable and stayed married. These are the last of the generation that got free education and secure, stable, full time work and they know that that's how they got there.

I doorknocked that area extensively during the year of the campaign and these sort of people were already starting to say that they were worried that their children would not have the benefits they had had or even to be able to buy a home in that area. They were concerned that instead of securing a relaxed retirement, they would be funding their children's HECS, helping them get a deposit for a home and so on. So even at the last election there were very real concerns being expressed by people in the more secure areas of the electorate about how the changes that were taking place in the world would affect their children. There is no doubt whatsoever that the trend which was beginning to happen, then, is now accelerating and concerns are growing.

However, swings don't just come from people changing their minds. They also come from population movement between elections. There is enormous growth and change in the area. People move into my electorate because they can afford to buy their first house; or they're having children and they want a yard. New migrants tend to move to Harris Park, Westmead and further out into Blacktown, because that's where they can afford to rent and that's where their communities are.

This means that in the West a great number of people can be called "aspirational" voters although I'm using that word to describe a time of life rather than a way of life. They are people who have made choices that make them particularly vulnerable at that particular stage of life. Perhaps they've decided to take the risk on buying a first house, pushed themselves to the limit of their finances to get their good base, their start. They're expecting a few years of hard slog to get that home but for a while it can be perilous. Or they're starting a family or they're recently married and have moved into the area. So we have

a large number of people at a time in their lives when they're more vulnerable to external change.

Similarly with newly arrived migrants, and new citizens, who are really concerned about themselves and their families at that time in their lives. Along with those who are setting up their asset base by buying their first house; we need them to be selfish at that time in their lives. That's their job, to put themselves and their families first and we, as a community, will all benefit in the long run if they succeed in doing that.

People in marginal seats often live on a knife edge and small shifts in government policy, or opposition policy, can create small shifts in voting intentions and, as I've said, it is the small shifts that matter in a marginal seat. Many of those people, who are at vulnerable points in their lives, live in Parramatta and they are much more susceptible to swings of government policy, downturns in the economy, increases in interest rates, increases in petrol prices, increase in childcare costs and so on.

In the past, John Howard has campaigned very strongly to these people. He's very carefully, over the last three elections, promoted himself as a man who is steady-as-she-goes, who doesn't change things - who wanted us to be relaxed and comfortable. He's been good at putting forward an image of the man with a steady hand on the tiller; things won't change so you can get on and do what you need to do.

But that changed when he got control of the Senate. For the first time John Howard is able to do things that he's wanted to do for ten years, some quite radical. We are seeing the real John Howard for the first time. He has stopped tinkering at the margins and has gone after something fundamental.

John Howard's industrial relations changes have ripped away a range of assumptions that underpinned decisions made by families - when to buy their first house and how much they could afford to pay, when they made a decision on whether to have another child, whether both partners were going to work, whether one would have to return to work, how much overtime would one of them have to do or could the other go part time, will they send their child to a private school, how close to the margin are they?

All those decisions that people made and which underpin the building of their lives were made on a perfectly reasonable assumption that a century old industrial relations system was going to continue. There was no talk in the 2004 election of the entire system being dismantled. In the last year and a half we've seen those assumptions ripped away and replaced by uncertainty and doubt.

I know because I've been listening to the small groups that make up my community, I've been door knocking across my electorate,

the areas that vote Labor and the areas that don't. That fear of the unknown is not only affecting those at a vulnerable time, it's also affecting people who thought they'd made it through; people who now feel they might slip back into vulnerability. They are the sort who thought they were secure; their mortgages reducing but still there, they are now facing the loss of penalties and overtime, they're facing insecurity in their workplace and, for most, they know that their children will not enjoy the security that underpinned the relative comfort of their lives.

The Prime Minister, who has prided himself on providing stability and certainty, has now created incredible uncertainty across Western Sydney. I believe it's going to have a dramatic effect at the next election. The numbers are so small to lose these seats; Lindsay has a margin of just 3 per cent while 30 per cent of the workers of Lindsay are union members. Forty per cent of them voted for John Howard last time. It won't take many of those people to change their minds and Lindsay will return to Labor hands.

Sixty per cent or more are on collective agreements and awards in those areas. Workchoices is very real for these people. Very small numbers swing governments. It may be the votes of grandmothers who don't like it when their grandchildren can't find work; just 200 grandmas need to change their minds and that's all it takes in a marginal seat.

You wouldn't expect at the moment, mid term, to have people engaging in political debate. Usually it's really hard to get people to focus on politics. They're not turned on, you can talk to them seven times and they will still say that they only see you at election time. But at the moment I'm surprised by the extent to which people are engaged right now. I am getting a far greater response at my regular street stalls, many more people are coming up and many more people are phoning or emailing the office. When I door knock, it's an extremely positive experience, even when I door knock while the soccer's on. That's rare.

I remember campaigning in the last election and people didn't really turn on to issues until the last eight or ten weeks. Up to that point it had been very difficult to get people's attention. But that's not the case at the moment – and an election is still well over a year away. The level of political debate at the moment is much higher than I've ever seen it in the middle of a term. It's a very good indication that the industrial relations issue is going to have a profound effect at the next election and the polls are starting to show that.

The marginal seat vote is a complex one. I remember, during the campaign, Ross Cameron told me that he didn't ever think Labor would win Parramatta again because it was becoming wealthier, its income levels lifting, so it would swing more and more to the conserv-

ative side. He said that Labor would never be able to run a candidate attractive to that particular voting demographic. What he missed is that a lot of the lifting of wealth in the West was caused by people moving in, people moving in to buy a house, opening themselves up to the vulnerability and now put at risk by Work Choices.

There's a large turnover in the West - areas like Winston Hills and Carlingford - where the people who are moving in are often skilled migrants. You'll have an older person or an elderly couple move out and a couple with children move in. It is a changing electorate and rising wealth no longer precludes someone from voting Labor. So in some areas the swing has gone almost 10 per cent to Labor despite the rise in wealth of the suburbs in question. It doesn't happen uniformly and every suburb is different because the people move there for different reasons. It's never a simple thing, but then again nor is a community.

I am confident, at this point, that the debate over the next year and a half leading up to the election is going to be very aggressive and may even turn ugly. But the solid foundation John Howard has stood on in the western suburbs for ten years now is shifting from under his feet.

If you want to represent a marginal seat you need to represent the full spectrum - the whole community. John Howard has walked away from too many people in my community. The real question isn't whether Labor can win the west again, it's whether John Howard can.

FUNCTIONS - 2006



Photographer: David Karonidis

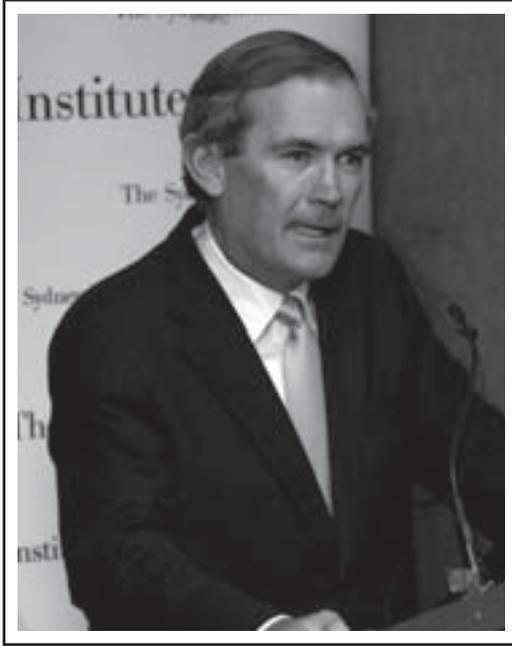


Photo - David Karonidis

Michael L'Estrange

Michael L'Estrange returned from his posting as Australia's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom in January 2005 to take up the position of Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra. As Head of DFAT, Michael L'Estrange is responsible for the administration of Australia's foreign and trade policies and also oversees Australia's diplomatic representation abroad. In an address to The Sydney Institute on Thursday 6 July 2006, Michael L'Estrange reflected on his role as DFAT Secretary and assessed changes in the international environment which have impacted upon Australia.

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

IN THE PURSUIT OF AUSTRALIA'S INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS

Michael L'Estrange

It is always good to be back in Sydney – the city of my birth, upbringing and education. And it is particularly good to be here at The Sydney Institute which has contributed so productively over many years to an informed public debate about Australia's past and about ideas for its future.

I had the good fortune to have a university education here at Sydney University, and to have it supplemented later at Oxford. Some people used to ask me about how teaching varied in each place and I always felt that a story best epitomised the difference. The story relates to an occasion – very worryingly as I now add it up – almost 30 years ago to the day. I had just arrived in Oxford keen to make a good, immediate impact as I began my course in Philosophy, Politics and Economics.

The Oxford tutorial system entailed one-on-one sessions in which students would read an essay on an assigned topic followed by a period of dissection and discussion. My first such tutorial was focused, as I recall, on a comparison of the foreign policies of Disraeli and Gladstone. And I laboured long and hard on this particular essay, determined to make a good first impression.

I had well-sourced intelligence that the tutor to whom I had been assigned was highly knowledgeable as well as very knowing, and that he was also a devotee of the game of cricket. I read my essay to him and – with a quiet, but as it turned out mistaken, confidence – I awaited his academic verdict. There was a long, seemingly interminable, silence before my tutor looked me in the eye and said: “I have an important question for you – do you think Greg Chappell or Ian Chappell has a better cover drive?” I knew instinctively that this was *not* a good sign! After an extended discussion on the history of Anglo-Australian cricket, the focus drifted back to the history of British foreign policy. What followed was a gentle, but nonetheless fairly wholesale, demolition of my first essay! I have somehow always thought that the verdict at Sydney would not have been that different

in substance, but would have been far less elliptical and gentle in its delivery!

One of the ironies of my period of education in the United Kingdom was that the greatest intellectual impact on me there was made by another graduate of Sydney University, Professor Hedley Bull. As Professor of International Relations at Oxford, Hedley Bull's teaching and writings inspired in me a deep interest in what he famously described as "the anarchical society" of sovereign states and in the means whereby order, justice and stability are pursued within it. For me, the deep interest in the international system and Australia's place in it, that was sparked in those years, became an enduring one.

Hedley Bull had strong, powerfully argued views on a wide range of strategic issues of his time. My intellectual debt to him lies not in the fact that I shared all his views on those particular issues – because I did not. For me, what set Hedley Bull apart was the deep wells of historical and philosophical analysis on which he drew, the clarity and elegance of his writing, the encouragement he gave me to think through for myself what had changed and what had not in the international system, and – in a personal sense – the great warmth of his friendship.

Tonight, I want to focus on elements of continuity and change in the pursuit of Australia's international interests. In particular, I want to address the broad international context in which those interests are pursued and the key policy priorities for Australia in relation to them.

Before doing so, however, I would like to reflect very briefly on the year and a half in which I have now held the position of Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. I came to the position of Secretary by a "road less travelled" compared to the career path of my predecessors. But it was a well-known world that I entered in January last year. In various capacities, I had worked closely with the Department's officers for a good deal of the period since I first became involved in public policy work back in 1981 when I joined the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. But there have been particular aspects of the job which have opened my eyes in some respects.

One such perspective relates to "whole of government" realities. There was a time in public administration in Canberra when matters to do with "foreign policy" were clearly demarcated from those relating to "domestic policy". Those days have long gone. And the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has been in the vanguard of change. We have been there because so many aspects of the world in which we operate have been transformed. Globalisation has driven much of that change. Australia's international and domestic interests are significantly more aligned today – whether it be in relation to security issues or economic growth or national competitiveness – than

they have ever been before. That is why the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade attaches such priority to developing close and effective interaction across the board in relation to the many departments and agencies which have important international operations or comparative benchmarks that increasingly share areas of intersection.

The Department contributes importantly to these whole-of-government realities and we rely significantly on them. A second perspective, which has clarified for me in the period that I have been Secretary, relates to the work of officers in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Their responsibilities relate to issues affecting a wide range of Australian diplomatic and security interests, the welfare of Australians overseas, and opportunities for Australian exports and investment. They also - regrettably too often - relate to the provision of support on the ground in response to natural disasters or terrorist outrages in which Australian lives are taken or traumatised.

In carrying out these responsibilities, we require of those who work today for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade a wide range of attributes. We require of them diplomatic skills - not of an effete, outdated or arcane kind but of a practical, hard-nosed and outcomes-oriented character. We require informed judgment and carefully focused activism. We require of our officers high quality advocacy skills to be applied within and beyond government. We require of them an awareness of appropriate opportunities for Australian export enterprises and a capacity to support them. And we require of them personal qualities that enable them to support and assist Australians in times of emergency or tragic loss, and to cope themselves with the pressures that they and their families come under in particular parts of the world.

The position of Secretary provides unique insights into the scale of the difficulties, dangers and personal risks that officers of the Department can face in carrying out these diverse tasks. The insights that I have gained as Secretary have served to broaden my awareness of and deepen my appreciation for the skills, professionalism and commitment that the Department's officers bring to their diverse responsibilities, and the often very difficult circumstances in which they do so.

The international environment

The broad framework for international relations today embraces many familiar historical patterns of strategic engagement and competition between states. But two influences, more than any others, have made the current international environment qualitatively different from what has existed previously.

The first transforming difference is the reality of global terrorism. History records instances and periods in which acts of terrorism

– sponsored sometimes by states but more often by non-state groups
– has been used in an attempt to affect outcomes in relation to particular confrontations or in support of particular causes. But the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001 – and the terrorist attacks in Indonesia, Turkey, Spain, Britain, Egypt, Jordan and elsewhere that have followed – constitute a qualitatively new challenge to international security.

New vulnerabilities for all states and their citizens exist as a result. A new kind of extremist threat has been created – global in its reach, utterly ruthless in its intent, indiscriminate in its targeting, fanatical in its opposition to liberal democratic values, committed to inflicting as much loss of life and dislocation as possible, and constrained only by its accessibility to weapons with maximum destructive effect. It is these realities which reinforce the historically unprecedented threat which modern global terrorism poses to international security and to the lives of people around the world. Terrorism is being increasingly confronted but its eradication will require a long-term, sustained commitment of resolve, resources and international cooperation.

The second major transforming influence in the international environment is the broader phenomenon of globalisation. At one level, globalisation encapsulates the processes of market-driven economic interaction and integration between economies across borders – a process that is being driven by a revolution in innovation and commercialisation which is continuing to drive down the costs of transportation and communications and to set new benchmarks for economic competitiveness.

In that sense, the concepts underpinning economic globalisation are not new. Cycles of dramatic expansion in trade, commerce and investment across borders have occurred for centuries. And prior to the late twentieth century, the most significant and productive such cycle occurred from around 1870 until the First World War.

What is new is not the idea of globalisation but the forces of change that drive its current transforming momentum across so many areas of international activity, both economic and non-economic. Globalisation is not an inevitable defining characteristic of the international environment into the future. But globalisation has, in a significant sense, won an important battle of ideas. It constitutes a galvanising, highly effective framework for economic development and poverty alleviation, and no alternative framework of ideas or action provides any comparable coherence or scale of practical gains.

Under the impact of globalisation, economic growth has accelerated. Trade barriers have been reduced. Openness in the international economy has been enhanced. And poverty levels have significantly fallen. Total exports which constituted just five per cent of world GDP in 1950 have grown now to 29 per cent of world GDP.

All the world's great and emerging powers are committed to the market-led dynamic that underpins modern economic globalisation. China and India, in particular, have been great beneficiaries of globalisation as well as significant drivers of the process. China's share of world exports has risen from just over one per cent in 1981 to just under seven per cent in 2005 making China the world's third largest exporting nation with its economic growth over that period averaging nine per cent. Similarly, India's long-term trend rate of growth has increased from an average of 3.5 per cent between the 1950s and 1970s to 7-8 per cent over recent years.

It is relatively easy to assemble a convincing array of technical detail about the transforming impact of modern globalisation. What is more difficult, however, is assessing whether and how those changes are in fact changing the international system itself, and how Australian interests are best pursued within it. In making such assessments, it is necessary to be clear-eyed about what globalisation has in fact changed, and what it has not.

Modern globalisation has clearly mobilised new sources of influence and new dimensions of interaction in international affairs. There are those who argue that by acting as a catalyst for the expansion of transnational business networks and international organisations, globalisation has had the effect of significantly eroding the traditional role of the nation state in the international system.

I do not share this view of the impact of globalisation.

Non-state groups are not a new phenomenon in the international system. They have many antecedents which include the great European trading companies of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, political movements of various kinds, great religious traditions and many other influences that have cut across national sovereignties. It is the number and purposes of non-state groups which have proliferated under the influence of globalisation. And it is that proliferation which has added a new dimension to an old phenomenon in the international system.

The world does confront the serious challenge of the erosion of capacity among particular states. But failed and rogue states are not the inevitable consequence of globalisation. They are a consequence of ineffective and often corrupt governance, or a self-defeating economic introversion, or a dependency culture, or particular perceived grievances, or outdated ideology, or other related factors.

In my view, the impact of globalisation has been to enhance the role of nation states rather than to diminish it. Globalisation puts a special premium on states pursuing sound policies of transparency, accountability, openness and international engagement built on competitive domestic infrastructure and the pursuit of comparative advantage.

For all the dramatic economic changes that have flowed from globalisation, it is nation states that continue to be the central agents of international order, and it is rogue and failed states that can have a significant capacity for disorder. It is also states that most powerfully influence the context in which justice in the international system is pursued. And it is states that will determine the future of globalisation itself because globalisation depends ultimately on a global market framework which in turn depends on the policies of sovereign states and protectionist pressures within them. Where nation states are vulnerable, ineffective or failing, their incapacity results in declining security, living standards and opportunities for their citizens. It is an incapacity that is open to exploitation by agents of transnational crime, disorder and terrorism, which means that the consequences of state incapacity spread well beyond the boundaries of vulnerable, ineffective, failing or failed states themselves.

Globalisation has also encouraged some policy responses at a regional level, and this has been the case in various regions in relation to issues such as trade and investment access, energy, health, the environment, contingency planning and other issues. But there is no inconsistency between the effective development of regionalism along these lines and the continuing central role of states within it.

The real transforming momentum of globalisation, and its biggest impact on the international system, come not from its impact on structures of international decision-making but from its role as a decisive catalyst for economic growth and poverty alleviation.

Over the past two decades developing countries which increased their exposure to international trade grew about four times faster than those that did not. Over the same period the faster income growth of globalising economies reduced the number of people in the world living in poverty by about 200 million, even though poverty increased in more closed economies. In East Asia, in particular, this period of globalisation has seen more people brought out of poverty more quickly than ever before in history.

But globalisation also brings challenges because the unprecedented movement of goods, services, capital and people across borders that has proved so productive in terms of economic opportunity and welfare has also had other far less desirable effects. It has facilitated the illegal movement of people, finance, weapons and drugs. It has engendered grievances among states which have not, for various reasons, had access to the full benefits of globalisation. It has accentuated the reach of threats posed by pandemics. And it has broadened the challenges presented by environmental issues. In these ways, globalisation tests countries' institutions and governance in terms of their capacity to pursue policies that enhance not only economic openness and competitiveness but also security and accountability.

Globalisation also tests the resolve of the international community in addressing transitional issues that globalisation creates for many states. That is why it is critically important to dismantle the international trade barriers that can prevent developing countries taking the first steps down the path of export-led growth. Those barriers and production subsidies cost developing countries much more than current aid flows benefit them. The World Trade Organisation's Doha Round of trade liberalisation negotiations is at a critical point and it is vital for all countries, irrespective of their stages of economic development, that the Round achieves the ambitious outcomes especially on tariff and subsidy cuts for which many countries, and particularly Australia, are working so hard.

The transitional issues that globalisation raises for some states are positively addressed when development assistance programs accelerate economic growth in recipient countries, when they improve governance and combat corruption, and when they invest in people's needs. These priorities are indispensable if developing and under-developed countries are to position themselves to achieve the full benefits of engaging in a globalised economy. And they are indispensable if globalisation is to achieve its full potential in alleviating poverty. For poverty alleviation, economic growth is necessary but it is not sufficient. Growth needs to be shared and sustained. And this will be one of the great challenges for the processes of globalisation in the period ahead.

The pursuit of Australia's international interests

What then do these elements of change and continuity in the international environment mean for the pursuit of Australian interests? Those interests over a long period have been defined by a number of general objectives – to enhance Australia's security, to develop further Australia's prosperity and to project Australia and its values internationally. The means through which these objectives have been pursued reflect the character of the international challenges and opportunities that face Australia in any specific period as well as the particular priorities of the government of the day.

At the present time Australia pursues a wide range of bilateral and regional interests in their own right and because of their own significance. The wider point I also wish to make this evening is that the effect of globalisation has been to make the alignment between Australia's global interests and our regional ones increasingly complementary. Australia's international interests have always engaged regional and global dimensions. What is increasingly clear, however, is that the interaction between these dimensions is now closer than it has ever been.

Let me illustrate this by referring briefly to some of the current priorities in the pursuit of Australia's international interests. Close practical engagement with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region continues as an abiding priority in Australian foreign and trade policy. That engagement is focused in a positive way on a wide range of issues including shared security challenges, investment opportunities, freeing up trading arrangements, countering extremism, development assistance, people-to-people links and co-operation in regional institutions. This is particularly evident in our relations with the countries of ASEAN and the South Pacific, and in regional bodies such as APEC, the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum.

Australia has a particular national interest in working with regional governments to address the challenges that confront vulnerable states in our region and that threaten to destabilise them. We are working at the request of the governments of those vulnerable states and in association with others to help meet challenges that relate, in the short term, to law and order, humanitarian assistance and effective governance, and over the longer term to enhancing sustainable economic development and building strong accountable national institutions.

The priority for Australia is to assist regional governments facing such vulnerabilities to assume the responsibility themselves for addressing the root causes of the challenges they face. This priority underpins, in particular, the work of the Australian Defence Force, Australian police, Australian diplomats, aid workers and others drawn from various agencies in the Australian Government on the ground at the present time in East Timor and the Solomon Islands. In a wider sense, it is a priority that also underpins our development assistance programs generally.

While important aspects of our regional engagement have a distinctive dynamic of their own, there is also an increasing intersection between many of our regional and wider global priorities. One critical area of such intersection relates to the threats posed by terrorism and the proliferation of weapons.

Australia is committed to meeting the challenges of terrorism at a global level. We are doing so on the ground in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan as well as through a range of initiatives focused on multilateral diplomacy and action. There is also an important global perspective in our commitment to counter the proliferation of weapons, and particularly materials and technologies related to weapons of mass destruction. We do so in various ways including through supporting the strategies of the international community to address the nuclear brinkmanship of Iran and North Korea, through multilateral export controls and safeguards, and through practical

measures such as the Proliferation Security Initiative to disrupt illicit trade related to weapons of mass destruction.

In a complementary way to these global dimensions, Australia's counter-terrorist and counter-proliferation priorities are also pursued through bilateral and regional initiatives – through bilateral counter-terrorist agreements and action agendas with a wide range of regional countries, and through regional co-operation to undermine the divisive messages of hatred, intolerance and violence propagated by extremists.

In both these key priorities for Australian national interests – defeating terrorism and limiting arms proliferation – Australian priorities at a global and regional level are increasingly interrelated because of the interlocking networks of terrorism, arms proliferation and fundamentalist ideologies that operate at both global and regional levels.

The same interaction between our global and regional interests is apparent in our relations with, and in relations between, the major powers of the Asia-Pacific region, and in particular the United States, Japan, China and India. Australia has important but different relationships with each of these countries. We have a strong and expanding alliance relationship with the United States – an alliance of both interests and values. We have broadening dimensions of security and economic co-operation with Japan. We have an important and fast-developing relationship with China which has been advanced in a spirit of ambition without illusions. And we share significant new associations of common interest with India.

The character of Australia's bilateral relationships with each of these major powers reflects the different origins, dynamics and shared purposes that distinguish each of them. That situation will continue to apply in the future in which the United States will continue to be the pre-eminent global power, in which Japan's international role will continue to diversify, and in which the development of China and India will be one of the defining elements in international diplomacy and the international economy.

There are, of course, distinctive bilateral interests which we pursue in each of our relationships with the United States, Japan, China and India. But there are also important interests we seek to advance across all of them. Many of those wider interests – such as expanding and further liberalising trade and investment flows, focusing on the consequences of failing and rogue states, addressing challenges such as energy security, climate change and pandemic threats, and making multilateral institutions work better – are interests with increasingly complementary implications both globally and regionally.

Those implications are highlighted by the fact that, over recent years in which Australia's alliance relationship with the pre-eminent

global power, the United States, has never been closer or stronger, our engagement with the countries of our region and with the region's institutions has never been more intensive and productive.

This increasing interaction between Australia's regional and global interests is also clearly apparent in our trade policy agenda. The global and regional dimensions of that agenda have a common and consistent liberalisation objective. It is an agenda that is an ambitious one because we believe that open markets best serve Australia's economic and wider international interests. It is an agenda which is pursued through different means but in a complementary way - multilaterally (especially through the World Trade Organisation), regionally (through bodies such as APEC) and bilaterally (through our activist strategy in relation to bilateral liberalisation and free trade agreements).

I referred earlier to the transitional challenge which particular states face in accessing the full advantages of globalisation. This is also a challenge with regional and global dimensions, and Australian policy meets that challenge in a direct and complementary way. We do so particularly through our advocacy and action in support of global trade liberalisation and through specific bilateral and regional trading arrangements. We do so as well through a significantly expanded Australian aid program focused on partnerships, particularly with the countries of our region, to enhance economic growth, good governance, poverty reduction and investment in the needs of people, especially their health and education.

I wish to conclude this evening with some brief comments about the conceptual framework in which Australia's international interests are pursued. Australian foreign and trade policy aims to advance those interests as effectively as possible in a way that is consistent with Australian values - values that derive from a commitment to democratic rights, the rule of law, an open society, tolerance and fairness, economic opportunity, an egalitarian spirit and strong accountable national institutions.

In the context of increasing globalisation, the values that underpin Australian foreign and trade policy are particularly well suited to the challenges of the times. In promoting priorities such as good governance, transparency, political accountability, the rule of law, economic openness, market competitiveness and practical support to enhance the capacity of states to benefit from economic globalisation, Australia is not only being true to the values it believes in itself. We are also maximising our own prospects in an increasingly competitive international environment, and by helping other states to do the same, we advance our wider interests in stability and development and in countering extremism.

The pursuit of any nation's foreign policy is always characterised by an evolving balance between ends and means, between aspirations and capabilities, between idealism and pragmatism. Current Australian foreign and trade policy brings to that age-old challenge a clear regional focus, a sense of realism and a multifaceted approach.

There is a clear regional focus evident in Australian policy priorities and in the scope of engagement with regional countries and institutions. It is a focus that reflects the particular structures, priorities and traditions of regional states. It is a focus that is neither artificially narrow nor constrained by geography alone because associated with it is a realism that reflects the increasingly complementary global and regional dimensions of many issues that lie at the heart of Australia's international interests. Australian foreign and trade policy is responsive to that reality in a multifaceted way seeking to advance Australian interests through a variety of means suited to different priorities and circumstances – means that include diplomatic activism, carefully targeted aid commitments, deployments on the ground, broad multilateral actions or specific initiatives.

I have spoken this evening about the challenge of discerning clearly the elements of continuity and change in the international environment. It is a challenge that bears very directly on the role and responsibilities of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. It is not a new challenge for the Department but, in its modern form, it is a more complex, demanding and variable one than it has ever been.

Meeting this challenge requires the Department to show innovation and flexibility in responding to the dynamics of positive change. But it also calls for consistency, realism and steadiness of purpose in responding to the dynamics of continuity where the requirements for security and stability have not changed and where Australian interests are enduring.

That is why issues of change and continuity lie at the heart of the Department's responsibilities and why they are so critical to the advancement of Australian interests.



Helen Caldicott



Greg Hunt

Photo – David Karonidis

Dr Helen Caldicott is an author, a Nobel Peace Prize nominee, the recipient of the 2003 Lannan Prize for Cultural Freedom and the inaugural Australian Peace Prize awarded by the Peace Organisation of Australia, 2006. A medical doctor, she has devoted the past 35 years to an international campaign to educate the public about the medical hazards of the nuclear age. Greg Hunt MP is the federal Member for Flinders and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Environment and Heritage. He has worked at the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and was Senior Advisor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Hon Alexander Downer, with responsibility for South East Asia, defence, human rights, Trade and international law. On Tuesday 11 July 2006, Dr Helen Caldicott and Greg Hunt MP gave two different views on any increased use of nuclear power.

NUCLEAR POWER —

THE ANSWER?

Helen Caldicott

I'm going to speak to you tonight as a physician about the medical dangers of the nuclear fuel cycle. But first I want to address the issue of global warming, which is an extremely serious matter. Not many people appreciate how serious it is, but you only have to see Al Gore's film, *An Inconvenient Truth*, to realise how extraordinary global warming is. So, we've got to stop burning oil and coal and stop going into other countries to get their oil to burn it, because it's damaging the environment in monumental ways. On the back of this crisis, the nuclear industry has decided that they are the answer to global warming. And they've spent several hundred million dollars in the United States on a propaganda campaign with ads in the *New Yorker* and *Scientific American* and the like to convince people that nuclear power produces no global warming gases.

A nuclear reactor itself does not produce global warming gases, although it does emit radioactive gases. However, when the uranium fuel is mined and enriched, and the massive concrete reactor is constructed, oil and petrol are utilised which when burned, create large quantities of carbon dioxide, the gas which is responsible for 50 per cent of global warming.

If the uranium mines are then reconstituted as they should be, to incur an ecological sustainability practice, and the radioactive tailings are deposited back into the soil, yet more fossil fuel will be consumed, a necessary remedial situation which has yet to occur in Australia or indeed globally.

After operating for 30 to 40 years, the radioactive reactor must then be decommissioned. It is now so dangerously radioactive that it must be disassembled by remote control using robots, a project that will consume enormous amounts of fossil fuel. The radioactive waste manufactured in the reactor must then be transported, stored and isolated from the environment for half a million years, involving the consumption of still more fossil fuel.

Presently, nuclear power plants produce one third the amount of carbon dioxide as do similar sized gas fired plants. But as the quality

of the uranium ore declines in concentration, yet more fossil fuel will be required to mine the uranium. Within several decades it is predicted, depending on how many reactors are constructed, a nuclear power plant will produce about the same amount of carbon dioxide as a gas plant. So nuclear power adds substantially to global warming. It is definitely not the answer.

Furthermore, every dollar used for nuclear power steals from the creation of much cheaper renewable energy sources; solar, wind, geothermal, cogeneration, wave and tidal power.

The Nuclear Policy Research Institute in Washington DC is constructing a road-map for a totally carbon free, nuclear free future. The road map will be completed within nine months and will be placed into the hands of every legislator in the United States – state and federal, and indeed into the hands of many other politicians around the world.

Now I want to talk to you about the medical consequences of radiation, because I'm a physician. My specialty is cystic fibrosis, the most common fatal genetic disease of childhood. One in 25 Caucasians carry that gene. Most of my patients died under the age of 20. I founded the cystic fibrosis clinic at the Adelaide children's hospital in 1975.

I originally learned about radiation and genetic disease during my first year in medical school when our biology lecturer taught us about Mueller's experiment on the drosophila fruit fly for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize. Mueller irradiated the *Drosophila* fruit fly which induced mutations in their reproductive genes. For example, they would develop a gene for a crooked wing, which would then be passed on generation to generation, and because they breed so fast, he observed many generations within a single year. This experiment determined that radiation induces mutations or changes in the DNA molecule, changes that can also cause cancer.

There are many forms of radiation, and I won't go into them all, except to say that the medical profession is the biggest irradiator of the public at the moment, because of their ubiquitous use of x-rays. Gamma radiation which is emitted by radioactive materials, made mostly in nuclear power plants is similar to x-rays and is non-particulate in form. Alpha radiation, composed of two protons and two neutrons is particulate in form, emitted from an unstable atom, and is extremely mutagenic and carcinogenic. Uranium is an alpha emitter. Beta radiation is composed of an electron emitted from an unstable atom and is also particulate. All these forms of radiation do the same thing – they mutate or alter the chemical structure of genes (DNA molecules) in living cells.

There are trillions of cells in the body and every cell contains a pair of genes called the regulatory genes, which control the rate of cell

division. If one of those is damaged biochemically by radiation, the cell sits quietly in a latent and undetectable form for many years. It takes 5 to 60 years - the latent period of carcinogenesis - to incubate cancer. But once the cancer is diagnosed, millions of damaged cells have already divided in an uncontrollable way presenting as a lump in the breast, or pain in your leg.

A Cancer does not wear a sign denoting its origin. But we do know that radiation is mutagenic, and carcinogenic. A 2005 study called the Beir VII Report (Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation) by the National Academy of Sciences in America stated that no radiation dose is low enough that does not carry the risk of cancer induction.

It is important to know that radiation is cumulative; each dose you receive adds to your risk of getting cancer. So if you have a dental x-ray and you have a chest x-ray, and you are exposed to radiation maybe from European food (40 per cent of the European land mass is currently radioactive from Chernobyl and will remain so for the next 600 years) each dose you receive adds to your risk of developing cancer.

The medical dictum states that if you have an incurable disease, the only recourse is prevention. I remember my father saying when I was a little girl that he was not worried about cancer because by the time he was old enough to get it, a cure would have been found. My father died of a very anaplastic malignant cancer in just three weeks at the age of 51 and he was obviously not cured.

We can cure some childhood cancers now but the treatment process is very brutal - we nearly kill a child to cure it by attempting to kill all the cancer cells with potent cellular poisons.

Why do we use radiation to cure cancer, or try to cure it? Because radiation damages rapidly dividing cells. Cancer cells divide very rapidly so you zap the cancer with a high dose of radiation, hoping to kill all the aberrant cells. However the regulatory genes in normal cells can also be mutated which is the reason why some people, a certain percentage, who've had their cancers cured, will some 20 years later develop another primary cancer, secondary to the radiation therapy.

Now I'll just walk you quickly through the nuclear fuel cycle.

Australia has 40 per cent of the world's richest uranium, maybe more. Uranium is radioactive; it's an alpha emitter and as such is very carcinogenic. Uranium 238, which is being used for anti-tank shells in Iraq, has a half life of 4.5 billion years (multiply by 20 to get the total radiological life of a radioactive isotope). Uranium decays to a series of radioactive daughter products. One of them is radon gas, which is an alpha emitter, and is very carcinogenic. In the past, 30 to 50 per cent of men who have mined uranium have died of lung cancer. Australian uranium miners have never been followed up medically - a

very serious deficiency on the part of federal governments, past and present.

Another uranium daughter is radium. Madame Curie refined radium, and used to carry a small lump of it in her pocket not aware of its dangers. She died of leukaemia, as did her daughter. Radium is a calcium analogue - it mimics calcium in the food chain and the human body; it is deposited in the bones where it can cause bone cancer or leukaemia.

Uranium miners are exposed to radon gas by inhalation into the lungs and to the ingestion of radium into the gut by swallowing the dust in the mine, so uranium mining is very dangerous. When I went to the Mary Kathleen uranium mine in Queensland in the 1970s to speak to the miners, they had not been informed about any of these radiation effects upon their genes or their sperm. When I completed my talk, some of the wives whisked their men away from the mine while other miners who stayed established a health clinic. But eventually new workers replaced those who left and were similarly ignorant.

Underground uranium mines are supposedly ventilated these days to remove the radon gas from the air, however although much of the radon can be removed miners are still at risk for radon inhalation. Also their bodies are perpetually exposed to gamma radiation which is constantly emitted from the uranium ore face. Uranium mining is therefore hazardous and the miners should therefore be well educated about the dangers.

After the uranium ore is mined from the ground and crushed in a milling plant it is taken to an enrichment plant. The uranium isotope 235 must be enriched from 0.7 per cent in the natural ore to 3 per cent for use in nuclear power, or greater than 50 per cent to be used as fuel in nuclear weapons. One of the reasons that the UN is worried about Iran is that once it starts enriching uranium it could, within five to ten years time make highly enriched uranium suitable for weapons. Uranium enrichment is extremely energy intensive and ecologically dangerous. In Paducah, Kentucky where Australian uranium is enriched together with US uranium, two 1000 megawatt CO₂ emitting coal fired plants are used to generate the electricity.

The material left behind after the uranium 235 is removed is the other uranium isotope, uranium 238 - called depleted uranium. It's depleted only of uranium 235; it's still radio-active and as mentioned previously is used as antitank shells in Iraq. In 1991 when the US first invaded Iraq, they used 360 tons of uranium shells near and in the town of Basra. These munitions are pyrophoric, bursting into flames on impact. Up to 80 per cent of the 5 kilogram shell is converted into aerosolised particles that can be inhaled into the lung, polluting the water and air, or concentrated in the food chain.

Since 1991, the incidence of childhood cancer has increased seven times or 700 per cent in Basra. The incidences of severe congenital anomalies - babies being born with no brains (anencephaly), no arms (phocomelia), single eyes (cyclops) have gone up 700 per cent. As I previously stated, the half-life of uranium 238 is 4.5 billion years, so really America is conducting a kind of nuclear war in Iraq. There are no nuclear explosions as such, only nuclear material scattered to the four winds for the rest of time. Those people will be exposed to a radioactive environment forevermore within the cradle of civilisation. Some of those weapons could contain Australian uranium.

After the uranium is enriched, it's taken to a reactor. A hundred tonnes of uranium are placed in the reactor core and submerged in water. As the moderating rods are slowly removed, the uranium reaches critical mass, fissioning and producing tremendous heat which boils the water. The steam from the boiling water turns a turbine which generates electricity. So, in reality, all a nuclear power plant is designed to do is boil water. It's like cutting a pound of butter with a chainsaw. When uranium fissions, up to 200 new radioactive elements are formed - some which last seconds and some which last millions of years.

For instance, radioactive iodine that causes thyroid cancer, escaped at Three Mile Island which is situated some 13 miles from the Hershey's chocolate factory. but radioactive iodine 131 only exists for six weeks. However, there was a major meltdown at Three Mile Island which I discuss in my new book - nuclear power is not the answer to global warming. Suffice to say, it is unwise to eat Hershey's chocolates as some of them could still be radioactive because the cows graze on land that received radioactive fallout.

Another radioactive element is strontium 90 which has a half-life of 28 years, with a total radioactive life of 600 years. Strontium 90 is a calcium analogue like radium, and it causes bone cancer and leukaemia. Cesium 137 also lasts for 600 years and causes brain tumours and muscle cancers.

After Chernobyl, 40 per cent of the European land mass remains radioactive. There are over 300 sheep farms in Wales at the moment producing lambs that are so radioactive and full of Cesium 137 that the meat cannot be eaten. These farms will remain radioactive for 600 years. Mushrooms, berries, and many other European foods are also radioactive. Turkey experienced high levels of radioactive fallout from Chernobyl, fallout came down in various places according to the radioactive rainfall. When I go into my organic food shop now, I can only find Turkish apricots. There are no Australian dried apricots. I said, do you know they're probably radioactive; have you had them tested? The shopkeeper said no.

And last but not least, is Plutonium, named after Pluto, the god of the underworld. Plutonium is one of the most carcinogenic materials known. Its founder Glen Seaborg called it the most dangerous substance known. It's an alpha emitter and so toxic that a millionth of a gram is carcinogenic. The half-life of plutonium is 24, 400 years, so its radiological life is half a million years, which is the reason that radioactive waste which contains much plutonium must be isolated from the environment for half a million years.

But the reason uranium was fissioned initially in the Manhattan Project in the early 1940s was to manufacture plutonium for weapons production. Five kilos of plutonium is critical mass, enough to induce a major nuclear explosion. It remains a mystery to me that we haven't yet seen terrorist nuclear weapons. Hundreds of tons of plutonium remain in Russia, some of it unguarded. Over 200 kilos of plutonium are made each year in a 1000 megawatt nuclear power plant reactor, and this, along with the other radioactive poisons must be stored safely for virtually the rest of time.

Now plutonium is biologically interesting. It is an iron analogue and iron, of course, is used to create the haemoglobin molecule which transports oxygen in the red blood cells. Plutonium can cause lung cancer if you inhale it. On entering the blood stream it migrates to the liver, because iron is stored in the liver where it can induce liver cancer. It migrates to the bone where the haemoglobin molecule is produced where it can cause bone cancer or leukaemia. It crosses the placenta (not many chemicals pass the placenta), where it can kill a cell that is destined to form the left half of the brain, the left arm or the septum of the heart - that process is called teratogenesis. The drug thalidomide taken by pregnant women years ago caused similar deformities in babies.

And last but not least plutonium has a predilection for testicles where it tends to deposit just next to the precursors of the sperm where it irradiates the sperm. As the genes in the sperm develop mutations they can be passed on generation to generation, to cause cystic fibrosis or any one of the 16,000 genetic diseases now described. Meanwhile the plutonium lives on to enter testicle after testicle for the rest of time so there could be an exponential increase in genetic disease.

Biological evolution occurred caused by planetary background radiation which was very, intense billions of years ago. Gradually the earth cooled. But it was the background radiation that induced genetic mutations, for instance, fish developed lungs, birds developed wings and eventually over millions of years because of this process, human beings evolved.

However, most mutations are deleterious causing disease. Very few are advantageous taking millions of years to express themselves. So by rapidly increasing the levels of background radiation in nuclear

reactors and scattering it around various geographical locations in the world we are in the process of upsetting the fine balance of nature, not just in humans of course but in the 30 million other species which co-habit the world with us, plants and animals. We are in the process of destroying the wonderful natural dynamics of evolution so that we can turn on our lights and computers using the diabolical technology of nuclear power.

I worked with George Kistiakowsky, Jerry Wiesner, Ted Taylor, Philip Morrison and many other brilliant scientists who worked on the Manhattan Project. When Robert Oppenheimer who was in charge of the Manhattan project witnessed the first nuclear explosion in the desert of New Mexico he muttered to himself, "I have become death, the shatterer of worlds."

The guilt of these scientists was so intense when they developed the bomb that they placated themselves by harnessing atoms for peaceful uses, but they knew in their hearts, because they confided to me, that nuclear power is extraordinarily dangerous.

NUCLEAR POWER:

THE ANSWER?

Greg Hunt

The Australian government recognises that climate change is a serious global problem with no simple “silver bullet” solution. The fundamental position as to where nuclear energy sits within that context and the context of energy security is clear: Nuclear power has to play and is playing a role as part of the global solution. It is not, however, the whole solution, but only part of a broader approach which includes clean coal, renewable energy, fuel switching and demand management.

In short, nuclear energy currently provides 16 per cent of global static energy which in turn offsets over 2 billion tonnes of CO₂ per year and to stop that process would have an impact on the environment, global energy security and global energy prices. Its role will depend on decisions that balance environmental, economic, health and safety, and broader social and security considerations in national contexts.

Challenges

There is overwhelming scientific evidence that significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will be needed by the end of the century, and the Australian government is working closely with other countries to find constructive solutions. For the past 10,000 years, the global atmospheric carbon dioxide level has been stable between 260 and 280 parts per million. However, since the beginning of the industrial revolution, carbon dioxide has increased to 380 ppm by 2000.

The projected increase in temperature by the end of this century lies between 1.4 and 5.8 degrees celsius. Sea levels are projected to rise between 9cm and 88cm between 1990 and 2100. To limit global warming to 2.5 degrees celsius by the end of 2100, carbon dioxide concentrations would need to be stabilised at 550 ppm or less. This will require a 50 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions across the globe by 2100, and further reductions after that.

Reduction in emissions does not translate to an immediate reduction in concentrations because carbon dioxide has an atmospheric lifetime of 50 to 200 years. Once concentration levels stabilise, global

temperature and sea levels will continue to rise for centuries because of the heat-holding capacity of the ocean.

Australia is vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. While the scope and intensity of these effects are unknown, the Bureau of Meteorology has advised me of the following facts, which may be linked to climate change and of risks likely to flow from climate change:

Water resources are already under stress in many parts of Australia and reduced runoff is expected to increase this stress. Run-off may decrease 10 to 25 per cent by 2050 across the Murray-Darling Basin. Increases in extreme weather events such as storms and high fire danger days are likely to lead to increased flash flooding, strains on sewerage and drainage systems, greater insurance losses, possible black-outs, and challenges for emergency services. Many of Australia's unique ecosystems are vulnerable to climate change – especially coral reefs, alpine regions, wetlands and the Wet Tropics in Queensland. For example, major coral bleaching events occurred on the Great Barrier Reef in 1998 and 2002, and up to 5 per cent of reefs were severely degraded during each event.

Solutions

Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions are a small and declining fraction of global emissions. Annual global emissions are around 40 billion tonnes of CO₂ or equivalent gases. Australia's emissions are 560 million tonnes, or 1.4 per cent of the total global emissions. Australia is working with the international community to develop a global response to climate change that is environmentally effective, economically efficient, involves all major emitters, and will reduce global greenhouse gases to levels that scientists tell us are needed.

The UN climate change conference held in Montreal in December 2005 heralded a new chapter in global climate change discussions. While Australia remains on track to meet its Kyoto target, a number of countries are struggling, or appear unlikely to meet their targets given their current domestic policy settings. They include Canada, Japan, New Zealand and over ten European countries including France, Germany and Italy. Agreement was reached amongst 189 countries to start a new dialogue on a post-Kyoto framework. The head of the Australian Greenhouse Office, Mr Howard Bamsey, has been chosen to co-chair these new international talks.

Australia's leading role in the *Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate* represents another important contribution to an effective global effort. The US, China, India, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Australia are working together to develop, deploy and transfer the cleaner, more efficient technologies that the world will need to make the required deep cuts in global greenhouse gas emissions. The partnership is consistent with our efforts under the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change. And it complements, but doesn't replace, the Kyoto Protocol.

According to scenario analysis by ABARE, AP6 could reduce cumulative greenhouse gas emissions over the next 45 years by 90 billion tonnes CO₂ equivalent. The Kyoto Protocol will deliver only a one percent reduction in global emissions compared to BAU. A key concern with the Kyoto framework is leakage. Indeed, European Environment Ministers recently raised with me the fear that energy or emissions intensive industries (for example aluminium and cement) could move away from Kyoto-bound countries to ones with weaker emissions controls. This process may actually increase global emissions – rather than reduce through the process known as perverse outcomes.

The Australian government recognises that climate change is a serious and long-term issue which requires comprehensive and long-term strategies. It has also put in place a comprehensive climate change strategy, committing almost \$2 billion to combating climate change, ensuring Australia meets its Kyoto target and providing leadership in shaping a framework for action beyond Kyoto. This investment, coupled with commitments made by the States and Territories, places Australia among the world's leading nations addressing climate change. The strategy delivers a focussed and integrated group of measures in key strategic areas - emissions management, international engagement, climate impacts and adaptation, strategic policy support, science and measurement. This will deliver a lower greenhouse signature while maintaining a strong, growing economy.

This multi-track approach is exemplified in the “stabilisation triangle” which has been devised by Robert Socolow of the Carbon Mitigation Institute at Princeton University. If emissions could be kept flat for the next 50 years, we'd be on track to stabilise below 550 ppm CO₂. The stabilisation triangle consists of a number of “wedges” each representing the abatement of four billion tonnes of CO₂ globally by around 2050 to avoid more than doubling our emissions. We can visualise the government's strategy in contributing to this global challenge in terms of the stabilisation triangle and wedges. I will briefly outline some examples to illustrate.

The energy sector is a key focus for action. Stationary energy, including heating and electricity production, accounts for around half of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions of 560 million tonnes CO₂ equivalent. Our economy is dependent upon reliable access to competitively priced energy and our trading industries benefiting from the value of our abundant energy resources.

The energy intensive nature of Australia's economy means that it must seek cost-effective ways to improve the efficiency of current technologies, while enabling new low emissions technologies to be part of the longer-term solution. One of these new technologies is

carbon capture and storage, or geosequestration, and the Australian government is exploring its potential in Australia. The application of this technology offers possibly Australia's single largest opportunity to reduce its emissions while underpinning its competitive advantage in fossil fuels.

Our focus is on demonstrating these technologies. Of course, uptake would rely on some form of incentive to overcome any cost disadvantage relative to conventionally produced electricity. Similar policy approaches would need to be taken up by all our competitors to ensure we are not disadvantaged by higher electricity prices. With support from the Australian and Victorian government and industry, the Cooperative Research Centre for Greenhouse Gas Technologies will start a carbon dioxide storage pilot project this year and plans to inject carbon dioxide into deep geological formations in late 2006 or early 2007. The pilot project will include an extensive monitoring and verification strategy. The German energy company RWE is planning to build the world's first commercial-scale (450 MW) power plant combining coal gasification and carbon capture and storage. The plant could come on-line in 2014, given timely regulatory approvals. The Australian government will monitor progress with interest. In the context of this project, I recently had informal discussions with the German Secretary for the Environment for Australian-German co-operation on low emissions coal technology which we now have to turn into a more concrete outcome.

The Australian government considers an effective path to a sustainable energy future is to encourage a broad range of low emissions technologies, including renewables, and further address barriers and impediments to the uptake of renewable energy. This strategy includes the following initiatives: a \$500 million Low Emissions Technology Demonstration Fund to be established to leverage \$1 billion in private sector investment in demonstrating large scale low-emission projects; a \$100 million Renewable Energy Development Initiative to promote the development of renewable energy technologies; a \$75 million Solar Cities Trial which will demonstrate the economic benefits of solar photovoltaics in reducing energy demand during peak periods; a \$20 million Advanced Energy Storage Technologies Fund - to identify and promote advanced storage technologies to increase the ability of renewable energy-based electricity generation to contribute to Australia's electricity supply system; a \$14 million Wind Energy Forecasting Program - to help increase the value of wind energy in electricity markets and enable network managers to effectively manage higher levels of wind energy in electricity networks; and keeping in place the MRET scheme which has been very successful in kick-starting a renewable energy industry in Australia.

Fuel switching offers the potential for significant emission reductions. Fuel switching can occur at the point of generation, for example

switching from coal to gas as the fuel source for electricity generation, and switching from electricity to gas for household uses such as heating and cooking. Australian government programs, such as Greenhouse Friendly, support fuel switching activities. AJ Bush & Sons is a Greenhouse Friendly™ approved abatement provider who has converted four coal/waste oil/LPG fired boiler into three natural gas fired boilers and one cold standby unit. This conversion saves approximately 9,000 tonnes of CO₂-e from being released into the atmosphere each year.

Establishment of vegetation as carbon sinks, which remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere, can make an important contribution to reducing Australia's total net emissions. Australia is reducing emissions by supporting revegetation, protection of existing vegetation, promoting sustainable agriculture and land management practices, and establishing plantations. Plantation forests established since 1990 sequestered an estimated 18 million tonnes of carbon dioxide in 2004. This is expected to increase to about 21 million tonnes annually in the Kyoto target period. Between 2000 and 2004, an average of 75,000 hectares of new forest plantations were established each year. Major national programs include the Natural Heritage Trust, the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, and the Plantations 2020 vision. The government's \$20.5 million Greenhouse Action in Regional Australia Programme supports emissions reduction measures, including forest carbon sinks, that deliver multiple environmental and economic benefits in regional Australia.

Energy efficiency is currently the most cost-effective approach to reducing greenhouse emissions, and it delivers real economic benefits. The Australian government is working with all spheres of government, industry, business and consumers to improve energy efficiency of equipment, appliances, buildings and transport, and to increase the uptake of cost effective energy opportunities that reduce energy demand and greenhouse emissions. The National Appliance and Equipment Energy Efficiency Program is projected to save almost 204 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent below business as usual between 2005 and 2020. These savings are projected to be achieved at a net present value of minus \$23 per tonne. In other words, over time, consumers would actually save money by buying more efficient products mandated under the program. The program is projected to save consumers about \$4.8 billion by 2020 as a result of reduced energy costs in using these products.

All Australian jurisdictions have agreed on a *National Framework for Energy Efficiency*, for a consistent delivery of energy efficiency policy across Australia covering residential, commercial and industrial through to government sectors. Other actions include energy efficient measures in Building Codes of Australia, supported by the Australian government guide *Your Home*, which helps educate the building industry, design

students and the public about the use of energy efficiency and environmentally sustainable building options.

The Australian government's actions on transport include the National Average Fuel Consumption (NAFC) target and consumer information programmes. NAFC is a voluntary target of 6.8L/100km for petrol passenger cars by 2010. This represents 18 per cent improvement in fuel efficiency of new vehicles between 2002 and 2010. There is also mandatory fuel consumption labelling for all new vehicles up to 3.5 tonnes mass and the Green vehicle guide which rates the combined level of air pollutants and greenhouse gas emissions per vehicle. There is great potential for the Australian government Fleet cars to become low emissions vehicles.

Nuclear energy

To combat climate change, the government is prepared to examine all possible solutions and invest in a wide range of options and technologies for our future energy needs. This includes clean fossil fuels, renewable energy and energy efficiency. We also need to investigate the viability of nuclear energy. The potential of nuclear power to provide low emission base-load electricity on a large scale globally is becoming more widely recognised. That is why the Australian government has decided to establish a Taskforce to review uranium mining, processing and the contribution of nuclear energy in Australia in the long term. This review will contribute to a wide ranging public debate on Australia's future energy needs and the broad range of emerging energy technologies.

The Nuclear Taskforce will examine the potential for adding value to uranium processing in Australia through fuel enrichment. I note the Prime Minister's comments in announcing the Taskforce, saying "there is significant potential for Australia to increase and add value to our uranium extraction and exports ... holding the reserves of uranium that we do, it is foolish to see ourselves simply as an exporter of uranium ... I think we should also look at the value-added process, which is principally enrichment".

Today there are some 440 nuclear power reactors in 32 countries. These reactors provide around 16 per cent of the world's electricity. According to the World Nuclear Association, about 25 power reactors are currently being constructed in ten countries, notably China, the Republic of Korea, Japan and Russia. A number of countries are currently considering whether to build new nuclear power plants to replace, or expand on their existing capacity. For example, Britain is shortly to release the results of a review into its future energy options, including whether to replace its fleet of nuclear reactors. The United States has also recently signalled its intention to facilitate the construction of new nuclear power plants with around US\$13 billion of incentives in its *Energy Act* passed last year. The Canadian province

of Ontario has also recently announced a 20-year, US\$41 billion plan to build and refurbish nuclear power plants. Over the last three years Australia's exports of uranium have averaged nearly 10,000 tonnes per year, providing about 22 percent of world uranium supply from mines.

Nuclear power stations emit low levels of greenhouse gases under operational conditions. However, overall greenhouse benefits would need to take into account the full life-cycle emissions from nuclear and alternative generation methods such as clean coal, gas and renewables. The overall life-cycle greenhouse emissions of nuclear energy is a complex field and results will depend on technology and project specific factors. This complexity is reflected in the range of views presented in the literature. Some studies indicate that nuclear power can produce electricity with virtually no greenhouse gas emissions on a life-cycle basis. Some studies suggest there may be significant life-cycle emissions, particularly relating to the mining and milling and processing of uranium ore. For example, the International Atomic Energy Agency has estimated the life-cycle emissions of nuclear power to be between 10 and 20 kg of CO₂-e per megawatt hour, or around one to two per cent of emissions from coal (or about two to four per cent of gas).

Australia exports around 10,000 tonnes of uranium annually. This could produce approximately 415,000 gigawatt hours of electricity. Ignoring broader life-cycle emissions, if the same amount of electricity was to be produced from average black coal generation, around 400 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year would be emitted. This represents around 70 per cent of Australia's total annual greenhouse gas emissions. The government's nuclear Taskforce will consider the extent to which nuclear energy will make a contribution to the reduction of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Safety is an issue of paramount importance in the discussion of nuclear energy. According to the World Nuclear Association, taking on board both the tragedy of Chernobyl and the Three Mile Island incident, nuclear power has been one of the safest forms of electricity generation. While the potential consequences of an accident can be severe, as demonstrated at Chernobyl, experts have indicated that Chernobyl was largely a result of poor reactor design, lack of training and inadequate safety protocols.

There are a number of technologies on the horizon that seek to make nuclear power generation safer. A South African-led consortium plans to demonstrate a Pebble Bed Modular Reactor. Investors include Eskom, the South African Industrial Development Corporation and Westinghouse. The current schedule is to start construction in 2007 and for the demonstration plant to be completed by 2011. The first commercial PBMR modules are planned for 2013. China currently has the world's only operational PBMR plant - an experimental research model in Beijing housed at Tsinghua University

Traditional reactor safety systems are “active” in the sense that they involve electrical or mechanical operation on command. New reactor designs, however, aim to incorporate ‘passive’ or inherent safety features. Passive safety systems require no active controls or operational intervention to avoid accidents in the event of malfunction and depend only on physical phenomena such as convection, gravity or resistance to high temperatures, not on functioning of engineered components.

Generation 4 reactor designs aim to incorporate these features, however these reactors are not anticipated to be ready for commercial deployment before 2030. Some Generation 3 and 3+ designs that are nearer to commercial deployment also incorporate some of these features.

For example, the Pebble Bed Modular Reactor is a Generation 3+ concept whose design aims to significantly enhance its safety compared to earlier designs. Particles of uranium are packed into thousands of graphite spheres, each about the size of a tennis ball.

The uranium itself is sequestered at low density within the pebbles and shielded by their graphite casings. This ensures that the uranium can never get hot enough to melt, and the catastrophe of a nuclear meltdown can be avoided. The newer designs also aim to be resistant to diversion of materials for weapons proliferation and secure from terrorist attacks. Most of them employ a closed fuel cycle to maximise the resource base and minimise high-level wastes to be sent to a repository.

Another technology under development that has potential to enhance safety of nuclear power generation is the use of thorium, rather than uranium, as the energy source for nuclear power stations. One potential advantage with thorium is that it cannot sustain a nuclear reaction by itself so it can not undergo a runaway chain reaction like uranium. Thorium requires a catalyst to sustain the reaction. Thorium also has potential to produce much less potent radioactive waste than uranium based nuclear energy. The full technical development of this energy source is ongoing and it is yet to be seen to what extent it will be able to contribute to global energy supply in the future.

Waste management experts generally agree that geological disposal is the most effective way to manage high level and long-lived intermediate level radioactive waste. No repository has yet been constructed for high-level waste spent nuclear fuel anywhere in the world. However, Sweden is one country examining the construction of an underground storage facility. Work within the industry focuses on encapsulating the fuel in copper and embedding it in bentonite clay at a depth of about 500 metres in the rock. However, the method has not yet received final Swedish government approval. Furthermore, a site has not yet been selected to host the repository. The siting process is in progress and a number of municipalities are currently participating in investigations.

The nuclear industry hopes that construction of a repository can start by 2008.

The *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* does not allow the approval of an action consisting of or involving the construction or operation of a nuclear fuel fabrication plant; a nuclear power plant; an enrichment plant; and a reprocessing facility. The left wing think tank the Australia Institute, recently proposed several sites for nuclear power plants in Australia. These included Wollongong, the Sunshine Coast and Western Port Bay in my electorate.

This proposition was nothing but a stunt set up as a provocative hoax that deliberately pinpointed sites that are highly populated coastal tourism zones. Not surprisingly, the same response occurred as if someone wanted to build an aluminium plant in the middle of a residential zone. It was not a case of NIMBYISM, only of people rejecting a deliberately provocative proposal. Significantly, it may have backfired when within 48 hours almost 20 rural municipalities indicated their willingness to consider a plant subject to appropriate safeguards. The Australia Institute, either through ignorance or otherwise, ignored the evolutions in technology which meant that in the future water will not be the key determinant in operating plants globally.

Due to the size of older and current technology nuclear power plants, around 1000MW, other countries have tended to locate them relatively close to major load demand to reduce transmission costs. However some new designs under development, including the pebble bed reactors, are smaller in size, which will provide them with more flexibility in location. Most nuclear power plants utilising current technology require large amounts of water for cooling fuel rods, necessitating proximity to large sources of water. However, Generation 4 design concepts use gas, lead or sodium to cool the reactor core and so they don't need to be located close to large water bodies. This should assist in flexibility in locating possible nuclear power plants in the future, however these plants are still in the developmental stage.

Even if nuclear power plants are eventually permitted in Australia, identifying the specific location would need detailed and rigorous analysis taking account of the requirements of the plant and electricity networks and an assessment of particular environmental and social impacts at the proposed location

Conclusion

The Australian government encourages leadership, innovation, and investment in developing and deploying the next generation of low emissions energy technologies, thereby helping ensure the emergence of new industries and jobs, economic growth, together with improved energy security and protection for our environment. Through both our domestic and international policies, Australia is playing an increasingly

significant role in leading the way by example towards a low emissions technology future.

My own view is clear. In principle I see no reason why stable environmentally aware countries such as France, Sweden, Finland, Japan, Canada, Germany, the UK and the USA, are able to produce nuclear energy but Australia is not. We need to consider it objectively for Australian conditions and the Nuclear Taskforce gives us an opportunity to do so. And it will determine whether my hypothesis is correct and whether it would be economically viable and acceptable to the community within Australian conditions.

Even if the Taskforce finds nuclear energy does not stand up economically for Australia, I have no doubt in saying that we do the world a moral service by exporting uranium resources which save up to 400 million tonnes of CO₂ each year.

Endnote

The report of the *Uranium Mining, Processing and Nuclear Energy Review - Opportunities for Australia?* was released on 21 November 2006.



Photo – David Karonidis

Malcolm Fraser

The Rt Hon Malcolm Fraser served as a Liberal Party backbencher during the final decades of Sir Robert Menzies' Government. Mr Fraser got to know Australia's longest serving prime minister as a young MP and maintained a close personal contact with Sir Robert until the time of his death in May 1978. In an address to The Sydney Institute, on Monday 17 July 2006, Malcolm Fraser evaluated the Liberal Party in the time of Sir Robert Menzies and reflected on the contribution he made. The paper which follows is an edited transcript of the address given on the night.

REMEMBERING

ROBERT MENZIES

Malcolm Fraser

The previous world was a very different one. Heather Henderson, Sir Robert's daughter, who is here, can speak about remembering Robert Menzies with much more authority and probably much more accurately than I could.

The Menzies world was the sort of a world that I would have some consciousness of. It began in the 1930s with the Depression and difficult times. There were arguments about trade with Japan. Menzies was nicknamed Pig Iron Bob for which he paid a high price. He was probably right to trade with Japan. I also believe that he felt that the trade embargoes imposed on Japan, especially by the United States, were only going to drive that country into a more difficult situation. It was one of the factors that put Japan, during the war, against us on the Axis side.

Some of the old correspondence reveals an aspect of Menzies most people would not have expected. In 1939 there is a letter to Bruce, then the British High Commissioner in London, which indicated clearly that Menzies felt that the British did not understand east and south-east Asia. They were making major mistakes. Menzies believed we should be advised by our own people who had our own Australian interests at heart. It was announced very shortly after Menzies became prime minister, in 1939, that missions would be opened in Tokyo, Beijing and Washington. That was the embryonic beginnings of an Australian Public Service.

Another letter to Bruce showed that Menzies thought that the powers after the war would be disposed to establish a standing army for what was to become the United Nations. By that he meant a balanced force - an army, air force and also a navy to give some strength to the international body. That was way ahead of his time then, and maybe way ahead of its time today, and it gives some indication of the kind of thinking of which he was capable.

Menzies was criticised a good deal over being in England too much in the early stages of the war. But I have a suspicion that he was in England because he was concerned that Australia was going to be,

an unfortunate phrase, left for dead. Britain was obviously preoccupied, obviously beleaguered.

It was a very difficult time after the war. The world had been through a time when civilisation had nearly destroyed itself. Leaders in all major countries knew that they had to do better. The Second World War had started just 20 years after the end of the First World War. The United Nations was established, along with the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was negotiated and published in 1948. A number of conventions were negotiated under it, including the Refugee Convention. These were designed to give legal force to the high aspirations of the Universal Declaration. Menzies signed on to the Refugee Convention 1954.

Maynard Keynes had given some hope that governments could better manage their economies, that serious unemployment could be banished. I know it's been the fashion for many economists over the last 30 years to say that Keynes was wretched, that he didn't know what he was talking about. But most of his writings were undertaken during the Depression when there was no economic activity. I believe Keynes was a far better economist than most of his critics since. If he had been writing about countries that were highly indebted, he wouldn't have said, "Borrow more money."

The post war world was a time of independence for former colonies. And we know that some of those new-born countries used their independence well and unfortunately a number used it very badly. In many ways, despite the Cold War and the potential conflicts with the Soviet Union, the end of the 1940s/50s and the 1960s were a period of enlightenment in world affairs.

It was with this background that Robert Menzies formed the Liberal Party. Quite deliberately, it was designed to be a forward-looking progressive party, undertaking experiments, in no way reactionary. He didn't quite say in no way conservative, but then he never used the word conservative to explain the basis of the party itself. As a young candidate, I learnt one thing very sharply about the Liberal Party in the early 1950s. Candidates used to stay right away from funding of operations, campaigns for their own electorates. Ministers, Members and even the Prime Minister were not to involve themselves in fundraising for the operations of the Party. That was undertaken by a separate section of the Party, divorced from active politicians and policy makers in the Party. As I see it, that was very deliberate. The business people who founded the United Australia Party, its predecessor, virtually felt they could have a significant voice in choosing candidates and a voice in determining policy. The Menzies Liberal Party was devised of a different kind. But in today's

Liberal Party, there is more similarity in that regard to the United Australia Party than to the Liberal Party in its earlier years.

I would like to consider some aspects of policy that Menzies supported very strongly and let you see for yourself whether you think those are still relevant matters for Australia or whether we have gone off in a different direction.

The Murray Report and the Martin Report led to the Commonwealth being a major funder of universities. There were a number of elements to this. It was important that as many Australians as possible had access to higher education. The number of scholarships and living allowances that were available increased rapidly in the early to middle 1950s. It was clear that universities were going to need significant federal funding. Again, Robert Menzies had a sense of principle as to how this should happen. Because the Commonwealth was to be the major funder, it was important that universities be insulated from political interference by the Commonwealth, from micro-management by the Commonwealth so that academic independence and independence of fundamental research could be protected. So the Universities Commission was established, a high level body which consulted with universities and made its recommendations to state and to the federal governments on the future course of the development of universities. That system worked very well until Education Minister Dawkins wanted to get his sticky fingers on higher education policies so he abolished it. And the Opposition, at that time, didn't oppose that abolition. In recent times, such interference has gone even further than under Minister Dawkins.

Federalism was strongly supported not just as a political matter, not just because the Commonwealth was a federal organisation or Australia is a federal country, but because there was philosophy behind it, reasons behind it. Australia is a very large country and it's never going to be well governed if government is to be determined primarily by majorities in Melbourne and Sydney. There is too much of Australia in other places. One of the ways of balancing this is to have states with some substance. There is also the question of the separation of powers. Do we really want all political power to be in the hands of one group of politicians in Canberra? No matter which party it might be. There was a speech made I think by Archie Cameron in the very early war years. He was acting as an independent at the time. In the speech he was praising a piece of Labor Party legislation saying it was a wonderful legislation, glorious legislation, that it would enable the Minister to preside over a number of very good things. Then he finished by saying, "This legislation gives the Minister so much power that there is only one person I would entrust with that power and that's myself." And so he voted against it.

There has been a lot of centralisation in recent times. The labour laws are a very obvious example. Government influence over universities is another. Various ministers and different people have made statements about the Commonwealth being virtually the sole determinant of health and education policies. I'm not sure that in those earlier days the Menzies Government would have supported such things.

In the matter of foreign aid and humanitarian aid, there is a world objective of .7 per cent of GDP set as a target by members of the United Nations. You might be surprised to know that the year of greatest generosity of any Australian government, in all the years since the founding of the United Nations, was the last year of the Menzies Government. If you compare the figures roughly (you can't do it exactly) with today, the Menzies figure was .56 per cent while today our contribution is .24 per cent. Less than half. So we are richer, we are wealthier, we have higher standards of living but in terms of support for disadvantaged people around the world we do less than half of what was done by the Menzies Government.

On foreign ownership, I can remember there was a fuss about the takeover of four radio stations. I've even forgotten which four they were. But they were described as a substantial radio chain in Australia and the takeover was to be by a British company. The prime minister went to the parliament. He didn't use the word foreigner, he didn't use the word English. He just said it was wrong for people who do not belong to this country to own such a powerful instrument for propaganda. The takeover was dropped.

Let me talk about migration. In 1946, when Arthur Calwell persuaded the union movement to support a major migration program, the Opposition supported it, the union movement supported it. Nobody asked for a referendum, which probably would have voted 80 or 90 per cent against it. If you had asked Melbourne if it wanted to become the biggest Greek city outside Greece, 90 per cent would have said "no". If you asked them to vote now, I believe 90 per cent would be very proud of the contribution that Greek Australians have made to Melbourne and to Australia. That major migration program would not have been possible if anyone from Canberra or any significant person had introduced race or religion into the politics of the day. They had the responsibility not to. This isn't to say that Australians aren't sophisticated enough to have a debate about these things but race and religion are very sensitive issues. If you scratch a raw nerve, it's very hard of put that nerve to sleep and sometimes it can take a very, very long while.

Billy Hughes played on anti-Irish and anti-Catholic prejudices during World War I. We did not begin to recover from the bitternesses, even hatred, between Protestant and Catholic until the middle to late 1950s. Some people in my generation would still remember the

bitterness that existed between Catholics and Protestants because of the way Billy Hughes had turned the debate over conscription into an anti-Irish, anti-Catholic referendum. That did enormous harm to Australia

I mentioned the Refugee Convention which Menzies signed onto in 1954. His government adhered to the provisions of that convention. And it was still the time of the White Australia Policy even if it was being whittled away slowly piece by piece. In 1966, Harold Holt effectively ended the White Australia Policy. Gough Whitlam got rid of some legal remnants of no consequence in 1972 or 1973. Against that background, one can only imagine how that earlier Menzies Liberal Government would have reacted to the Tampa election, where race and religion played a very significant part in the politics of Australia. How would he react to an Australian wrapped in the Australian flag shouting obscenities? What would he say about that? He would have criticised that person for a gross abuse of the flag. It was never meant for that purpose and it should not be used for that purpose.

In foreign policy if Robert Menzies hadn't been resolute there wouldn't have been an ANZUS Treaty. The Americans didn't want a treaty with Australia. They wanted Australia to sign the Japanese Peace Treaty. But the Menzies Government wouldn't sign this treaty until we had some sort of commitment from the United States. It was a lesser commitment than that required under NATO, which some people wanted. NATO's commitment is to defend, ANZUS is to consult. In the middle 1950s, around 1955-56, there was real concern over position of Taiwan and Chinese shelling of Quemoy/Matsu – the offshore islands. President Eisenhower moved the Pacific Fleet at a range to, or close to, the Taiwan Straits as some sort of a warning. The Australian government didn't say much about it in public, nor did the New Zealand government. But Australia and New Zealand both let Eisenhower know that if there was a war with China over that issue, Australia would not be party to it – that we would stand aside – that ANZUS would not apply. And indeed it doesn't because it applies to Australian forces and to the territories if they are attacked by another country in the Pacific. ANZUS, of course, wasn't relevant in the conflicts with Malaysia because America wasn't involved. It was certainly never invoked in relation to Vietnam and it was always denied that ANZUS had any relevance to Vietnam.

But now it applies to Afghanistan and it applies to Iraq. A security pact designed to maintain the integrity of Australia is being turned into a treaty to support United States policy worldwide. We really ought to work out, ourselves, whether that's in Australia's interests. We also support a missile shield, Bush II's version of Ronald Reagan's star wars. We support pre-emptive strikes and we also support the idea of Japan, the United States and Australia acting in concert to make

sure that China does not become a nuisance. I can't really imagine any idea more likely to cause concern than that sort of arrangement.

We also support the current US treatment of people in Guantanamo Bay, who for four and a half years have been outside any law, and only belatedly brought within the reach of the Geneva Convention which they ought to have been from the very beginning. We support military tribunals where the rule of law will not apply, where evidence taken under torture is accepted, where evidence will be heard in secret and in which the defence would not appear. At the time, I never really understood why Robert Menzies, in speaking of the Liberal Party and the documents that were written about it in the early days, so often emphasised the rule of law, access to the law and everything that flows from it. I do now, because we have breached the rule of law and due process in ways that I never would have thought possible.

We think that this probably only applies to people who are a bit different, maybe even people who don't look like us. And therefore it doesn't matter. But we will realise one day that if we don't protect the human rights of everyone, even people who views we might abhor or hate, then the breach of human rights will one day reach to ourselves. That's the nature of it. You only have to look at what's happened in Australia over the last three or four years. Breaches of human rights have affected more and more people and we hear little of it. The reason we hear little is that if any journalist reports such matters, he or she goes to jail. The government now has the power to take any one of you, arrest you and detain you for a week, even another week. They can take you away and you're not allowed to ring up a lawyer. You're not allowed to ring up your wife or your husband to say, "I'm sorry, I'm somewhere. I can't tell you where, but I'm alright, sort of." You're not allowed to make that sort of call. So you just disappear.

I don't know if such a thing has happened to one person, ten persons, a hundred persons or a thousand, because if it does happen to anyone, and they talk about it after the event, they can go to jail for five years. If a journalist reports the circumstances within two years of the event, that journalist can go to jail for five years. These are laws of Australia. I can't believe that somebody who believes in the rule of law, due process and equal access to the law would condone these sorts of provisions.

In the late 1940s and into the 1950s, there were very real concerns about an aggressive, predatory communism. Czechoslovakia was invaded twice by Soviet tanks, Hungary once in 1956 and in the early 1960s a PKI communist group nearly succeeded in Indonesia. It took ten years of resolute struggle to overcome the communist insurgency in Malaya (it's become Malaysia), but it was successful. Communism was regarded as a dangerous, worldwide, aggressive force. And I

believe there was a great deal of justification for that point of view, in those days.

In Australia, in those years, the only significant terrorist incident that occurred was in this city. I was prime minister and we had a meeting in the Hilton Hotel. Somebody wanted to blow up Morarji Desai, the Indian prime minister, because he had a terrorist in jail and the organisation wanted that terrorist out. They had planted bombs all around the place, not around Australia but around south east Asia. Nobody came to me and said they couldn't do their job because our laws are not adequate. But now we've changed the laws and I don't think it will really help with what they are designed to achieve.

There is only one other point that I'd like to make because again I think it points to a difference. Robert Menzies had an intense sense of Australia being a country of esteem, a country that ought to be respected, that could provide weight beyond its size. He would have resented any foreigner interfering in Australian domestic politics. And I would have resented any foreigner interfering in Australian domestic politics.

Now, I'm not an apologist for Mark Latham. He was not destined to become the Australian prime minister. But Australians are capable of sorting that out without repeated comments from the American ambassador in Australia, without comments, even more extreme, from then US Under Secretary of State Richard Armitage, who more than once sought to tell us what to do. He told us we would have to do a lot of the dirty work if there was a war between United States and China over Taiwan. He should have been told to push off when he first said that several years ago. But President Bush also weighed in, in front of the Australian prime minister on the lawns of the White House. I regard those interventions as thoroughly offensive and totally and absolutely inappropriate. I don't think Menzies liked being told what to do by generals, and I don't think he liked being told what to do by foreigners, or for that matter by anyone. And he certainly didn't need anyone's help to win political arguments within this country. It's not the function of the United States and they ought not to take us so much for granted, almost as if we were another US state.

I have drawn over a few differences. The Menzies Liberal Party was a progressive and forward-looking party that did a great deal for Australia. It established the basis of modern Australia. Certainly elements of economic policy have changed markedly, but if Menzies were around today the implementation of economic policy would have changed markedly. Any judgment ought to be made against the debate and judgment of the times, not by applying different principles, or different standards to a situation that occurred many decades ago.



Photo – David Karonidis

Julie Bishop

The Hon Julie Bishop MP was appointed Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training on 27 January 2006. In her first six months as Education Minister, Ms Bishop tackled some big issues such as the need for Australian universities to diversify to keep pace with overseas competition, announced \$1.73 million to increase the number of Aborigines who go to university and to tackle their low retention and success rates and also signalled that she will proactively encourage an upgrading of the teaching of Australian history in Australian schools. Taking science education as her topic, Julie Bishop addressed The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 19 July 2006.

SCIENCE & INNOVATION

— *BIG SCIENCE, BIG PICTURE*

Julie Bishop

I would like here tonight to map out my thoughts on what I see as current imperatives for Australian science and innovation, along with the higher education and research systems that underpin them. These are the areas that will impact on the lives of all of Australia, and I want to explore new ideas for how we might address many of the challenges that we are facing now and in the future.

Science and innovation have long been linked to the prosperity of communities and nations. This is even more so today, for science and innovation are the keys to addressing many of the challenges of the modern world. Their influence and potential is astounding: just think of medical science; environmental remediation and management; communications; transport – just to name a few. Groundbreaking ideas generated by innovative minds in the private and public sectors have paid enormous dividends in improving the lives and livelihoods of many Australians.

This government has made a long-term commitment to building a world-class science and innovation system. Through our ten year, *Backing Australia's Ability* and *Backing Australia's Future* packages, we have begun to put in place a number of strategic measures and drivers aimed at strengthening our core science, research and higher education capabilities. These are aimed at keeping Australia competitive on a global level. But the question remains, “Is this enough?” New drivers are emerging on both global and domestic fronts that are placing new pressures on our current capabilities. But they also present new opportunities, if we are willing to grasp them.

We need to act quickly and with renewed vigour to strengthen the foundations of our competitiveness, and build a prosperous future for this nation. We need to do this on a broad front as part of a new, forward looking vision for science, higher education and research in Australia. Internationally, countries around the world are increasingly seeing science and innovation as the means to building healthier, socially integrated, and economically and environmentally sustainable societies, and platforms for success in the global marketplace.

At the American/Australian Leadership Dialogue in Washington recently, John Marburger, the United States Director for Science and Innovation Policy, outlined the *American Competitiveness Initiative*. This had been announced by President Bush in the State of the Union address, the core elements including a renewed commitment and boost in funding for long-term research, improvements to years K-12 maths and science education, and fostering the expansion of a favourable environment for private-sector investment in innovation.

The US estimates that as much as half its post World War II economic growth is due to R&D fuelled technological progress. Today, the US recognises that its future economic strength and its global leadership depend upon its ability to harness the latest in scientific and technological developments and apply them to real world applications.

Newer players, such as China and India, are investing heavily in their science and innovation systems. For example, over the period 1991-2004 China's investment in research and development grew by roughly a factor of 13. Over the last five years of that period it added almost 400,000 researchers to its skills base. In 2004 China reported nearly 645,000 degrees in Engineering. Australia - 30,000.

Clearly, countries around the world are aiming to use brain-power as a catalyst for economic development. And while we can take pride in our Nobel Prize winners, our Rhodes Scholars, our Federation Fellows and our scientific achievements, at a time when other countries are strengthening their capabilities, there is emerging evidence that some of Australia's domestic capabilities are in danger of softening. One area where this is particularly apparent is in our science and engineering skills base.

The government recently commissioned an Audit of Science, Engineering and Technology skills to examine trends in the demand and supply of these skills in Australia. This evening I am releasing the final report of that Audit – a little more on that later – which finds that, just as global demand and competition for Science Engineering and Technology skills is intensifying, we are under threat of skills shortages in many of the very engineering and scientific disciplines we most need. There are indications that our capabilities may be further eroded if the current trends in quality and uptake of courses and career paths are not reversed.

The audit also highlights the brain drain/brain gain conundrum – or as I like to suggest – brain circulation, as our best and brightest are increasingly mobile. The report does find that we are currently in a net gain skills position due to our increase in skills migration, but we are competing for skills on an international basis and this picture may well change.

A renewed focus on strengthening the underpinning elements of Australia's science and innovation system is not just desirable, it is imperative. Let me list several capabilities that are critical to our achievement:

- ***Global engagement.*** We need to engage globally by more aggressively identifying our strengths, and where those strengths can be built on, through partnerships with particular countries.
- ***Quality research.*** We need to pursue new ways to boost the quality and impact of our research to put it on par with the world's best.
- ***World-class infrastructure.*** Having identified our strengths, we need to provide our researchers with the infrastructure that places them at the cutting-edge of scientific discovery and supports their training needs.
- ***Competitive skills.*** We need to nurture the skills base that our modern world demands through a renewed focus on improving the quality of science education in our schools and universities and by providing rewarding career paths for our best and brightest students and researchers.
- ***Connected industry and communities.*** We need to make better connections between our science, research and higher education and our communities and industries so that we can ensure that Australia remains well placed to capture the maximum benefits from its investment for our economy and society.

We can achieve each of these goals as part of a system-wide refreshment of Australia's capabilities.

Global engagement

Science and research are international fields of human endeavour and a driving force of globalisation itself. Many of the common features of our historic civilisations owe their origins to cross-fertilisation from scientific, mathematical and technological exchanges. International collaboration has become an essential element of science, research and higher education, bringing benefits from the convergence of ideas and the meeting of bright minds. It supports global economies in meeting common and domestic needs and contributes to the global circulation of skills and talent.

We are now moving into an era in which international collaboration will be even more important and require a new focus and consideration of how we can strategically partner with the rest of the world. A number of global challenges are beginning to emerge that threaten the future prosperity of all nations, including climate

change, access to water, secure, clean and efficient energy sources, and emerging diseases.

Australia is strengthening its bilateral science relationships. This year, for example, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund, providing \$20 million over five years for collaboration between Australian and Indian scientists. Australia is also collaborating with its regional partners and the US, to establish the tsunami monitoring and early warning system for the Indian Ocean. Given the events of the last few days, the tsunami up the coast of Indonesia, this can't come soon enough.

These initiatives recognise the incredible potential that partnerships with other nations have for Australia. However, we have failed to fully realise other opportunities. By identifying Australia's existing and emerging strengths, I aim to use our current efforts and existing resources in a more targeted and strategic way. In doing so I will build partnerships with specific countries possessing complementary interests and capabilities to Australia and, where appropriate, to establish bilateral funds to enable scientific collaboration. We currently have three bilateral science funds with China, India and France. What of the US, the UK, the EU, Singapore or Brazil?

We could create joint international centres of excellence that could provide Australia with greater collaborative research partnerships, thus enhancing our scientific capability. At the Prime Minister's Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC) meeting last month, a working group reported on the impact on Australia of the recent strong growth in China and India. I don't believe we should limit our horizons to the emerging economies of only China and India. Through PMSEIC I have supported the establishment of a new working group to analyse more broadly our existing international science and technology activity to address issues, including:

- Which countries have the most to offer Australia in terms of building our science and innovation capability?
- Where are our existing, and what are our emerging, areas of strength?
- Can we be sure that we are getting the best value from our current international engagement?
- And, where can government most usefully intervene?

Once we have the answers we will be better positioned to ensure that our international science and innovation efforts and resources are well targeted and make a significant contribution to Australia's economic prosperity.

Quality

Of course it is not enough just expect to engage with the rest of the world – we also need to have something to offer. It is clear that

Australia cannot compete with the investments of global giants such as China and the US but what we can do is ensure that the quality of Australian scientific and research endeavour in our areas of strength is world-class and that it is progressing our social, economic and environmental goals.

To that end, I am committed to a Research Quality Framework – a new initiative to ensure publicly funded research is measured against international benchmarks for its quality and its impact. Development and implementation of a Research Quality Framework has the potential to provide us, for the first time, with a robust assessment mechanism of both the quality and impact of the research produced by Australian institutions and to act as a driver of excellence on a broad front.

Assessment of impact has been the source of some contention, but is also of great academic and intellectual interest. And rightly so, as it has not been done before. No-one should underestimate the effect the Research Quality Framework will have on Australia's research activity. No more incentives for mediocrity. The funding must follow excellence and relevance.

Infrastructure

To become a leading research nation we need to ensure that our research is underpinned by leading edge, high calibre infrastructure. Through the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy, the Government is providing more than \$500 million to build the critical capabilities that will underpin both discovery and application-based research in Australia. We have identified 16 priorities through the Infrastructure Strategy program to support research activity infrastructure in emerging fields such as biotechnology, nanotechnology, biosecurity and environmental monitoring. This process has been the catalyst for a new spirit of collaboration in the research community.

While this Strategy will do much to serve the infrastructure needs of Australian scientists and researchers, we need to do much more. The cost and complexity of research and facilities in recent years have escalated, and continue to escalate, in response to rapid scientific and technological developments. To remain competitive we must take our investments to the next level. In particular, we must recognise that some of the most exciting and challenging scientific problems of the future will only be solved through large-scale, multi-national efforts beyond the resources of any one country.

This is particularly true in the area of astronomy – one of Australia's recognised areas of research excellence. The Australian government has committed \$20 million to developing a ground-breaking, next-generation radio telescope, the "Extended New Technology Demonstrator", to be built in Western Australia. You

need open spaces with no noise, and we've got just the ideal site in Western Australia. This telescope will demonstrate new technologies needed for the Square Kilometre Array. That is a \$2 billion international project that global partners are currently looking at placing somewhere on the earth, and Australia is now putting in place some of the capabilities to attract a project like the Square Kilometre Array – it is all about tracking the origins of the universe. This is really Big Science!

Participation in such “Big Science” projects will be critical in taking Australia's agenda for science and innovation into the twenty-first century and beyond. We need to look at how we can optimise the intellectual, economic and political rewards that involvement in such major international efforts can bring. Australia should consider its level of involvement in other major international projects such as the collaboration around the development of Generation IV nuclear power reactors and the development of nuclear fusion technology, discovered by renowned Australian Sir Mark Oliphant.

Competitive skills

In order to think big, we need to look at our foundations. Our universities must aim for world's best. There is no excuse for pursuing the “one size fits all” model of the past and universities must diversify not only to thrive, but also to survive. To maintain our global reputation for education excellence, and to maintain our fourth largest export, International Education Services, state universities must diversify and pursue their strengths. This will mean, over time, changed missions, changed course selection and delivery mechanisms, changed academic and managerial structures. Standing still is no longer good enough.

The findings of the Science Engineering and Technology Skills Audit report that I have released tonight give rise to a number of challenges. In particular, the report forecasts that Australia's supply in key science, education and technology areas will not be sufficient to meet future demand. Projected demand for science skills suggests that we will need an additional 55,000 professionals by 2012-13 while our supply is likely to fall short by up to 35 per cent.

The report suggests that there are a number of issues around uptake of Science Engineering and Technology studies and career paths, which, if not addressed, will reinforce the problem – such as the static or declining rates of student participation in these courses; concerns that we must improve the quality of Science Engineering and Technology education, and evidence that career paths and opportunities are poorly understood and limited in some areas.

We must respond to these challenges quickly and instigate a range of actions – in our classrooms, in our universities, in our industries

and in our communities. This must be an integral component of our forward agenda for science and innovation so that we can build on and grow the intellectual capital that can sustain us.

As a follow-up to the report, I have commissioned research into how we can improve Australia's Science Engineering and Technology capacity. Such as how the community engages with Science, Engineering and Technology, what triggers the engagement of pre-school aged children and primary school students with Science, Engineering and Technology and what career paths are available. I am particularly concerned by the lack of uptake of science in schools. I agree entirely with those who are convinced that science and mathematics education is critical for building a strong and innovative society.

We need to engage young people in science early. On the way here, I was recalling how George Negus told me recently that his eldest son Ned, was studying ophiology. I said, "What, he woke up one morning and decided he wanted to be an ophiologist and study snakes?" George said that way back at his son's fifth birthday, instead of getting a clown at the party, they invited along an ophiologist who brought along snakes and other creepy crawlies, and young Ned Negus was smitten. From that day on, he was going to be a scientist or researcher studying snakes!

We should never underestimate the power of introducing children early to the wonders and mysteries of science. Ask any distinguished scientist and they will identify a teacher who inspired them to undertake science subjects during their schooling. We must maintain a high-quality of science and maths teaching in schools to meet the challenges.

I was impressed during recent discussions with John Marburger and later with United States Secretary for Education Margaret Spellings that the United States has adopted an aggressive strategy to boost the quality of science and maths education in its schools. Its new *Ten Thousand Teachers, Ten Million Minds* initiative has a number of ambitious aims, including:

- 10,000 more scientists, students, post doctoral fellows and technicians given opportunities to contribute to the innovation exercise.
- 100,000 more highly qualified maths and science teachers by 2015.
- 800,000 more workers skilled for the jobs for the twenty-first century and so on.

Australia already has in place a number of laudable initiatives and programs to support science education in our schools. These include: innovative school projects, such as the *Australian School Innovation in Science Technology and Mathematics Project*; curriculum modules professional development programs for teachers and initiatives such

the *Questacon Smart Moves Invention Convention* which brings together secondary students and their ideas from around Australia. A five-day program of: ideas development; money management; intellectual property issues; networking and mentoring; commercialisation; and guest speakers from business/science worlds; and CSIRO's *Double Helix Science Club* - a science awareness club for children - with 17,000 members! Over the last 20 years, more than 100,000 kids have been members.

But we need to do more and develop a more coherent, coordinated and national approach to science education in Australia. And we must have a greater continuous supply of highly trained qualified teachers in maths and science - from our teaching graduates to those working in science or maths professions who could be encouraged to take up teaching.

I am establishing the Australian School Science Education Framework to map the key science education initiatives that are currently in place. The framework will identify what gaps exist in our current programs, and determine what works and then recommend actions to enhance and address future priority needs in science education. This must be a highly collaborative project that will require significant commitment from all states and all sectors. Improvements to science education alone will not be sufficient to attract and retain our best and brightest in science, engineering and technology careers. They must be provided with quality career paths.

In the last six months I have been asked on more than occasion by the scientific and research community, "What are you doing to ensure our young PhDs and post-Docs continue with a research career?" And from talking to many early career researchers over the past few months they tell me that they are looking for career stability and are frustrated with the amount of time they spend writing grant applications just to maintain their project funding.

Our bright young scientists should be encouraged to go overseas to gain international recognition and exposure, but we need to ensure that they have a reason to return to Australia. We need longer term research grants and research fellowships. On average the length of a research grant is three years. Given that researchers are expected to write their next application in year two when they should really be approaching the substance of the research, this is hardly an ideal situation. One idea is to make the ARC Discovery grants automatically five years duration and I intend to examine this issue with the ARC.

To this end, I announce this evening that the CSIRO will increase its investment in its early to mid career researchers with an additional 40 new postdoctoral fellows and an additional ten new CSIRO Science Leaders. The CSIRO Science Leader Scheme is directed to high performing scientists with between five and ten years post-

doctoral experience. This increased investment will amount to \$18.3 million over three years and provide important career opportunities to Australian researchers.

But I want to take this further and I have an idea, framed in part from my current bedtime reading list which includes Peter Doherty's *The Beginner's Guide to winning the Nobel Prize*, which lucidly explains the rewards and pitfalls of a career in scientific research in Australia. Imagine if our post-docs went on to long term contractual positions within our premier scientific organisations, with the possibility of international placements at similar overseas institutions. In my "perfect" science world, CSIRO, for example, would have a certain number of competitive places available to outstanding university students seeking to have a permanent research career. The student could undertake a PhD with close supervision by CSIRO, then be offered a Post-Doctoral position, to be followed by a permanent position with opportunities for international exchanges. I have asked CSIRO to look into such a 'career ladder' scheme and what it would take to establish it. And why couldn't such a career ladder scheme be introduced into some of our other research agencies such as ANSTO (our Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation) or private research institutions.

This raises the question, why do we equate career progression with management? Why are we surprised that Bill Gates has determined to keep his best researchers and programmers in research and programming and pay them well to avoid them leaving to pursue management roles for career advancement?

Finally, connections. How to best capture the full potential of Australian scientific and research endeavour. We need to concentrate on building effective connections and pathways between researchers and industry and the community which go beyond a focus on patents, licensing and start-up companies. One successful example of these connections is the government's Cooperative Research Centre Program which promotes long-term strategic collaborations between researchers and research users from universities, industry and the public sector. A recent study by the Allen Consulting Group measured the economic impact of CRCs and concluded that as a result of the CRC Program the nation's GDP is cumulatively higher by at least \$1.14 billion.

Australia needs to do more to engage in the early stages of research. India, for example, has established Institutes of Technology to foster excellence in separate areas of national importance in higher education and research. Our universities have an important role to play in building separate areas of excellence. At the first Ministerial Council on Education which I attended two weeks ago, State Education and Territory Ministers agreed for the first time on the

Australian government's insistence to create specialist universities operating in teaching and research in one or two fields, moving, for the first time, from the obsession with comprehensive universities, universities trying to be all things to all students.

Our existing universities are also starting to look seriously at their areas of specialisation. James Cook University, for example, has a significant focus on tropical and marine science, while Curtin University is gradually becoming a world renowned energy and mineral resource engineering and sciences university. But we lack the specialist universities of our overseas competitors – such as the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology which specialises in engineering, natural sciences, architecture and mathematics, or in the US, the Rockefeller University which is devoted exclusively to Medical Research.

I have outlined for you this evening some of my views on science and innovation in Australia – why it is important, where we are performing well and where I see room for improvement. I am looking at ways to build on the strengths we already have and extend these into new areas of endeavour and performance. I don't believe we can defer consideration of these important issues for the prosperity of our nation depends upon it.

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Photographer: David Karonidis

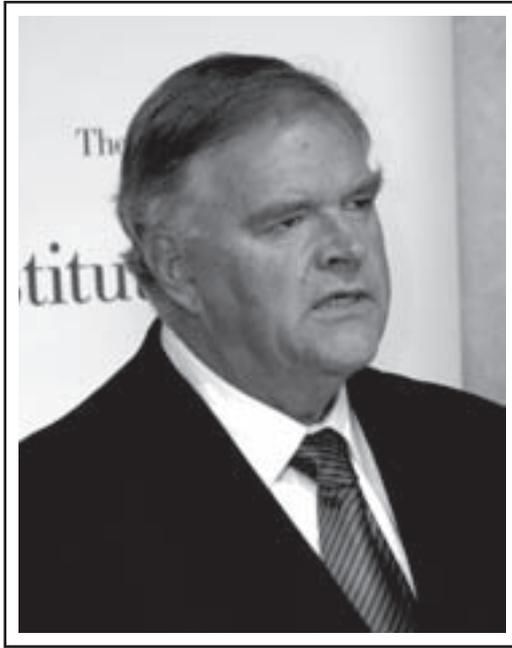


Photo – David Karonidis

Kim Beazley

In an important address to The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 24 July 2006, federal Labor leader the Hon Kim Beazley announced that he would seek an historic change to his Party’s uranium “no new mines” policy. As he put it, “I believe the real issue is what we do with the uranium we mine – not how many places we mine it. ... And we [Labor] have always been prepared to modernise our policy to reflect the changing circumstances of the world.” Acknowledging the reform would be resisted by some in his Party, Kim Beazley added, “I won’t stifle debate on this issue. I welcome it.”

LEADERSHIP IN THE *NATIONAL INTEREST*

Kim Beazley

Thank you all for giving me the opportunity tonight to talk about energy policy and the national interest.

First let me say this: when I returned to the Labor leadership, eighteen months ago, I confronted quite a different task from that which I faced in 1996. Then, we had to recover and rebuild. Today, we must organise and fight.

Today we must show the families of Middle Australia we have what it takes to govern our great country again, in the national interest. And I confront this task with the lessons I learned from my first period as Leader clear in my mind. The greatest lesson of all? That, as the world always changes, Labor always stays relevant. As my friend Tony Blair put it – we must be a movement, not a monument.

I'm now served by a young and vital frontbench with new ideas. A fighting parliamentary party with the bit between its teeth on industrial relations. Alongside a labour movement mobilised in a way I have never seen in my lifetime. All of us determined to defeat John Howard and his extreme attack on the wages and conditions families of Middle Australia rely on to pay off their homes. Determined to build a nation we're proud to hand to our kids.

The years of cautious rebuilding in Federal Labor have passed. Without question, these years of my leadership are years of decision. I have embraced the task and the times. I have not shirked my responsibility. I didn't change Labor's 2004 policy on funding of non-government schools because it was easy. I did it because I knew it was right. I didn't stand up and say I'll rip up John Howard's wage-cutting AWAs because it was easy. I did it because I knew it was right.

And tonight, I'm not leading a debate in the Labor Party about uranium mining and export safeguards because it's easy. I believe it's right. Right for Australia's future.

An agenda for the future

After 10 long years, John Howard has no agenda for the future. He has slashed investment in higher education and skills. The only

government of a developed country to cut public investment in tertiary education – cutting eight per cent over the last 10 years while other OECD nations have increased their spending by an average of 38 per cent. He has turned 300,000 Australians away from TAFE.

He has put up tax on business research and development, smashing private sector investment. So investment has collapsed – for most of his decade remaining below 1996 levels and even now barely higher than it was 10 years ago. He has spent 10 years trying to sell Telstra instead of building broadband. So we have some of the slowest internet speeds of any major economy – behind even Slovenia and the Slovak Republic.

No wonder we have among the highest real interest rates in the developed world. No wonder our foreign debt has hit half a trillion dollars – one of the highest levels of foreign debt in the world.

In all these crucial areas of national policy, I have outlined Labor's Blueprints. Ambitious plans for nation-building and reform. A blueprint to tackle the threat of climate change and build a sustainable future. A blueprint for an Australian fuels industry that ends our dependence on foreign oil. A blueprint to set great national goals for the health of the next generation of Australians – our kids. Blueprints to invest in the skills of our people; rebuild our crumbling infrastructure; kick start innovation and turn Aussie brilliance into dollars.

And last week, I released Jenny Macklin's White Paper for universities – promising the biggest reforms to higher education in this country in 20 years. Yet while we are preparing for the future, all John Howard can offer is media spin. His dismal energy speech last week showed that. Not a single new initiative. Not one. No answers for the future.

In fact John Howard did not even ask the hard questions:

- How do we make our vast reserves of coal and gas cleaner?
- How do we make more use of renewable energy?
- How do we find more and better Australian transport fuels?

Nuclear power isn't the answer to any of these.

Contrast that with the practical plans I announced in my Blueprint speech on fuels and energy policy. Plans to re-examine the depreciation regime for gas production infrastructure, and allow the selective use of "flow-through" share schemes for smaller operators. Plans to make alternative fuel vehicles tariff free and to give city traffic and parking advantages for these vehicles – as well as examining tax rebates to convert petrol cars to LPG. Plans to work with industry to improve engine design and fuel quality standards. Plans for a feasibility study into a gas to liquids fuels plant in Australia, and to look at Petroleum Resources Rent Tax incentives for developers of gas fields which provide resources for gas to liquid fuels projects. Plans for a new infrastructure investment allowance to overcome the barriers to a

major gas to liquids fuel project in Australia, caused by the remoteness of our untapped gas reserves. Along with a targeted funding scheme for research and development in this area. And plans to ease the regulation of biodiesel production on farms and encourage a sustainable ethanol industry. That's my nation-building Blueprint on fuels.

Yet when Australia needs nation-building like this, John Howard gives us nothing but the old Liberal chestnut that Australia should be a nuclear-powered society. And a slogan that Australia should be an "energy superpower". Just a cute way to state the bleeding obvious: that Australia is, and will be, one of the world's great suppliers of gas, coal and uranium. We don't need a slogan to tell us that. And we certainly shouldn't let a slogan limit our ambitions for our country. Countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran aim to be energy powers. Australia should aim to be a genuinely modern economy.

Now, let me make a prediction. Tomorrow, John Howard will come out with his tired, flawed argument that if I'm prepared to export uranium elsewhere for use in the nuclear cycle I should be willing to have nuclear power in Australia. It's an absurd, dishonest argument. Frankly, the sort of rubbish I've come to expect from the man who won't come clean on his own nuclear ambitions.

We know it's not an either/or. Australia can be a more responsible exporter of uranium while we pursue an energy strategy tailor-made for our future. In fact, given Australia already exports uranium, is Mr Howard suggesting we should automatically and unthinkingly wade further into the nuclear cycle? That we should build nuclear reactors here, or become a dump for the world's nuclear waste? If that's the case, he should come clean.

The truth is, Australia is blessed with abundant coal and natural gas. Blessed with abundant sun and wind. We should be making the most of these advantages. Our future is in renewables, not reactors.

Exporting for prosperity – and security

So tonight, I want to outline what I believe Australia should do with our uranium exports, and what our broader policy on nuclear issues should be. My point tonight is this: I believe the real issue is what we do with the uranium we mine – not how many places we mine it.

Uranium is not a fuel like any other. It requires special strategic decisions which impact on export conditions, exploration decisions and mining arrangements. Labor has always understood this special responsibility. And we have always been prepared to modernise our policy to reflect the changing circumstances of the world. Since at least the late 1970s, Labor has been very cautious about Australian involvement in the nuclear fuel cycle. This coincided with a growing awareness of the danger of nuclear proliferation – and a security

environment where arms control was at the top of the international agenda.

In the 1980s, Labor moved decisively away from opposing uranium mining and export altogether and instead adopted a policy of responsible supply in the Cold War-era. The original three-mines policy reflected this approach. The 1990s no-new-mines revision was a temporary solution, reflecting the reality that a Howard Government could approve new mines. Importantly, it was a decision made before the full effects of the minerals boom were felt in the Australian economy. All along, Labor's motive has been to maintain sound export controls in the national and global interest.

Each step in changes to Labor policy has been to keep in balance our responsibility as a cautious supplier of uranium, our concern for environmental sustainability, and our respect for contracts and understanding of sovereign risk. Now the world has changed again. Australia is already the world's second biggest supplier of mined uranium. With the planned Olympic Dam expansion, we will be the biggest within a few short years. Banning new uranium mines would not limit the export of Australian uranium to the world – it would simply favour incumbent producers.

Now our interests focus very specifically on export controls, rather than on mines themselves. Yet though circumstances change, that same balance of considerations must be maintained. I've said many times that as a cautious exporter of uranium, Australians are as far in to the nuclear cycle as they want to be. I've also said many times that we must move from a focus on no new mines to a focus on the terms and conditions under which we export uranium. At the next Federal conference, I will move to ensure that the platform reflects this.

So tonight I announce that I will seek a change to my Party's platform to replace the "no new mines" policy with a new approach based on the strongest safeguards in the world. I fully realise there are diverse views in my Party on this matter. Indeed there are diverse views in my Shadow Ministry and the caucus. No doubt there will be spirited discussions following this speech; from valued and thoughtful friends on either side of the argument. But I won't stifle debate on this issue. I welcome it. My colleagues have considered views on these matters. I will consult widely on the detail of the change in the lead up to National Conference next year. That is the proper forum for the decision in our democratic Party.

Tonight I outline the personal beliefs I'll take to that Conference. We need impregnable arguments against John Howard's failures in energy policy – and against his obsession with an economically unaffordable, environmentally uncertain, and strategically unwise domestic nuclear power industry. So at its heart, the new policy

I propose will be based on the strength of safeguards, not on the number of mines.

Here's why. Exporting uranium will help to build our future prosperity – and pay off John Howard's foreign debt. With demand for uranium worldwide increasing rapidly, some forecast earnings on uranium exports could increase by 50 per cent this year alone. This will continue to grow. Thirty five per cent of Europe's electricity already comes from nuclear power. And with China forecasting an increase from two per cent to four per cent of its electricity from nuclear sources by 2020, demand for Australian uranium could almost double in the next 15 years. Uranium has an important part to play in our energy exports - worth nearly half a billion dollars a year – but we should keep things in proportion.

This year Australia will export nearly \$7 billion worth of liquefied natural gas and nearly \$8 billion in thermal coal. Even if we doubled or quadrupled our earnings from uranium, they would still not exceed either gas or coal in significance for our economy. But we must grasp the export opportunities that present themselves. After 10 long years of the Howard Government we have a massive foreign debt problem in this country. Our national challenge is to take the economic opportunity presented by uranium exports responsibly. So I believe that when we allow new mines we should have tough new tests. I believe there should be a strong national interest test on ownership.

The Foreign Investment Review Board process is suitable for judging the national interest in economic issues. But allowing new uranium mines affects Australia's wider national interest – our environmental sustainability and our national security. So I will propose a strong national interest test, to be put in place for any proposal for foreign ownership or control of new Australian uranium mines. One way to do this would be to ensure that any proposal must be considered by the Cabinet as a whole, after formal consideration both by the National Security Committee of Cabinet and by appropriate environmental and industrial review. There may be other processes we should consider in developing this test as well. The bottom line is that as Prime Minister, I would take a lot of convincing that existing Australian control over our uranium resources should be further diluted.

I also believe there should be strong standards to ensure indigenous people benefit from mining in remote Australia. We will not solve the social problems in remote Aboriginal communities without jobs and economic opportunities. At a time when Australia faces a severe skills shortage and desperately needs more people participating in the workforce, it is terrible that indigenous employment is still so low.

My colleague, Martin Ferguson, points to 2004 research suggesting the costs of indigenous unemployment to government is \$1 billion per annum; the cost to the economy in lost productive output is another \$3 billion; and related social welfare expenditure and foregone tax revenue is a further \$3 billion. A shocking waste that cannot describe the true human cost. In remote regions, greater efforts by the mining industry can help greatly. There are already impressive partnerships between Indigenous communities and mining companies like BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto and Anglo. In my home state of Western Australia, I think of the Pilbara and Kimberley. Progress is being made such as greater direct employment of indigenous Australians, indigenous employment targets for mining contractors, and especially the growing indigenous owned and operated contracting and service companies. I will ensure that these initiatives and the same high standards of corporate social responsibility are a condition of new uranium mines.

Stronger safeguards

Now let me turn to the most important issue: controls over exports and especially support for nuclear non-proliferation. This is my focus. I believe that terrorism, poverty, climate change and the spread of weapons of mass destruction are the four critical international challenges of our age. Australia has no greater international obligations and no greater international opportunities than those granted by our position as a nuclear supplier. We can do much to limit the spread of weapons of mass destruction and to work for nuclear non-proliferation.

The world is threatened by the collapse of the existing non-proliferation regime. We must do everything within our power to prevent that. So I will propose that Labor's platform include much stricter controls over uranium exports. I believe there should be "three tests" – three strict new measures that must be agreed by any country which wants to buy Australian uranium. The first test: accept the NPT. Labor will ensure no country should get its hands on Australian uranium without signing the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty – and abiding by it. The second test: accept the world's strictest safeguards on the peaceful use of uranium.

Labor will strengthen bilateral safeguards so that they are water tight:

- Strict safeguards and security controls over their nuclear power industries;
- Practical and continuing commitment to non-proliferation policies;

- Ratification of the international and bilateral nuclear safeguards agreements necessary to support these controls and policies; and
- Above all, ensure that uranium mined in Australia, and nuclear products derived from it, are used only for civil purposes by approved instrumentalities in approved countries.

These agreements must state clearly that Australia will have complete discretion to stop exporting to any country which ceases to observe these safeguards. Or any country that follows policies which do not reflect our national interests in nuclear non-proliferation. They must also have effective provisions for verification.

The third test: join Australia's new diplomatic initiative against nuclear proliferation. I believe governments should join in a new diplomatic caucus of like-minded countries - to be led by Australia and including both nuclear suppliers and nuclear users. A nuclear "Cairns Group". This will be the basis for a major new push to put non-proliferation at the centre of international politics. Countries signing up to this new diplomatic effort would agree to work with Australia toward important agreed objectives including:

- A review to strengthen the Non Proliferation Treaty;
- New incentives for countries to remain within the peaceful nuclear community, for instance with new assistance in technology transfer and other important forms of peaceful scientific and research co-operation;
- Ensuring that countries within the peaceful nuclear community have the political, diplomatic, economic and military support they need to protect their legitimate national security interests without nuclear weapons;
- Pursuing the recommendations of the Canberra Commission; and
- Ensuring that the carbon emissions gains from the growth of nuclear power are matched by new and innovative work on waste disposal and safety of power generation.

Just as I believe Australia should use our position as a leading uranium supplier to support global non-proliferation efforts, so I believe we should be a driving force for major improvements in nuclear safety. So tonight, I'll propose extra environmental and safety controls on our uranium exports. These controls should be part of the bilateral agreements our government signs before countries can import our uranium.

I want tough new standards to be part of the debate in developing Labor's new policy. We must get the balance right. Nations importing Australian uranium should have to adopt world's best practice nuclear safety standards - especially in their nuclear power plants. This must begin with clearly agreed measures to meet, maintain

and report against international safety benchmarks. For instance we should ensure countries importing our uranium participate fully in the Nuclear Safety Convention. We should also consider proposals to strengthen the existing international standards. A new regime of international nuclear safety inspections could be put in place, plus independent supervision of automated inspection equipment. There should be specific safety measures for those nations that have special circumstances. For example, where earthquakes and other external events are frequent, such as Indonesia, ensuring that nuclear power plants are designed and constructed to withstand seismic activity. And we must be sure that our uranium is disposed of properly.

As the world moves to establish permanent high-level waste storage – such as deep geological repositories – we should ensure that the construction, management, security, and monitoring of any deep geological repositories is an international responsibility. We need an open debate in the community about the best safeguards. These are tough standards which will not be easily met. They are no soft touch. But I am determined to get the balance right.

No nuclear power for Australia

There will be debate within Labor in the lead up to next year's conference on our uranium mining policy. But on nuclear power, Labor policy remains crystal clear. Labor's view is that nuclear power is not appropriate for our country. I rule out nuclear power in Australia. It is not in our national interest. The economics of nuclear power simply don't stack up here. The fact is we have plentiful cheap gas and coal – enough to power us for decades to come. While nuclear power is enormously expensive and the financial burden continues for years. Indeed the UK government has estimated it will cost \$170 billion to clean up 20 British nuclear sites.

As a nation, Australia still does not have a solution for the disposal of even low-level research and medical waste. The fact is under successive Liberal ministers even the plan to store waste from the Lucas Heights reactor has been a debacle. And the regional reaction would be bad for Australia's security. The fact is it sends the wrong message to the region. There is no question that Australia would be less secure, and not more, if our neighbours believe we have nuclear ambitions.

I think former Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev put it well when he warned:

Think again, think seven times again before you leap and start construction of new nuclear power plants ... *With my experience of Chernobyl I know what is involved.*

That's why, almost four months ago to the day, I challenged John Howard to come clean on his plans for nuclear power in Australia. I said then: "John Howard is talking up a debate on nuclear power for this country because he is seriously looking at it but won't say so publicly - yet. But I have no doubt that if John Howard wins the next election he will bring nuclear power to this country."

Since then, John Howard's nuclear power debate has become John Howard's nuclear power inquiry. And if he wins the next election, it will become John Howard's nuclear power plan. Just don't expect him to say where the reactors would go.

This obsession with nuclear power is the ultimate proof that after 10 long years of government John Howard really has changed. He used to be a political pragmatist. Now he pushes extreme ideology. He used to be an economic rationalist. Now he wants the ultimate, un-economic white elephant. Most of all, he used to understand the hopes and aspirations of ordinary Australians. Now he is completely out of touch with Middle Australia. Just look at his arrogant and incompetent mismanagement of the Lucas Heights reactor - and of the disposal of its waste.

Labor recognises the important role the new reactor, approved this month, will play in the medical treatment of many Australians. But the Howard Government must end its culture of secrecy surrounding nuclear reactors and nuclear waste, and make sure the community is told what is going on at Lucas Heights. It's just not acceptable for the Minister, Julie Bishop, to mislead the parliament about safety at this facility as she did when questioned during the Budget session. And the licence to the new research reactor also brings a nuclear waste dump one step closer for the people of the Northern Territory. Without consultation. And despite promising before the last election there would not be a dump in the Territory.

Uranium enrichment and downstream processing

Just as Labor's policy on nuclear power remains clear, our policy on uranium enrichment is unchanged. There will be no case for uranium enrichment in Australia for many years into the future. I believe John Howard is wrong to thumb his nose at international efforts to control nuclear fuel. Presidents Bush and Putin have outlined a plan for co-operation between their countries to provide participating countries with nuclear fuel for peaceful purposes as well as storage for nuclear waste.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has called for no new enrichment facilities to be constructed anywhere in the world for at least five years. Yet John Howard plows ahead, talking up downstream processing for Australia, despite all its current economic, environmental and strategic problems. There's a strange echo here of Liberal

Prime Minister John Gorton's attempts to keep Australia out of the Non Proliferation Treaty and his plans for uranium enrichment in Australia back in the 1960s.

Australian policy makers understood the potential link between downstream processing and weaponisation. Australian Atomic Energy Commission Chairman Philip Baxter declared publicly in 1969:

The growth of this industry and the expertise and facilities which it will create will provide a basis from which any Australian government, at any future date, feeling that nuclear weapons were essential to provide this nation's security, could move with a minimum of delay to provide such a means of defence.

At the time, Gorton hid his motives, but 30 years later, he too admitted the truth, saying:

We were interested in this thing because it could provide electricity to everybody *and it could, if you decided later on, it could make an atomic bomb.*

That's just another reason it's so irresponsible of John Howard to talk up processing without addressing the strategic policy issues that arise. How would John Howard reassure our neighbours that processing facilities in Australia did not reflect wider nuclear ambitions? And what would he do to secure Australia if other countries in our region pressed ahead with processing programs of their own? John Howard also hasn't explained what his plans for downstream processing mean for waste storage in Australia. There is growing momentum in international politics – including in the Bush-Putin plan – for countries which process uranium to accept spent fuel as well. John Howard cannot find a solution for Australia's low and intermediate level waste, let alone talking about taking the world's high level waste.

The best contribution Australia can make to the world's nuclear waste disposal is as a developer and supplier of technology, like synroc. But especially considering John Howard's arrogant approach to disposing of waste from Lucas Heights, I have no confidence that his plans for uranium enrichment won't ultimately lead down this path for our country. In the real world – as opposed to John Howard's ideology – there is actually no serious private sector proposal for uranium processing in Australia. And it's hard to see where one would come from. Certainly not unless the current review of the Non Proliferation Treaty is complete and agreements flowing from it are in place. Certainly not unless downstream processing is economically viable. Certainly not unless the strategic policy questions are answered and environmental concerns are met.

In my opinion, these conditions for uranium enrichment in Australia could not be met for many years into the future if at all. It will not happen while I'm Prime Minister. And I also believe that any

government proposing to bring uranium enrichment to this country must take that proposal to an election.

Building our future prosperity and security

I end this speech where I started it. I'm not the type of man to shirk tough decisions or tough debates. Unlike John Howard, I'll never let ideology get in the way of Australia's national interest. He has gone too far in the nuclear debate. In his desperation to find an agenda for the future, he has dredged up the ultimate distraction from the past: nuclear power for Australia.

As my colleague Anthony Albanese loves to remind me, in this country, plans for nuclear power are the final refuge of dying conservative governments. John Gorton thrashed around for a nuclear plan in the late 1960s. The sign and concrete slab at Jervis Bay are his legacy to the nation. Malcolm Fraser had some things to say about nuclear power in the early 1980s. He told a New York business audience that a nuclear industry could be developed in Australia. And now John Howard has a nuclear power obsession of his own. When Australia needs nation-building, instead we get a government interested only in itself and its ideological obsessions.

We need a genuine plan for the future. For our universities and TAFEs. For our crumbling infrastructure. For renewable energy, not reactors. I'm determined to make the hard decisions to get Labor fit for government. Because Middle Australia needs a government that will put aside ideology. A government that puts the national interest and the future of middle Australia front and centre again. That's why Australia needs a Beazley Labor government.



Photo - David Karonidis

Isabel Kershner

Isabel Kershner is Associate Editor, Middle East, of the *The Jerusalem Report* and the author of *Barrier - The Seam of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Palgrave Macmillan) which records the feelings of countless Palestinians and Israelis as Israel's security barrier is erected. In exploring the reasons for the barrier and its political and moral implications, Kershner focuses on the people committed to their causes. During a visit to Sydney which coincided with the outbreak of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, Isabel Kershner addressed The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 2 August 2006.

ISRAEL AND THE

PALESTINIANS: WHERE TO NEXT?

Isabel Kershner

I'm going back to Israel tomorrow with some trepidation. As my nine year old said to me yesterday, "If there's a war going on why are we going back early?" I do sometimes wonder whether we Israelis and Palestinians are doomed to a future of eternal violence with lulls in between of a few years or more. It's very easy at this point in time to despair, or feel on the verge of despair. Indeed most of us have come to the conclusion there are no magic solutions or instant formulas. We have a very hard road ahead. I usually like to convey optimism and try and look at the glass half full; to seek a way out of whatever particular crisis we're in. But at this particular point in time it is very, very hard to see the way out.

Since the death of Yasser Arafat in November 2004, we've been living with the legacy of Arafat, which is the legacy of chaos. It's what the Palestinians themselves call the "weapons chaos," a huge proliferation of arms in the territories, coupled with a largely dysfunctional Palestinian Authority; an authority that essentially, for the last few years, has been running hospitals and schools but doing nothing on the security front. Even before Arafat died, he'd essentially abdicated responsibility for at least two years. What he's left behind is a huge leadership crisis on the Palestinian side, a vacuum.

On both sides, Israeli and Palestinian, in every internal opinion poll done, there is still a clear majority for a peaceful solution -- for a resolution based on the two-state solution. It comes through time and again. The framework is there.

We've gone from the collapse of the Camp David summit in July 2000, through to the Clinton parameters, the Taba negotiations, and then the freelance, unofficial peace initiative known as the Geneva Accord. Through all these processes a framework has emerged, yet for the time being we seem to be further away than ever from any kind of implementation. On the Palestinian side, the public is almost losing sight of a negotiated peaceful solution; you just hear despair. There is despair with the leadership, or lack of leadership, the lack of law and order and, of course, despair with Israel and what they see as Israeli

schemes and designs. On the Israeli side, there is a feeling that there's no one to deal with. That has been the case for six years, since the outbreak of the second intifada and the violence that ensued. It first took the form of the suicide bombings, which became an existential threat to the Israeli way of life. And now it takes the form of the Qassam rockets that are being launched constantly from Gaza, more frequently, more accurately, and with a longer range as time goes on. So on the Israeli side, there might still be a majority for a negotiated solution, but the majority also doesn't see anyone to deliver it on the other side.

This notion of having no partner is essentially what gave rise to the Kadima party, the party that Ariel Sharon established shortly before his catastrophic stroke a few months ago, leading to the election of Ehud Olmert and the new government at the end of March 2006. Sharon was the most trusted Israeli leader at the time. He had gone from being a very controversial figure in Israel to a very beloved and trusted one. He came to represent the mainstream. Such a departure, so sudden and unexpected, could have had bad implications elsewhere. In Israel, the smooth transition of power attests to the strength of the country's democratic institutions. And we did see a very smooth transition, leading into the election and the victory of the party he had just set up.

Kadima came in on a platform of unilateral disengagement. That was the strategy, and that was what the government was voted in to do. It became the new Israeli concept. If there's no partner on the other side, if there's no one to negotiate with, or nobody to deliver or implement a signed agreement, the thinking went, we have to start taking our future into our own hands, and start acting on our own, in our own interest. We witnessed the unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in the summer of 2005. The idea was to continue that process in large parts of the West Bank. In the last few months, the barrier under construction between Israel and the West Bank had gone from fulfilling its original purpose and design -- which was purely to stop suicide bombers -- and had been imbued with much more significance. It had become a very central component in the idea of being able to withdraw to secure lines, behind a fence. The idea was to have a line of defence and basically to be on the other side.

The disengagement from Gaza, as a model, was very traumatic for Israel. It meant uprooting 8000 Jewish settlers, some of whom were third generation residents in Gush Katif, the main Jewish settlement area in the strip. It was traumatic, but it was essentially deemed at the time to be a success. There was no civil war; in fact there was very little violence between the Israeli parties involved. The army carried out the job professionally, and with great sensitivity. And the country was beginning to move on. That is why the idea of essentially creating

an eastern border for the state of Israel became real and was seen as being in Israel's interest.

Now there's been a massive collapse of concepts on both sides. It has happened very rapidly, and it has left us all searching and grappling over where to go next.

As for the unilateralist concept, it became clear soon after the new government was formed in Israel (and well before that to me) that there's no way Israel can set its own eastern border, and have it internationally recognised or have it become permanent. That just was not going to happen. Israeli interests mean setting an eastern border that keeps the main, most populous West Bank settlement blocks on the Israeli side. Of course, it doesn't involve any compromise around Jerusalem. And these are issues which, as far as the international community is concerned, that have to be settled bilaterally, by both sides.

In any case there were no maps and there was no timetable; it wasn't entirely clear when, or to what extent, this withdrawal was going to take place. And it soon became very clear from Washington and elsewhere that there would be no approval for a unilaterally set border. It would not be permanent or internationally recognised. That was the beginning of the collapse.

Now, of course, we're in a whole new ball game following the Hamas victory in the Palestinian Authority. In addition we've become embroiled in a serious confrontation in the north, and we've been dragged back into Gaza because of the ongoing firing of Qassam missiles from there. One can't talk about withdrawing from parts of the West Bank when Israel is back in Gaza, fighting the Qassam launchers, and back in Lebanon. All this has put the unilateral withdrawal plan on hold, if not erased it altogether. It has become clear that the barrier is good for stopping suicide bombers -- which is, indeed, what it was designed for-- but it doesn't stop the digging of tunnels and it doesn't stop rockets. Israel is not going to be able to withdraw behind a fence line and forget about what happens on the other side. The other side is not going to forget us.

On the Palestinian side, there has also been a collapse of concepts. If we go back to January 2005, Mahmud Abbas, otherwise known as Abu Mazen, was elected as President or Chairman of the Palestinian Authority. There was a large voter turnout and a big majority in his favour. He was elected on a peaceful platform. He is known to be for negotiations and against suicide bombing. He was also elected on a very clear platform, or promise, of instituting order in the territories. His slogan was "One authority, one law, one gun." The idea was to restore order, to put an end to the chaos of the militias and gangs in Gaza, many of whom are literally criminal gangs. You even have

private family militias by now. But, having been elected on this platform, Abu Mazen didn't carry through, he didn't deliver.

We can speculate as to why. When I asked security people in Gaza why they weren't acting against the Qassam launchers or to disarm some of the local militias and gangs, I was told that they simply didn't have the orders.

Abu Mazen had a plan. His plan, or concept, which was good on paper, was to reach a deal with Hamas, the fundamentalist Islamic Resistance Movement; to bring about a ceasefire so that Hamas would no longer be sending its bombers into Israel on a weekly basis and would therefore not act as a spoiler. In return, Abu Mazen would pave the way for Hamas's political participation in the Palestinian Authority. According to Abu Mazen's concept, the PA would go to elections to vote in a new parliament, or Palestinian Legislative Council, for the first time in ten years. The old council really had lost its legitimacy. The Palestinian Authority in general was seen as ineffective, corrupt and undemocratic. The idea was to hold elections, let the opposition take part. Afterwards, Abu Mazen would emerge empowered, with what he would consider to be the legitimacy, or the mandate, to act and restore order.

The idea was that once Hamas became part of the Authority, it would be subject to the Authority; it would become accountable and responsible to the central authority. The problem is, Hamas won and now Hamas is the Authority. It was a surprise to everyone. It was a surprise to Hamas. We now have not one Authority and one gun and one law. We have two Authorities in competition with each other: the Abbas-run presidency; and the government run by Hamas. We have many guns, and we have no law. The Palestinian Authority is in complete crisis

There were many factors that led to the Hamas victory. They were expected to do well and had been sweeping the board in local council elections in the months before the parliamentary election. So it didn't come completely out of the blue. One of the factors was the corruption of the decade-old Authority, which the Palestinian masses had come to hate. They wanted to vote Fatah out. Hamas was the only really organised opposition with a constituency built up over ten years through charity work, health clinics, and education. Another factor was that Hamas used the new electoral system very well, to its advantage. Half the seats were up for grabs on national slates, and half the seats were distributed among local district lists. Take, for example, the Ramallah district where there were three seats up for grabs. Hamas ran three candidates. Fatah was so dysfunctional and so full of internal rivalries that it couldn't agree on a three-person list for the Ramallah district. So you would have ten Fatah people running, plus another five who ran as independents, but who everyone knew

were really Fatah. What you got was a split vote, and of course Hamas took the three seats. This happened again and again in the district elections.

The Palestinians were voting on purely domestic issues. They wanted to get rid of the corruption, and they wanted to restore law and order. I know this from being out on the ground and speaking to the people; they were not voting on issues of peace and war. They had nothing to lose, in a way, by voting for Hamas. They weren't thinking peace process because there was no peace process at the time. This was another reason Hamas managed to gain such support.

The Palestinians were against unilateralism. They understand that if Israel was doing something unilaterally it was because it was in Israel's interest and therefore "bad" for the Palestinians. They believe they can get more through negotiation. But when it came to the Gaza Strip, we also saw time and time again in Palestinian polls that the Palestinians perceived Israel's withdrawal as a victory for the armed struggle. Polls indicated that between 80–85 per cent of Palestinians saw it as a victory for violence, and therefore believe that violence is the only thing the Israelis understand. Hamas, of course, having been at the vanguard of the violence, gained on that score as well.

It is not a pretty picture. Hamas, as you know, is defined clearly as a terror organisation in the European Union, in America, in Australia too. It is not volunteering to disarm itself now that it is in government. We have clear parallels here with Hezbollah. You cannot rely on militias to "do the right thing" once they're in power, when they weren't prepared to do so before they were in power. Rather than volunteering to disarm, they're building their army. They've been building it up ever since they came into power. They've been sending out their own armed militias onto the streets of Gaza as a direct challenge to the Palestinian Authority security forces which, though they do very little, are still essentially loyal to Mahmud Abbas, or Abu Mazen. The reason is that for the previous ten years, prior to the Hamas victory, most of the security apparatuses, like most of the PA administration, employed Fatah loyalists. Those people are all still in place. While Hamas is at the top, most of the staff are still Fatah, or pro Fatah.

This leads to major dysfunction. We also have a Hamas-led government which does not receive the direct funding from abroad that the PA has been relying on for the past ten years. The salary payroll for the Palestinian Authority is \$1 billion per year. The PA is the biggest employer in the territories, employing about 160,000 people who have received their salaries for five months. This includes tens of thousands of armed and increasingly angry security force members. When Hamas does bring in money in suitcases (they've been caught at the Rafah border crossing with hundreds of thousands,

and millions of euros) that money is not going to the people; it's not going to pay salaries. It's going to Hamas interests, to the Hamas army's fighters who turned out on the streets in new uniforms a few weeks ago. Palestinians themselves warn that the crisis in the PA could lead to a complete collapse of the Palestinian Authority and could degenerate into civil war.

On the one hand, Hamas can't rule under such circumstances. On the other hand, it seems to be very difficult to bring about their collapse, to "starve them out" as it were. And it may sound contradictory, but the Palestinians are very proud of their democratic election and are determined that the results of that election should be respected. The Palestinian masses, even though they are suffering economically with about a third of the work force not receiving salaries, still support their Hamas leaders. What you hear, time and time again, is that the Western economic siege of the government is a Western crusade against Islam. Popular sympathy goes toward the government.

The Quartet lay down very clear conditions for Hamas. The three conditions were to recognise Israel, renounce violence and accept previous signed agreements. Then the Hamas government would qualify to receive the same aid that the Fatah government was receiving. So far, Hamas has not acquiesced to these demands. And Hamas itself has become a very split organisation. You have a leadership in the West Bank, mostly imprisoned in Israel, which tends to be more pragmatic. It recently engaged in talks with leading Fatah prisoners and came out with the document of National Conciliation, called the Prisoners Document. This called for a National Unity government as a way out of this crisis. But you also have extremists in the Gaza Strip in the political echelon, and of course the militant underground, the Iz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, who answer primarily to an outside leadership, the exiled leaders who sit in Damascus. There isn't one unified Hamas anymore. You hear very contradictory voices coming out of a movement with no clear policy and no ability to make a decision. It is a very unstable situation.

We're also seeing a breakdown of the ceasefire agreed with Abu Mazen in return for political participation. We saw Hamas leading the operation a month ago that resulted in the capture of Corporal Gilad Shalit, the soldier abducted into Gaza. It was an operation that had been planned for a long time. You don't dig a 600 metre tunnel under the barrier out of Gaza into an army base overnight. I don't know what the considerations were regarding timing. Some people speculate that the action was meant to scuttle the national conciliation effort that might have led to a unity government in the Palestinian Authority. [By the end of September, the on-again-off-again talks

about a coalition government appeared stymied.] Whatever the case, the ceasefire has broken down.

Where do we go from here? Hamas has to decide first and foremost where it is going. Does it want to be Hezbollah? Does it want to wave the flag of resistance? Does it want only militancy, violence and eternal war? Or does it, like some of the voices in Hamas, see being the first Islamist government democratically elected in the Middle East and allowed to stay in power as the ultimate achievement? Does it want to preserve that, and adopt a more rational line in terms of maintaining a ceasefire? We have heard the more pragmatic elements in the movement talking about a 60 year ceasefire with Israel. Not peace, but an accommodation; something along the lines of a 1967 land agreement and akin to a kind of two-state solution. This would be in tune with the general Palestinian popular opinion that voted for Hamas in the first place. It would represent the possibility of power sharing with Fatah rather than the alternative of each trying to knock the other out. It would lead to a power sharing arrangement perhaps along the lines of the prisoner document that emerged at the end of June. Or does Hamas want to remain true to its charter of 1988, which enshrines Jihad and the resolve to destroy Israel?

Hamas has to decide where it's going; we can't decide for it. We are in a period of flux. At the same time Fatah has to reform itself. Fatah has to take the hard steps that will make it a credible alternative for the Palestinians next time they go to the polls. The Fatah movement is in complete disarray. Abbas has not managed to bring about the reform that he and his colleagues in the younger generation have aspired to. But it has to be done. There isn't time to waste here. They have to root out the corruption, promote the young and any real pro democracy leaders who can offer some kind of future.

We can't get rid of Islamism by military means. You can't get rid of an idea, a philosophy, by force. You can try, and you must try as a state to protect yourself and your citizens. And obviously you have to respond to and make every effort to knock out the military means on the other side, especially when they're underground and not state sanctioned. But without having some kind of political process as well, I fear we're just leaving the moderate camp on the Palestinian side with no reason to exist. If they don't have a political process, they have no reason to exist as far as most Palestinians are concerned. It's a very angry public. These are difficult things for Israel to face, and it's hard to see right now how that should play out. It would be naïve to say now is the time to enter final status negotiations, and now's the time to come up with a permanent peace agreement. It's not the time; we are in flux and the other side is in chaos. We're fighting a serious war.

However, I would like to see some kind of strengthened ceasefire emerging if a deal can be reached on the release of Corporal Shalit. As

for the abducted soldiers in Lebanon, I would like to see that kept as a separate issue. Hamas would be making a very grave mistake to tie its fate in with Hezbollah on this. If, as part of a deal, we can come up with new guarantees for a mutual ceasefire and build something out of it, that's probably the best we can hope for right now.

There is the beginning of some new thinking on the side of Kadima, on the Israeli side, because of the collapse of the concept of unilateralism. Once we get through this current crisis, and if we go ahead with withdrawing from parts of the West Bank, the thinking goes, it will at least be coordinated with Abbas. Perhaps it could be turned into phase two of the Road Map, which calls for a provisional Palestinian State, with temporary borders in the Palestinian territories. Perhaps it might be the beginning of some kind of process. I would like to see the barrier turn into a ceasefire line, an armistice line. There's a lot of work to do but I don't think it is absolutely beyond the realm of possibility. I do not think it's a given that Hamas is going to be in power forever. If there are new elections, I would like to see credible alternatives. Even Hamas, as long as it is in power, is ready for ceasefire, although not peace.

I would just finish by saying that at the moment we're in a fog of war. A fog on both sides. When that fog clears, we need policies both on the Israeli side and certainly on the Palestinian side. We need to know where we are going. As former US President Bill Clinton said last year in Jerusalem, "Unilateral steps are okay if you know where they're going." This has not necessarily been the case. Otherwise I fear the violence is just going to escalate. The rockets are getting longer in range, more accurate, more devastating, both from the north and from Gaza. The dispute could turn from being a nationalist one, essentially over borders and turf rights, into a religious war. And in religion there is no compromise. So I very much fear where we could go if we don't all stop and get back on track, as difficult as that may seem.

Just before I came away I was in Jericho sitting with Saeb Erekat, Abu Mazen's right hand man on diplomacy and the Chief Negotiator for the Palestinian Authority. He hasn't had much work in that line recently. It was just a few days after Corporal Shalit had been abducted into Gaza and a couple of days before my visit, Israel had detained dozens of Hamas ministers and legislators from the West Bank who were still in gaol in Israel. I looked at him and said, 'Well, how are we going to resolve this? What are you going to do about it?' His reply to me then was, "Oh this is much bigger than us; this is regional. Everybody's watching Iran." And I really didn't get what he meant at the time. I thought it was a cop-out, that he was trying to deflect responsibility away from the PA. Of course, a week later, after Iranian-backed Hezbollah had got in on the act and abducted two

more soldiers to Lebanon, I understood fully what he had been trying to say. He obviously had better information than I.

Yes, it does all lead back in the end to what happens in the north and in Iran. I fear very much that if Hezbollah comes out of this war looking victorious or unscathed, it will have very grave implications on the Israeli/Palestinian front. It could certainly tip the scales when the Palestinians and Hamas are deciding which way to go. Hezbollah has been a model before for the Palestinians and for the resistance and could be so again. As I say, I'm not terribly optimistic.

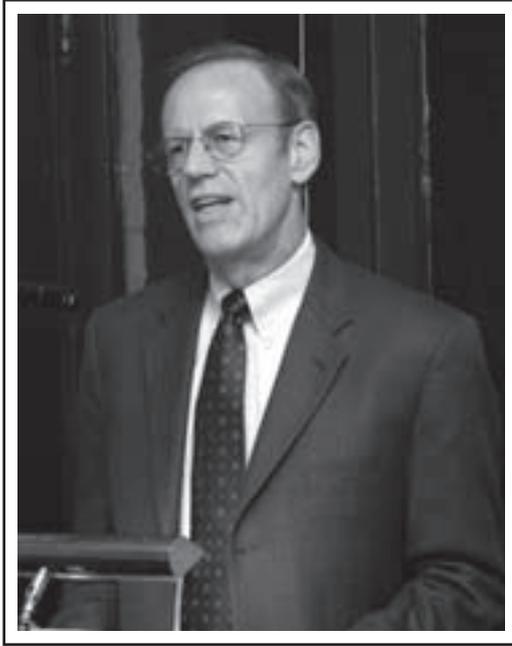


Photo - David Karonidis

Carl Gershman

Carl Gershman is President of the National Endowment for Democracy, a private, congressionally supported grant-making institution with the mission to strengthen democratic institutions around the world through nongovernmental efforts. The NED sprang out of support from the West to the Solidarity Movement in Poland and today supports NGOs and civil rights groups in places like Tunisia, Egypt, Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East. It's not enough to want democracy, says Gershman, citizens must work hard to keep it. Visiting Sydney on a working tour of Australia, Carl Gershman spoke for The Sydney Institute on Monday 14 August, 2006

RESPONDING TO THE

NEW BACKLASH AGAINST DEMOCRACY

Carl Gershman

Since the fall of communism in Central Europe in 1989 and the cresting of the “third wave” of democratisation in the early 1990s, there has been a steady trend toward the acceptance of democracy promotion as a norm of practice within the international system. Underlying this trend has been the incorporation of “a right to democracy” into international law, a growing consensus that democracy is the only system which confers legitimacy upon a government, and a widespread agreement that democracy promotes human rights, development and peace,

The practical manifestation of this trend has been a proliferation of democracy-assistance programs funded by governments, multi-lateral bodies such as the United Nations and the European Union, international financial institutions, and independent foundations. Such programs, which have gained broad international support, provide technical and material assistance to governments that are trying to consolidate democracy, as well as to nongovernmental groups that seek to monitor public institutions and processes, promote human rights and access to information, and encourage democratic participation. The creation in Australia of the Center for Democratic Institutions is an example of this international development.

Just as this trend has taken root in the international system, however, a counter-trend has emerged of resistance to democracy programs, especially those that seek to empower civil society; promote free media; and strengthen democratic political parties, institutions, and processes. This new phenomenon needs to be distinguished from the conventional resistance to democracy that is a central feature of such long-standing dictatorships as Cuba, Burma, North Korea, and Syria. It takes place in countries where democracy assistance until recently has been possible and relatively unobstructed, even though NGOs have been subjected to various forms of harassment. The difference today is that the new legal restrictions and extra-legal

impediments have assumed menacing proportions and pose a major new threat to the advance of democracy.

The backlash against democracy assistance is largely a by-product of the proliferation of so-called hybrid regimes in the aftermath of democracy's "third wave," which ended in the early 1990s. These are regimes where autocrats have been able to hold onto power, where elections are largely manipulated, the executive very strong, the parliaments very weak and the courts controlled, but where there are some formal democratic procedures, including elections, and where civil society organisations and independent parties have for the most part been able to function and receive foreign assistance.

As we know, the independent groups in some of these societies have been able to use the available political space to mount significant campaigns to expand political freedoms and challenge the ruling party. Democratic breakthroughs occurred in Slovakia in 1998 and subsequently in Croatia, Serbia, and Georgia. And then the Orange Revolution in Ukraine dramatically unfolded in 2004, raising alarms in neighboring Russia and Belarus and sending shock waves that were felt as far away as China, the post-Soviet Central Asian countries, and Venezuela, all places where international democracy assistance organisations had established a presence.

Many of the remaining hybrid regimes, whether fraudulent or backsliding democracies or partially open dictatorships, concluded that if they were to hold onto power they had to more tightly control political expression and choke off foreign democracy assistance. In effect, they saw the force of Abraham Lincoln's adage, stated in one of his debates with Stephen Douglas, that "a government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free ... It will become all one thing or all the other." Just as democratic movements seek to expand political space and rights, the hybrid regimes are moving in a much more concerted way than ever before to restrict rights and block access by democratic groups to international assistance.

The current offensive against democracy and democracy assistance is not an entirely new phenomenon. The Moscow office of the NED's Solidarity Center was closed some time before the Rose Revolution in Georgia, and the Lukashenka regime in Belarus has been "pre-empting" democracy, as Vitali Silitsky termed it in a recent *Journal of Democracy* article, since it came to power more than a decade ago. But the Orange Revolution has clearly accentuated the resistance to democracy by autocrats, as has the higher profile accorded to democracy assistance in the United States and in Western and Central Europe. The resistance has come in the form of legal constraints as well extra-legal tactics such as the use of thugs or auxiliary forces to assault or intimidate democratic activists.

The official measures undertaken by governments are often rationalised as a response to terrorism or to counter money-laundering or foreign espionage. But the means used are far more repressive than needed to fight NGO malpractice and are often contrary to obligations to protect the right to free association required by international conventions the country has signed or even by its own constitution. The intent of measures against NGOs was clearly stated last May by Russia's chief of security, Nikolai Patrushev, at a meeting in Kazakstan of secret service chiefs from the CIS countries. Patrushev declared that "we all need unified legislation across the CIS, something that would define the sphere of activity for NGOs; and the constitution and the laws must be changed before the wave of orange revolutions spreads to the leaders of the Commonwealth of Independent States." The NGOs have been a key target in Russia, as well as in other countries, because they are the last remaining outpost of independent political activity, after the government had secured control over the parliament, the judicial system, the regional governments, and the media and effectively neutralised the opposition parties and business community.

The official measures used to block pro-democracy work include:

- 1) Constraints on the right to associate which take their most severe form in dictatorships like Libya, Saudi Arabia, China, Cuba and Vietnam.
- 2) Impediments to registration such as making registration expensive, exceedingly inconvenient, burdensome in terms of the type or amount of information that is required, held up by excessive delays, requiring re-registration every few years, thus giving the government the power to re-visit the issue of whether a group can exist at all, in effect compromising or denying legal status for NGOs.
- 3) Restrictions on foreign funding, including onerous taxes on foreign grants (in Belarus), the requirement (in Uzbekistan, for example) that funds be channeled through designated accounts where the bank can refuse to release the funds, the requirement that groups must receive prior government permission before a grant can be received (as in Egypt), and the actual criminalisation of the receipt of democracy assistance, as in the case of Sumate in Venezuela.
- 4) The power to arbitrarily shut down NGOs, such as the 2002 law in Egypt that gives the supervising ministry the authority to terminate a group that is deemed to threaten "national unity" or violate "public order or morals", or the 2004 law in Belarus that enabled the government to dissolve more than 20 organisations.

- 5) Constraints on political activities, broadly defined by Zimbabwe's public-service minister Paul Mangwana as NGO funded "antigovernment activities, in the name of democratisation," or by the Criminal Code in Belarus as activities that "discredit" the countries' image abroad or that appeal to foreign powers or groups to act "to the detriment of the countries' security, sovereignty and territorial integrity."
- 6) Arbitrary interference in NGO internal affairs, such as the new Russian NGO law that gives the Russian Registration Agency, with 30,000 new employees stationed in every region of the country, unchecked oversight authority to audit the activities and finances of NGOs, attend their meetings, terminate their activities, and stifle them administratively by demanding what one NGO leader just called "an insane amount of details". The \$180,000 tax just levied on the International Protection Center, which helps Russians take cases to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, is an example of how the new law can be used punitively to silence independent NGOs.
- 7) Harassment by government officials, such as the questioning and searching of NGOs in Belarus by the national security agencies, and the confiscation of their materials, leading to the closing in 2003 of 78 organisations and warnings in 2004 to 800 others.
- 8) The establishment of ersatz NGOs called GONGOs (or Government-Organised NGOs) which attack and seek to monitor and undermine independent organisations and receive special funding from the government.
- 9) And finally the harassment, prosecution, and deportation of civil society activists, such as the repeated characterisation of NGOs in Russia as fronts for foreign espionage, an example being the notorious British "spy stone" scandal last January that unfolded shortly after the new NGO law was signed; and the imprisonment of Ayman Nour in Egypt.

A concerted response to the assault on democracy assistance will have to be fine-tuned, addressing the general problem and also its particular manifestation in each country. The response needs to be carried out at three different levels of activity – the tactical, the political and the normative. The tactical response involves the work of the indigenous NGOs and activists affected by the new restrictions as well as the international donor and programmatic organisations that provide democracy assistance. The international groups will have to be guided by the readiness of NGOs to accept assistance, as well as by the manner in which indigenous pro-democracy groups choose to deal

with the legal and administrative barriers that their governments have erected.

In some instances the NGOs may wish to test and challenge the new laws. For example, the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights fought a ministry in court, ultimately prevailing after more than ten years of litigation. International organisations with a presence on the ground may, where feasible, use their access to government officials to negotiate access to political space and use transparency and contact to demystify their work, without however changing their relationship with grassroots partners or grantees.

But it may also become necessary to revert to practices employed in formerly or currently closed societies regarding methods of financing, running trainings and other programs in adjacent countries, and making greater use of cross-border programs carried out, for example, by Polish, Czech, Slovak and Lithuanian NGOs in Belarus, Central Asia and beyond. Many programs will also certainly take advantage of the Internet and other forms of communication that were unavailable to activists in dictatorial countries only two decades ago.

It is also important to try to insulate democracy assistance from political pressures by strengthening its international and multilateral character. Joint programs by assistance groups from different countries, shared funding arrangements and regular meetings to coordinate assistance in priority countries is useful in itself and also sends the message that democracy assistance is an international activity which is not meant to further the narrow foreign policy interests of any particular government.

A recent example of an effective response to the backlash occurred last month in Russia prior to the G8 Summit when democratic activists, among them the chess Grand Master Garry Kasparov, organised an alternative summit called "The Other Russia". The conference had two goals: First, to declare to the world that there was, in fact, a different, more pluralist and democratically committed Russia than the bureaucratic nomenclatura that would be on display later in the week in St. Petersburg; and second, to rally and bring together a broad coalition of NGOs and opposition political forces to fight, as the conveners said, for human rights and "for the democratic principle of organising government and society," and against "bigotry and xenophobia" and "a culture of bureaucratic theft".

The conference achieved both objectives and more. It received enormous attention in the international media, thereby enabling "the Other Russia" to have its message heard; and, more importantly, it provided a forum where Russians representing widely different points of view and areas of engagement were able to overcome a history internal strife and mutual reproach and unite around a common

vision of “a new democratic state of Russia under the rule of law”. Significantly, a permanent council was established that will convene in September and that plans to meet regularly thereafter to exchange information and opinions.

Beyond this and other tactical efforts to counter repressive actions by backsliding regimes, it is necessary to mobilise political pressure on governments that block democracy assistance and persecute local NGOs and activists. This is the second or political level of response. While some offending governments will be easier to influence than others, it should be possible to develop a coherent, coordinated and comprehensive policy to defend democracy assistance and NGO activists.

The key political response is linkage, a term that was commonly used to describe efforts to defend human rights under repressive regimes during the 1970s and 1980s. The idea is to link a state’s treatment of democracy activists and independent civil society organisations to the political and economic dimensions of interstate relations. Such efforts by governments and international organisations can also complement campaigns by indigenous NGOs to mobilise pressure against government repression. A version of this policy was followed last fall when the US and a number of European governments sought and partially obtained changes in the draft Russian NGO law. It also led to the temporary shelving of repressive NGO legislation in Kazakhstan and Zimbabwe and to the indefinite postponement of the Sumate trial in Venezuela after representatives of European governments expressed a determination to observe the trial.

Russia agreed to trim back some of the NGO law’s more egregious provisions to guard against embarrassment at the G-8 Summit though, as we have seen, NGOs are already experiencing new hardships. Other ways democracies can respond to the backlash is through public statements by high officials and by national or regional parliaments defending pro-democracy NGOs and criticising restrictions on democracy assistance; symbolic gestures such as high-level meetings with democracy activists and opposition leaders; conditioning foreign assistance and trade benefits on democratic performance and the treatment of groups working to strengthen democracy; and reports by public bodies or credible private groups that gauge democratic progress and monitor the ability of civil society and political organisations to receive democracy assistance.

Such reports can be useful in helping democracies distinguish between countries that are making genuine efforts to democratise and regimes that use elections and other democratic forms to legitimise illiberal and antidemocratic behavior, which is a growing problem. This distinction is especially important in the case of backsliding autocracies such as Russia and Venezuela that were once electoral

democracies but where democratic rights and processes have been steadily eroded. At what point can it be said conclusively that such regimes have crossed the line and no longer deserve the respect that comes with being considered a democratic government? Many believe that these countries have already relinquished any claim to democratic legitimacy, yet Russia remains a member of the G-8 and also chairs the Council of Ministers of the Council of Europe, and both it and Venezuela continue to be full participants in the Community of Democracies.

That these and other regimes covet the image of being democratic and value the advantages that come with participation in the Council of Europe, the OAS, and other associations of democratic countries highlights the extent to which democratic values have spread throughout the international system. Regimes that seek to suppress democracy assistance may just want to stay in power, but they will often state a public rationale in which they paint themselves as sentinels guarding the principle of state sovereignty that international democracy assistance is alleged to undermine. This leads to the third or normative level of response.

The precondition for the acceptance of democracy promotion as a normative practice within the international system is the existence of a broad, if not universal, consensus about the definition of democracy promotion and the means by which it is appropriately carried out. Opponents of democracy promotion have tried to associate it with the war in Iraq, claiming that democracy promotion is simply the pursuit of regime change by other means. But support for democracy promotion here and around the world is as great as it is because its purpose is not to remove particular regimes but rather to strengthen democratic processes. The removal of a non-democratic regime does not, after all, automatically produce democracy, as the replacement of Batista by Castro or the Shah by Khomeini confirms. Democracy assistance does not focus on determining particular political outcomes but on nurturing democratic values, practices and institutions.

It is true that the expansion of democratic participation can lead in some instances to a change of government and even, where the government in question is not democratic, to a change of regime. But that is not the goal of democracy promotion, nor is supporting free, fair and competitive elections its only dimension, as we and other proponents of democracy assistance constantly point out.

In June 2000, democracy promotion – understood as a cooperative international effort designed to strengthen all aspects of the democratic process, elections included – received the endorsement of more than a hundred sovereign governments meeting in Warsaw to found the Community of Democracies. To be sure, the Warsaw Declaration also acknowledged the importance of “sovereignty and

the principle of non-interference in internal affairs". But it gave no sanction to the view that democracy promotion – meaning nonviolent and transparent efforts “to strengthen institutions and processes of democracy” – conflicts with sovereignty or violates the principle of noninterference. On the contrary, the Declaration affirmed the importance of democracy promotion in the evolving international system of transnational bodies, democracy-assistance organisations, grassroots NGOs – and sovereign states.

While the Community of Democracies was never meant to be a democracy-assistance agency, as such, its aims do emphatically include the goal of fostering greater cooperation and commitment among democratic countries in order to advance the cause of democracy worldwide. Heretofore, however, the Community’s voice has been muted and its role unclear – and as I’ve noted, its character has been compromised by the participation of some semi-authoritarian and backsliding governments. The new backlash against democracy promotion gives the Community an opportunity to play a more visible and important role in the current international debate. The Community needs to reaffirm and further elaborate the Warsaw Declaration in light of new circumstances and to seek approval for the Declaration from governments and parliaments around the world, as well as from regional bodies and global institutions, including the United Nations. The Community and its participating governments should also formulate and support a core set of principles affirming the right of NGOs to organise and peacefully advance democratic freedoms.

In conclusion, let me note that the backlash against democracy has gathered unusual momentum because certain recent developments have played into the hands of the autocrats. High oil prices, for example, have enhanced the influence and belligerence of autocratic regimes in Russia, Venezuela, and Iran. Gains made by Islamist movements in elections in Palestine, Egypt, and Lebanon have set back the drive for democracy in the Middle East. The war against terrorism has given autocrats in many countries a new excuse to crack down on dissidents who are called extremists and terrorists. China is using its growing economic and political power to support undemocratic regimes not just in neighboring Burma and North Korea but also in Zimbabwe, Sudan and Uzbekistan. Not least, Russia and China, along with four Central Asian countries, have formed the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to collectively act to advance their own authoritarian agenda and to counter efforts by the US and Europe to spread democracy.

As we have seen, the efforts by the United States and Europe to promote democracy developed in the aftermath of the Cold War and in response to the need to consolidate the gains of the third wave

of democratisation. For a long time these efforts encountered little resistance, a situation that encouraged their proponents to assume that progress was inevitable in the brave new world of international democratisation, even though the US, Australia and European countries might foster democracy in different and sometimes competing ways. It's now clear that this period has come to an end and that the long-anticipated reverse wave of authoritarian reaction has arrived – indeed, with a vengeance. We're only at the beginning of this reverse wave, and strategies for responding to it are still in the incipient stage of being formulated. But one element of any meaningful response seems more than obvious – which is that the US and its democratic friends are going to have to find a common ground and work together at least as closely as they did during the Cold War. The differences between them will not disappear, but in the context of the current global situation they are relatively insignificant when viewed against the backdrop of resurgent authoritarianism. The US has no better friend than Australia, and together our two countries can take the lead in deepening cooperation among all democracies by building upon the common democratic experience and commitment that unite them. In this way, it should be possible to blunt the impact of the reverse wave and lay the foundation for new gains in the years and decades ahead.



Photo - David Karonidis

Sharan Burrow

Across the globe, where competition is allowed to flourish and as the market opens up a greater diversity of employment and a higher standard of living for more and more workers, union leaders can still point to the fact that globalisation can also lead to the exploitation of sections of the workforce. While the poor may not be getting poorer, the gap between rich and poor is getting wider. Sharan Burrow is President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions. On Tuesday 15 August 2006 she addressed this theme in a speech to The Sydney Institute.

A GLOBAL ECONOMY

NEEDS UNIONS

Sharan Burrow

The “Washington consensus” is dying if not dead.

This approach, the leave-it-to-the-market or trickle-down theory has delivered a world that in spite of massive growth now has more people unemployed, experiences increased unrest and is a world in which there is substantial marginalisation amongst local communities, greater numbers of economic migrants and growing economic inequity both within and across nations. Even major advocates of this approach as a development framework accept that a blind faith in privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation with the attendant demands of small government and deregulation has had *unacceptable* consequences and that the social dimensions of globalisation require urgent attention.

It is unconscionable that more than 1.4 billion people live on less than \$2 a day and that 550 million people live on less than a dollar a day. The majority of these people (60 per cent) are women. There are 185 million people unable to find employment; and 88 million of these are young people. In fact, there are 34 million more people unemployed than a decade ago. Further the “unemployment rate” greatly underestimates the extent of labour market distress. A more appropriate measure includes the underemployed and the income deprived, or those living in extreme poverty. Using this measure we get a global labour underutilisation rate of 25 per cent — a quarter of the global labour force.

While these demographics are largely external to Australia we cannot escape both the global impact of these and indeed those that challenge us directly.

Direct challenges include; an aging population and a shrinking workforce, increasing levels of casual and precarious employment with rising levels of underemployment and in too many regions double-digit youth unemployment, the entrenched inequity of women’s participation, pay inequity and inequity of retirement incomes, the global shift in the location of both manufacturing and service jobs

(off-shoring) with the potential loss of local skills and intellectual property, the shifts in rural populations and the overdevelopment of our cities, the crisis in affordable housing; creaking social and physical infrastructure and of course a massive skills deficit.

These and many more issues should be at the top of the policy debate not a set of IR laws which shift the balance of power to employers, deny working people fundamental rights laid down in international law and make Australians feel more insecure.

Increased participation in the workforce, skills, training, industry restructuring and productivity – history tells us that to achieve the massive shifts necessary in all of these areas the active involvement of working people and their unions is essential. Employee engagement at the local level makes obvious sense but so too does it globally when we are talking about a global workforce, global companies and their supply chains and investment and reporting mechanisms – all relevant to workers, their communities and workers capital. This is all serious business for unions in international discussions both with multi-national companies (MNCs) and with intergovernmental bodies and employer associations. Unions have a role to play at all levels in meeting the challenges that face Australia and the world as a whole.

Setting standards for “decent work”

Australia is out of step with a world that is looking for a new development model that addresses the challenges of globalisation while continuing to deliver on economic growth. The debate is now about how, in the face of a global jobs crisis, unequal development and escalating economic migration, to best provide employment and decent work opportunities. A decent job is the fastest way out of poverty and for a nation, sustainable employment is the only route to development. With the challenge to create 400 million decent jobs within ten years this is a global priority.

To not do so is to invite civil unrest on a scale not yet considered and the trauma in Nigeria is just one example of why jobs that do not pay a living wage with fair conditions will not be accepted. Multinational companies, in this case the large resources companies, have to balance their desire for profits with the big risks they take if they don't accept responsibility for a fair employment relationship.

The international debate is not about stripping back regulations, about removing labour rights, it is about their place in conditionality for development loans from the International Finance Corporation and in ethical investment strategies and programs more broadly of the UN network and the World Bank. As the President of the ICFTU, a member of the governing body of the ILO and a representative on the Global Commission on Migration, I have been heartened to see the United Nations and the World Bank seriously addressing the issues

threatening the sustainability of the global economy. In a remarkable act of leadership last November, the United Nations endorsed the proposition that *fair globalization equals full employment and "decent work"*. The UN's commitment to full employment and decent work is a significant shift. It represents a major step towards a global floor for trade and investment.

By "decent work" we mean "freely chosen employment, the recognition of fundamental rights at work, an income to enable people to meet their basic economic, social and family needs and responsibilities and an adequate level of social protection for worker and family members" (ILC Report 2003). Thus, the decent work agenda includes the core international labour standards - freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining, freedom from forced labour, child labour and discrimination at work.

But it is clear that a decent job has to be much more than this. The mere absence of slavery, abusive child labour and the most basic forms of discrimination are not sufficient conditions to make work "decent". Decent work is about providing a social floor that is fair. A decent job must also provide fair incomes, safe work and social protection.

The World Bank and its private sector investment arm – the International Finance Corporation (IFC) — have initiated two developments which are providing significant leadership. The first is a decision to make core labour standards a condition of new loans. Decades of arguments have resulted in a cautious consensus between the Bank, the IFC and the labour movement that, further to human rights protections against forced and child labour, fundamental rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining can drive productivity. They can also provide an affordable increase in the share of wealth through wages that is enjoyed by the majority of working people in developing countries – thus helping both profit and consumption.

Somewhat to my surprise the World Bank's chief economist is also talking about how to measure "good" jobs and "bad" jobs.

Beyond the issue of rights there is also some renewed consideration of the need for a global minimum wage. For almost two decades, along with other labour advocates, I have risked life and limb when proposing a minimum wage in international forums. But the discussion at the recent United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) meeting went to the optimistic level of an argument not about whether there should be one but about what methodology could be adopted internationally to set a minimum floor for wages. Crudely described, the argument was about adopting a global floor of X dollars a day versus a measure based on a percentage of GNP or average weekly earnings.

This is where the international debate over economic and social sustainability is at – decent work underpinned by basic labour rights and the serious consideration by the World Bank and other international bodies of an international measure for the minimum wage. Where is Australia in this conversation?

Once a great leader on the international stage Australia is now missing in action as it seeks to undermine the same basic protections for its own citizens. Australia is now in the grip of a backlash that is totally out of step with the international debate. The federal government's new IR laws not only seriously infringe on our human rights – the right to bargain collectively and to join a union – but they also fail to respect and harness the cooperation necessary to address the real challenges facing our economy.

Australia's fragile economy

Consider the Australian economy in recent years:

- There have been fourteen consecutive years of economic expansion with growth averaging 3.7 per cent a year, low inflation, and average annual productivity and employment growth of 2 per cent. This is a record performance.
- Australia's growth has outperformed the US and the OECD average.
- Profits have soared, increasing by 136 per cent since 1991 – by 70 per cent in real terms.
- Average adult full-time earnings have increased by 4.1 per cent a year and Australia has risen to 11th in the OECD for GDP per capita.

These are some of the positive features of the engagement of the Australian economy with the world. What a pity they have been wasted years as we have seen investment decline comparative to our real need for greater support for education, social and physical infrastructure, and innovation. We have doubled our GDP since 1981 and yet despite being twice as wealthy as a nation we have failed to invest adequately in our future.

Given the manifold economic advances that Australia has made over the past ten years, it cannot credibly be argued that industrial relations rigidities have held the economy back. Industrial relations are undeniably important to the economy, but are by no means the most pressing economic issue. The critics of Australia's unique system of safety net awards, the dignity of a social floor with a central role for a fair minimum wage and the role of collective bargaining — people whose ideas are our decidedly out of the Washington Consensus mould and are now in ascendancy in Federal Cabinet — should think again.

On all the evidence, IR has not been *the* economic issue and today, in the face of the government's industrial relations assault, IR is *still* not the pressing economic issue facing Australia. We need to shift the focus onto the real economic priorities. We have a fragile economy that is currently being sustained by a commodities boom that cannot last and a spending spree driven by consumer-debt that also cannot last. Here is a snapshot of our present predicament:

- Commodity prices are at record highs, but the current account deficit is bigger than ever and net foreign debt is the highest it has ever been.
- Exports of simply and elaborately transformed manufactures (STMs and ETMs) surged during the 1990s but this has been reversed under the current government's abandonment of industry policy.
- Productivity growth surged through the 1990s following award restructuring but has slowed and become stagnant over the past five years under the current government's pursuit of labour market deregulation.
- The past fifteen years of low inflation originated in the Accord and have been driven by the age of information technology and the rise of China, but interest rates are rising as the spectre of inflation reappears.

You could say that we are now perched precariously on a cliff top with an economy that is based on the importation of clever stuff while we export stuff that we either dig up or cut down. And our sustained economic growth has been underpinned by a consumer spending spree that is financed increasingly by households' reliance on credit.

The real problem is that the broadening of our economic base that commenced 20 years ago has been stymied by this government's abandonment of investment in skills, and innovation and our collective failure to deal with creaking social and economic infrastructure. The outgoing Governor of the Reserve Bank, Ian Macfarlane, has been astutely warning of the real challenges facing our fragile economy. As reported in *The Australian* last weekend, Mr Macfarlane said Australians should not assume that the economic expansion of the past 15 years, described as a "miracle economy", would continue indefinitely: "I don't think the last 15 years will turn out to have been a normal period," he said. "It has been better than normal."

Education, infrastructure and innovation — these are the real challenges to Australia's continuing global competitiveness and the real source of future productivity gains and economic growth. The Howard Government's industrial relations reforms are a cul de sac for national policy. They are a complete distraction from a government that is desperate to hide its failings in these areas.

Australia's competitive edge with India and China and other rapidly advancing economies in Asia lies not with low-wage, low-skill jobs but with high-tech, high-skill and high wages. Productivity that is gained from pushing down wages is short termism at it worst and will not provide the competitive edge Australia requires. Brains not brawn will win out for Australia in the long-run and our competitive edge will come from productivity, (genuine not low-wage based) infrastructure, innovation and education. These are the key drivers of future economic growth and social advancement for working Australians and I will deal with each of these areas in turn and take a look at the decline in the important industry sector of manufacturing.

Productivity

Productivity is a critical issue that we should all be addressing but to rely on "individual contracts" to drive down wages and conditions is a low road and demonstrates a poverty of understanding. It ignores both the financial stress facing working families and the need for all Australians to be able to engage in our economy beyond essential or survival needs. A nation of "producers" with little or no capacity for discretionary consumption is not a grand plan for a sustainable domestic economy.

The conservatives will tell you that unions hinder productivity growth. This is a myth and the evidence is growing. Our own experience with a co-operative approach to both multi-skilling and up-skilling of the workforce in the early 1990s underpinned the restructuring of the Australian economy and along with wage restraint, the management of inflation. We maintained a regulated system of awards and minimum standards and pursued collective bargaining. Even Judith Sloan and Mark Wooden¹ when comparing the deregulated system of the UK and the US at the time to the Australian environment said "any differences in the labour market outcomes of these three countries defy definitive conclusions". These two people, while notable academics, are hardly apologists for the union cause.

Positive research in US companies in the same period by Sandra E Black and Lisa M Lynch also found that "productivity growth was highest in workplaces with a strong union presence and cooperative management practices".² And the *OECD Employment Outlook 2006* reviews the evidence 12 years on from the publication, in 1994, of the OECD Jobs Strategy and finds that, in regard to unions density versus labour market deregulation, many roads lead to Rome:

Lower productivity growth, deteriorations in the terms of trade and increases in long-term real interest rates are all found to increase aggregate unemployment.

In other words what really matters for unemployment, is economic management. Consider the conversation going on in New Zealand where there is a conversation across the workforce, driven by the unions and the employer associations, as to how to improve productive performance. One can only wish that we could again engage in such a constructive enterprise rather than the socially destructive practices of the IR laws where low wage mantra is the recipe for a race to the bottom – poor Australia!

Investment lags in infrastructure

The phenomenal growth of the economies of China and India in recent years masks some inherent problems in the infrastructure needs of these nations. Basically, their infrastructure is unable to keep pace with their rate of economic growth and is creating major bottlenecks. For example, 80 per cent of China's sewage flows untreated into its waterways. Contaminated water is killing more than 30,000 children annually in China. Luckily the problems we face here are not of this order.

However, Australia's under investment in economic and social infrastructure has become a major constraint to economic growth, social cohesion and our future international competitiveness. A recent study to estimate and model Australia's existing under-investment in economic infrastructure was undertaken by the Australian Council of Infrastructure Development (AusCID) and Econtech Pty Ltd. This focused on electricity, gas, road, rail and water. The study found that just to clear the backlog of under investment in infrastructure in these sectors would require \$24.8 billion of capital expenditure. But undertaking this investment would result in a long-term increase in GDP of nearly 1 per cent and of exports by nearly 2 per cent.

This study does not capture the bottlenecks in infrastructure that emerged recently as the resources boom induced investment in Australia (fuelled by China in particular) confronted the capacity problems in coal ports in Queensland and NSW. Nor does it capture the full extent of the under investment in environment infrastructure where the report *Repairing the Country* by ACF and NFF estimated the need for \$65 billion of public and private investment over the next decade.

Even then, focussing on the under-investment to date does not tell us how serious the problem may be in the future for new infrastructure investment. For example, the Energy Supply Association of Australia estimated \$30 to \$35 billion of investment in power plants, transmission lines and distribution networks will be required by 2020. There are legitimate concerns about the capacity of the public and private sectors to efficiently manage this scale of investment.

This is not an “availability of finance” constraint as there are more than sufficient funds available from both the public and private sectors. The problem concerns more efficient and effective systems for the planning, co-ordination and regulation of energy and other infrastructure assets. There are also concerns in other sectors such as telecommunications about Australia’s capacity to build world-class infrastructure for its export and import competing industries.

As for investment in social infrastructure, the reports of the Auditor General in Australia’s States make depressing reading whether in itemising the backlog of maintenance required for public schools or the queues for elective surgery in public hospitals or the under investment in child care and aged care facilities. Part of Australia’s infrastructure problem results from government obsession, at all levels, with zero public sector debt. As the Allen Consulting Group put it:

The situation where many public infrastructure projects have been analysed exhaustively and found to be worthy, but are on hold because of lack of funds is unsustainable ... By restricting infrastructure investment in the name of fiscal conservatism, the approach of Australian governments has undermined our future economic potential ... Excessive fiscal responsibility at the expense of investment in public infrastructure is to save the pennies and miss the pounds.³

Australia’s infrastructure challenges are far more significant than the immediate capacity bottlenecks most commentators have focused on involving the slow response to much needed public and private investment in roads, rail and ports to meet the current mining and energy resources boom now underway. In an increasingly competitive global economy infrastructure investment is fundamental to Australia’s future prosperity

Under-performance in education and skills

Infrastructure development is dependent on relevant skills in construction and services being available and this is where the second layer of neglect is glaringly obvious in public policy. We have failed to invest adequately in education at all levels. For TAFE the federal government effectively froze funding at 1997 levels despite a 16 per cent jump in student numbers and unmet demand for up to 57,000 extra places and despite the dramatic change projected in our demographic futures.

You will hear the rationale that the origins of the skill shortages impacting on infrastructure and other sectors are largely the result of 14 years of continuous economic growth and low levels of unemployment. But this explanation largely absolves the private sector from responsibility when they are not investing enough in structured training. It also misses a number of key structural realities.

First, while many people supported the privatisation of public sector utilities like energy and rail they neglected the fact that one of the consequences of this was a significant reduction in the number of apprentices that used to be trained by the utilities to the benefit of the rest of the economy. Secondly, as firms contracted out maintenance and other functions the reality was that few contractors were training apprentices. Thirdly, as the pressures of global competition impacted on many firms, they cut back their apprenticeship program.

While this was occurring, low apprenticeship wages and negative perceptions of career opportunities in the trades, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing, resulted in a number of apprentices withdrawing and not completing their training. Growth in traditional apprenticeships (ie trades apprenticeships) accounted for only 7 per cent of the total growth in all apprenticeships and traineeships between 1996 and 2002.⁴

We now have a major skills shortage in the traditional trade areas (including construction, metal manufacturing, electrical and vehicle trades). As if this situation wasn't bad enough the infrastructure sector and others as well have been hit by the additional shortages of qualified engineers. As Therese Charles summarised it in a recent report:

The engineer shortage in Australia is wide spread in R&D, traffic and transport, environmental process, geotechnical, rail, power, software, systems, electrical and electronic engineering. It is taking six months to two years to fill the vacancies. In the past decade the total number of university students increased by 40 per cent but the increase in engineering students has been just 34 per cent and four universities have been closing engineering courses.⁵

The OECD estimates that in the year 2000 Australia ranked 22 out of 30 countries in terms of the growth in new science and engineering degrees.⁶ Thus whether we look to the traditional trade areas, engineers or indeed new areas of value added service requirements Australia has been and continues to be short sighted. Remember that there are 500,000 engineers graduating every year in China and that over the past three years the number of engineers graduating in India has doubled to over 200,000 — with a further 20 per cent growth predicted for next year.

What are we doing in Australia? We have a federal government that is fixated on demanding individual contracts for TAFE teachers and university lecturers rather than driving a focus on targeting the training dollar to areas of skills shortage. And in the absence of a coherent national strategy, too many employers are trying to desperately fill the gap with skilled immigration rather than investing directly in apprenticeships or the up-skilling of their existing workers to shore up a medium to long term skills future. To be fair they

have our support for more realistic incentives while the government wrongly places its hope on 24 technical colleges which will only partially train 7,200 students by 2010.

The PM's tech colleges will cost the taxpayer \$289 million. This is almost ten times (\$20,444 a year) as much per student as it costs in TAFE (\$2,235). What is more, only 7,200 students will have access to the tech colleges but if the money was put into local TAFE colleges as many as 70,000 students could benefit. All in all, the central objective of the federal government and the ACCI appears to be lower quality, lower qualification levels, and fragmented trades. How short-sighted!

Under-investment in innovation

Australia's under-investment in innovation is another of our most significant constraints to productivity growth and international competitiveness. It is also one of the major factors that will determine the future growth and availability of high wage/high-skill jobs into the future.

Unfortunately, our performance is lagging with OECD data showing a massive turnaround between ourselves and China in recent years. In 1995 investment in research and development (R&D) by China's private business sector was less than half that of Australia's, as a proportion of GDP. However, by 2002-03, R&D by China's private business sector had exceeded that of Australia's.

Australia's investment in innovation has stagnated since the mid 1990s in terms of business investment in R&D. The real annual growth rate of business investment in R&D fell from 11.4 per cent in the ten years to 1996 down to 4.1 per cent in the following years to 2004. For the manufacturing industry, the real annual growth rate of business investment in R&D also fell from 10.5 per cent to 2 per cent in the same period.⁷

Australia's research and development performance continues to be held back by a lack of investment by the business sector. In 2002-2003, while the total Australian R&D (business, government and private non-profit sectors) stood at \$12.25 billion — 1.62 per cent of GDP or close to 72 per cent of OECD average of 2.26 per cent of GDP — business R&D in Australia was just under \$6 billion — this is 0.79 per cent of GDP, or just 51 per cent of the OECD average of 1.54 per cent. This is a significant decline compared to the mid 1990s when Australia's business R&D to GDP ratio had risen to 62 per cent of the OECD average.

Australia has and will continue to pay a very high price for this R&D "under investment". This has and will continue to be reflected in a much slower growth in high-wage/high-skill jobs than would have occurred with stronger R&D investment. It also will be reflected in a significant slowdown in the growth rate of elaborately trans-

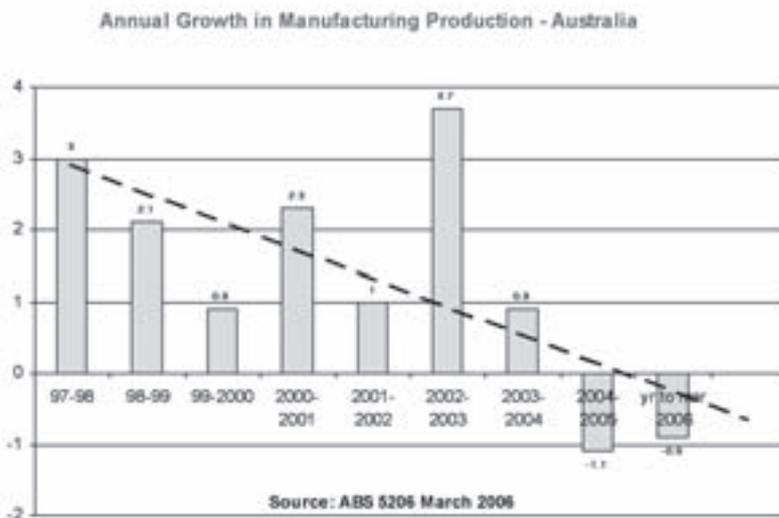
formed manufacture exports (ETM), as well as a long-term slowing of productivity growth in the international tradeable goods sector, compared to what would otherwise be the case.

I will now take a closer look at one of the key areas of our economy that is sorely in need of greater investment in innovation and concerted strategic co-operation from government, business and unions – the manufacturing industry.

Manufacturing - challenges for productivity and industry policy

Australian manufacturing is doing it tough. Manufacturing production has stagnated or been negative for almost three years now. This has occurred during a period when domestic demand in the Australian economy and global demand for manufactures has been strong. In addition, when we look at the last 15 years we find that only eight of manufacturing's 43 sub-sectors had annual growth equal to or better than economy wide GDP and 14 of the 43 had negative growth.

The stagnation afflicting manufacturing comes at a time of intensified global competition. In effect, this industry is being squeezed



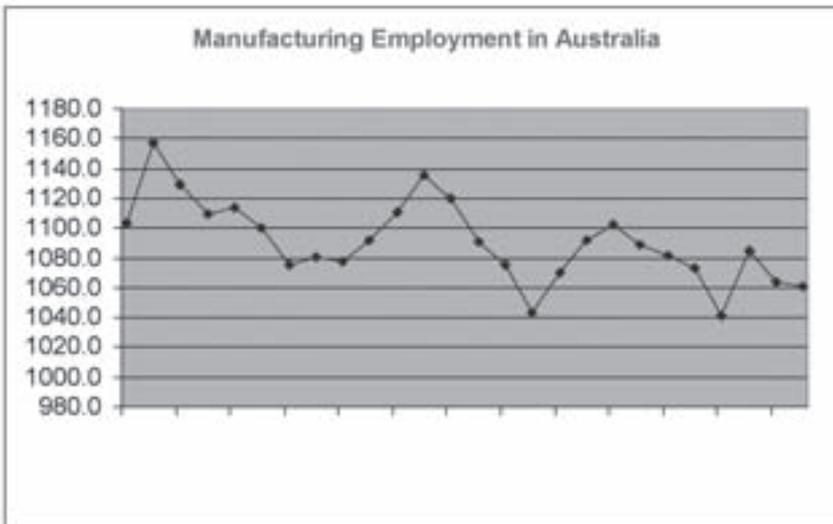
by pressures from established technology intensive firms in America, Europe and Japan, as well as the low wage/low cost global competitors from China, East Asia and India. A recent report from the Ai Group suggests another 10 per cent of manufacturing production will move offshore within three years; and the report from National Economics commissioned by the AMWU suggests the annual growth of manu-

facturing production over the next decade and a half will be a less than 0.5 per cent per year with a projected loss of more than 200,000 jobs.

Not surprisingly, these developments have meant Australia's manufacturing export performance has been poor in recent times and we have lost market share in a wide range of products in many overseas markets in the last five years. Our exports of ETMs have slumped from 17.7 per cent per annum (1984-85 to 1993-94) to 11 per cent per annum (1990-91 to 2000-2001) to -0.2 per cent per annum (2000-2005).⁸

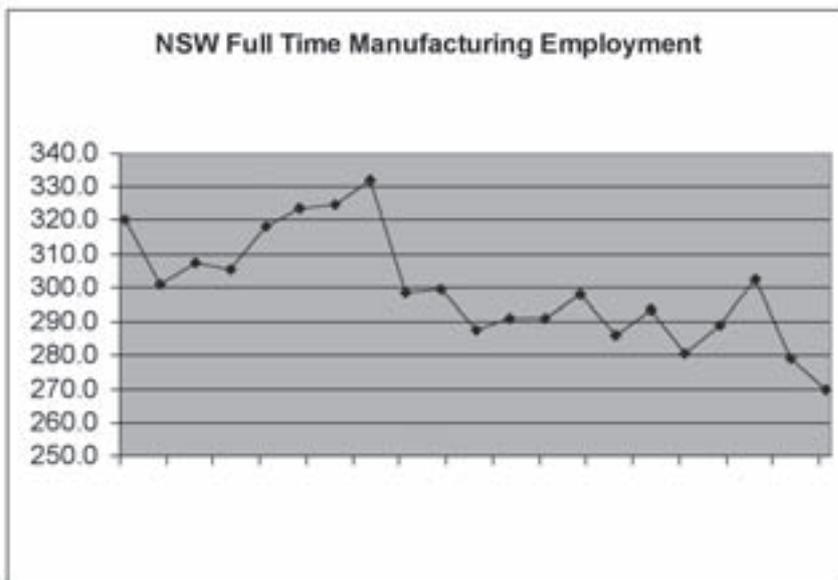
The collapse of ETM exports is evident across all regions of the global economy. Our exports of STMs have experienced a similar collapse. At the same time that Australian manufacturing export performance has deteriorated, more and more domestic demand is going to imports. Nearly 43 cents in every dollar of domestic demand went to imports last year which is up from 24 cents in 1990 and 35 cents in 2000.

The upshot is that there has been a hollowing out of our manufacturing industry that has been occurring as a result of stagnant domestic sales and exports, as well as intense global competition. Not surprisingly, the rising import share of domestic demand and the stagnation in manufacturing exports has resulted in falling levels of capacity utilisation in the industry as well as significant job losses.



Source: ABS 6291.0.55.003 May 2006. Seasonally adjusted data.

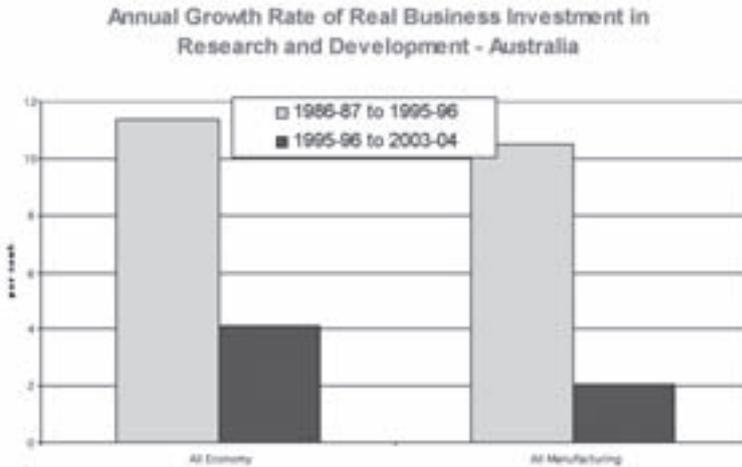
In the five years May 2001 until May 2006, NSW alone lost 50,500 full time jobs from the manufacturing industry — down from 320,000 jobs to 269,500 (see table below). Unions estimate that up to a further 70,000 jobs could be lost from NSW alone in manufacturing over the next 15 years.



Source: ABS 6291.0.55.003 May 2006.

True, there are some encouraging signs including significant increases in new capital expenditure by manufacturers over the past three years. But a few good years can't make up for a decade of under-investment. Since the mid 1990s manufacturers' investment in R&D has averaged only 2 per cent per annum compared to 10 per cent per annum in the previous decade; and Australia's R&D spending in manufacturing ranks near the bottom of OECD countries.

The low levels of investment in R&D and the slump in manufacturing exports has meant that structural change in manufacturing, in terms of shifting resources to higher value-added activities, with more defensible competitive advantages based on skill and innovation has not occurred as rapidly as demanded by the new realities of global competition. Simply put and despite some great success stories, Australian manufacturing is not well positioned to win more international business opportunities in the decade ahead.



Solutions to the manufacturing challenge won't come from the government's IR agenda. Taking away annual leave loading, penalty rates and unfairly sacking workers won't help. All that agenda does is to create a high-stress low-trust workplace culture that will have a negative impact on productivity in the medium term.

It is a sign of the times that while the Commonwealth is trying to take control of many responsibilities our founding fathers left with the States, it is only the State and Territory governments that are focused on a future industry policy agenda for manufacturing. It was their initiative that led to a manufacturing summit last year and their initiative that brought employers, unions, academics and State and Territory governments together in a national manufacturing forum that will produce an agreed national action plan for manufacturing at the end of September 2006. Once again, the federal government is missing in action.

But solutions to our manufacturing woes also need to come from the corporate sector. For example, there is an urgent need for our corporate leaders to reconsider their supply chain policies. There are real dangers for Australian industry with the emergence of "feral competition" — what is variously called "cost down pricing", "China price" or the "Wal-mart Syndrome". In summary it means business wanting the same supplies for less. Before the introduction of the federal government's IR laws, Australian workers were relatively immune from this practice because there was a floor in regard to the cost of labour that most Australian companies understood. This protected workers from an erosion of their living standards at the same time as protected businesses from competitors that chose to ruthlessly lower their labour costs. But there is now a renewed push by employers to drive down their input costs through cutting wages

and conditions. In effect, the new IR laws, including the forthcoming Independent Contractors Act, provide a licence for this sort of unsustainable business behaviour.

For those with external suppliers and contractors, it means driving down the contract price — sometimes to unfair, unviable levels. We are already seeing the results with the loss of jobs and increasingly closures of car component companies; GEF and Huon Corporation are the two most recent examples to go into administration.

Apart from the questionable corporate behaviour, the few dollars saved by companies held captive to their own “just in time” operations will lose serious time and mega-dollars when the supplies are not available somewhere along the chain of production. There is also a serious danger that if the practice is not arrested then Australia’s auto manufacturing sector could lose the critical mass it needs to survive.

Unions believe that companies everywhere have a responsibility to ensure that their supply chains are sustainable for business and employees alike. So, when companies like GM Holden, that get hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers money under the ACIS scheme, at the same time as it reduces local parts content for the Commodore from 80 per cent to 55 per cent over the last few years, it certainly seems reasonable to unions that further taxpayer funding should be conditional on more sustainable procurement policies.

Conclusion

And so, in conclusion, what role can unions play in building our economy while delivering decent work and decent wages for working Australians?

Unions will continue to represent our members in the workplace and at the same time advance new solutions to the key challenges facing our economy. Obviously there is little point bargaining for better wages and conditions for Australian workers only to see businesses fold under the pressure of unfair competition or, as is increasingly occurring, contract out their supplies to cheaper offshore sources. That is why we are passionately interested in the skills and training debate, the issue of our crumbling social and economic infrastructure as well as the future for key industries such as manufacturing. We want to achieve and sustain fair living standards by working with anyone who shares these goals and who is interested in a global economy that is prosperous for all.

We will continue to act as bellwethers for economies around the globe. Thanks to our members who give us a unique position in workplaces around the world, we can spot unfair and unsustainable business behaviour rapidly. We will continue to shout when we see injustice but continue to work tirelessly to meet the challenges I have outlined today.

Australians do have a choice — either we can support a fair set of global rules with fair national rules or we can continue to suffer under unfair rules that are allowing employers to transfer all of the risk of global competition onto workers and their families.

This is a very serious choice, with the Howard Government's new IR laws fitting only one alternative — the one we reject. Unions believe that Australian working people and their families deserve better and so does our nation. And we are ready to play our role.

Endnotes

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- 4 NCVER (2004) Trends in traditional apprenticeships
- 5 Therese Charles, Chief Executive, Association of Consulting Engineers, in *The Australian Financial Review*, 4 April 2005
- 6 See G. Combet, ‘Repositioning Australian Manufacturing in the Global Economy’, speech to the Manufacturing Summit, Melbourne, December 2005.
- 7 ABS 8104 2003-04.
- 8 DFAT, “Exports of Primary and Manufactured Products Australia, 1993-94”, 2000-01, and 2005 editions. Data is DFAT calculated trend data in nominal prices.

FUNCTIONS - 2006



Photographer: David Karonidis



Photo - David Karonidis

Malcolm Turnbull

Sydney businessman Malcolm Turnbull was elected as the Federal Member for Wentworth at the general election on 9 October 2004. Among his many interests and involvements over years has been water policy and water conservation in particular. In January 2006, Prime Minister John Howard appointed Malcolm Turnbull MP to the position of Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister with responsibility for water policy. In an address to the Sydney Institute, on Monday 28 August 2006, Malcolm Turnbull outlined some of the choices that can be made in water conservation, an issue of increasing concern for Australia. This talk is also available as a podcast on The Sydney Institute's website – www.thesydneyinstitute.com.au

WATER – FROM ANCIENT ROME TO CENTENNIAL PARK

Malcolm Turnbull

As you know, I am the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister, and my responsibility is for national water policy, which is a vital national and global issue, as I'll explain in a moment.

There is an enormous amount of water in the world. It covers 70 per cent of the planet and it is constantly on the move, being recycled by the hydrological process of precipitation, and then evaporation or transpiration back into the atmosphere. So the glass of water you drank today may have contained molecules of water that refreshed Leonardo or indeed washed his paintbrush, floated Noah's Ark or even washed the blood off Caesar's toga. Water is indestructible - it is just that it isn't always in the form in which we can make the most use of it.

The Roman engineer Marcus Vitruvius wrote 2000 years ago that Thales the Milesian, one of the seven wise men, taught us that water was the original cause of all things. Now Vitruvius, like the men that built this aqueduct, was a practical man. And having noted that the priests of Egypt believe all things are composed of water and consequently having thanked the gods for its creation, he then quickly moved, in his classic book *On Architecture* in the water chapter, to describe how to find water, test its quality and move it from its source to the place where it is needed. Because in his words, "it is of infinite importance for the purposes of life, for pleasure, and for our daily use". So nothing has changed.

As a practical Australian, let me at the outset make two observations about water. First it is very heavy. One thousand litres of water is a cubic metre and weighs precisely one tonne. If you turn on the tap tonight, Sydney Water will sell it to you for a little over a dollar. If you are a dairy farmer on the Murray River at Shepparton, it will cost you three cents. Water has a very low value to weight ratio. Secondly, and this follows from the first observation, water does not run up hill unless somebody or something is pushing it. As a consequence, the cost of moving water around is almost always the largest, if not the only, cost in any water scheme.

Now the management of water has always been one of the surest tests, indeed the foundation, of civilisation. The cradle of civilisation in Mesopotamia, the land between the rivers, was an irrigation society, sharing water, maintaining channels and other infrastructure, all of which required a political organisation. The Romans were particularly skilled in water management. The eleven aqueducts of ancient Rome were capable of delivering one billion litres of water to the city every day. More water on a per capita basis than any of our major cities can provide. Of course, the Romans delivered that quantity of water entirely by gravity. Pumps didn't exist, and that of course has been our good fortune, because if the Romans had had pumps they would not have needed to build magnificent aqueducts like this which still march across the valleys of the Mediterranean world.

But while much was different then much was the same. The other great Roman writer on water matters was Sextus Julius Frontinus. He was the chief executive of Rome Water, or the Curator Aquarum in the late first century about a hundred years after Vitruvius. He wrote a book on the Roman Water Supply, and it is a very practical book. He sets out his experience and talks about challenges which would be very familiar to urban water engineers and planners. Upon his appointment, he recognised that you cannot manage what you cannot measure.

This actually is the fundamental premise behind the two hundred million dollar component "Raising National Water Standards" in the \$2 billion Australian Government Water Fund. We have to have a better understanding of our water, because if we don't know where it is, how it is connected, its interrelationship with one type of water or another, how can we responsibly use it and plan for its use? So Frontinus quickly moved to reassess the volumes of water delivered by each aqueduct, and he noted the volumes at the intake and at the end. And he identified in each case where water was being lost through leaks, or, and this is another timeless theme, by theft.

The Romans also recognised that water should be fit for purpose. Some aqueducts had better water, which was reserved for drinking. Others had water that was fit only for gardening or cleaning. Frontinus describes the care with which the better quality water was separated from the lesser quality. So don't let anyone tell you that the dual reticulation systems at Rouse Hill are particularly novel. The Roman aqueducts are a salutary reminder that the challenge of providing water to large populations is not new, and that the necessity for commitment, coordination and above all leadership, is as great today as it was in the days of the Caesars.

The world today faces a grave water crisis. Much of the world's population is either in a position of real water scarcity, or looming water scarcity. We are all familiar with the water crisis in North Africa

and the Middle East, but the greatest challenge is actually looming in Northern India and Northern China. Over the last 40 years, we've seen a green revolution, an explosion of agricultural production in the developing world. It has been made possible in large measure by technology. But it is not just better crops and better fertilisers. The key element in that technology has been the introduction of inexpensive pumps. The green revolution has been made possible by the extraction of ground water.

Ground water is a particularly valuable resource. It holds about 30 per cent of the world's fresh water resources, most of which is locked up in glaciers. But in many cases it is being extracted at a rate which far exceeds the rate of recharge from the environment. And I am going to talk a little bit about China, just as an example, because this global perspective is very important. Since 1998 in Northern China where about half the population live, there has been a drought, a very serious drought. Drinking water has had to be distributed by trains. The international standard for water availability is a thousand cubic metres a year per person. In Tianjin, one of the biggest Chinese cities in the North, they've got only 160 cubic metres of water available per year per person, and in many towns it is much less than that.

The North China Plain feeds about 400 to 500 million people, nearly half the population of China. Agriculture there is 75 per cent dependent on the extraction of ground water. In some areas water is being extracted from shallow aquifers, which have declined by more than 20 metres since serious pumping started in the 1960s. Others have declined by more than 40 metres. The leading Australian hydrologist, Rick Evans, estimates that within 15 years this groundwater resource will no longer be available. How is China going to feed 400 - 500 million people when the essential element in their agricultural base is gone?

Remember water runs downhill. If you extract groundwater next to the coast and the water table drops below that of the seawater, it is almost inevitable seawater will penetrate. And that is why in some parts of the world, in Israel and in California in particular, they are replenishing aquifers in order to push the seawater back out, because once that seawater comes in you destroy your resource altogether.

Now what about Australia, how badly off are we? Well, we say we are the driest vegetated continent, and that is true. Over the Continent of Australia, the bulk of our water is around the north; the centre of the country has very little water. Having said that, while we are the driest vegetated continent, remember that if you take the arid centre out our average rainfall is about 700mm, a little bit more than about half of the rainfall of certain parts of Sydney. So it is not too bad. This is important to bear in mind.

Now rainfall and run off are two very different things. If you have a hot climate most of your rainfall will go straight into the air in evaporation, or if it is picked up by plants it will be quickly transpired. But, notwithstanding the heat in the north, almost all or two thirds of our run off occurs in the North. The Murray-Darling Basin, has 75 per cent of our irrigated agriculture and nearly half of all of our agricultural production, but it has only 6 per cent of our run off.

Australia is also very flat. It is very poorly drained and because it is an old continent it is very nutrient depleted. That has a very, very major impact on the Murray-Darling Basin. The Murray-Darling Basin is a big catchment, but it only has one outlet at the Murray mouth. It is very flat, and it drops by about 200 metres over 1,000 kilometres. So it is very flat. It has very low energy. And what that means is, unlike the rivers of North America and Europe which have very large volumes and where the gradients are steeper, it is very hard to flush all the salts and sediments out. So we have a landscape which has a lot of salt, because part of it has been under the ocean, and indeed you've got wind blown salts from the ocean, particularly in Western Australia. And because it is flat, and there isn't a great deal of rainfall, it is very hard to flush that salt out. That has a major impact for our irrigated agriculture.

Our climate is also very variable. For most of the major rivers in the world, the difference in water between a high year and a low year might be two or three, maybe four times. The difference between a low year and a high year on the Darling is 10,000 times. On the Murray River it is 5,000 times. So our landscape has enormous variability, and we have managed to deal with that of course by building massive dams. Perth is a city of over a million people. Between 1911 and 2004, Perth lost two thirds of its stream flow while its population doubled. So a good question is, are we going through long term change or short term pain?

Between 1950 to 2003, there have been significant changes on the east coast with very significant reductions in rainfall. Looked at over 100 years, however, the changes are not so great. This is one of the problems that we have, We don't know whether we are dealing with a real shift, a long-term shift, in climate. The middle of last century was particularly wet, so the trend looks particularly bad.

One of the major focuses of all of our water policy is the Murray River. That is where 75 per cent of the irrigation is to be found, and it is where around half of our agricultural production is to be found. Certainly by far the most profitable agriculture, the most productive agriculture if you like, is in irrigation. One of the major initiatives of the Howard Government is a commitment to acquire 500 gegalitres of water from productive use, from agricultural use, to be restored to the environment in the Living Murray Initiative, to ensure that a

number of iconic sites, six iconic sites, mostly wetlands, on the river, can be watered. To date we have been acquiring this water through water efficiency infrastructure with the gains going back to the Living Murray target.

This week we are releasing the draft of a new tender to acquire water from willing sellers on the basis that that water has become available by reason of efficiency measures they have or will undertake. What we have done by regulating the river is reverse its normal flow. In the days before we had those huge storages we've built on that system to deliver water for irrigators, the river was full in winter and spring that is when it ran. But of course the irrigators need their water in late summer and autumn. So what do we do when we regulate a river? We actually reverse its normal cycle. We store the winter rains up in the hills as best we can and then we release them during the summer when they need it. And the consequence has been that a lot of those floods upon which the wetlands depended are no longer available, or they are in effect over flooded during the summer period when they should be dry. So a great deal of management has to go into that.

We know that we appear to be going through hotter and drier seasons. This year in particular, but also the last five years, has been the driest years in the Murray-Darling system. In the Murray, in the Southern Murray, the Darling as you know, it is very variable. In the Southern Murray system we are in the worst drought ever, since records began. So we appear to have climate change. We also are losing a lot of water from ground water extraction. Historically, people have regarded groundwater as being like anything else that was under the ground, almost like a mineral. You could just dig it up, pump it out and it was yours. But groundwater, just like that molecule of water that started off with Leonardo's paint brush and ended up in your glass of water this morning, is almost invariably on the move and it is directly connected with surface water.

So if you pull a megalitre out of the ground, that is a megalitre that is very likely not to find its way to a stream. That is why over-extraction of groundwater, which is a big part of our challenge in the National Water Initiative as one of the things we have to confront, has a major impact. Obviously the more farmers put in dams, the more effect on water flows. You build a dam, it captures water, and that water would have otherwise found its way into a creek, found its way into an aquifer and so forth. And of course plantation forestry, a lot of people forget that trees use a lot of water, a hectare of blue gums soaks up a lot of water. Now if you've got rising water tables and you want to lower them that might be just the ticket, but in some places plantation forestry will materially negatively affect stream flow.

Do you know in the past 20 years we have doubled the amount of water we have pulled out of our rivers, our surface water, for irrigation, and trebled the amount we've pulled out of the ground for irrigation? So it is a bit like the old six o'clock swill when the pubs closed at six o'clock, and just as the minute hand was getting to the twelve everyone would order more rounds of drinks because they wanted to belt them down before the publican said, "Time gentlemen please." So, just as we have become aware of how scarce and affected our water resources are, we've been increasing our reductions.

More than half of the stream flow of our southern rivers in Australia comes from groundwater. You can think of the river as a channel running through a sponge. And the water is seeping out of the sponge into the river. We are lowering the water table. So less water is running into the river and we've reduced the flow into the river. If we reduce it enough, however, the river, instead of being what the hydrologists call a gaining stream, becomes a losing stream, and the water flows out of the stream into the ground. And this is what has happened in China and in parts of the United States.

This is why the Yellow River doesn't flow very often. Because even when there is rain, and there is flow in the river, it is being drawn down into the groundwater, to replenish that ground water table. And ground water moves slowly. The fastest aquifer I'm aware of in Australia is the one in Centennial Park, the Botany aquifer, which I'll come to in a minute, and it is sort of an XPT of aquifers. The water there moves at 150 metres a year because it has got about 40 metres head down to Botany Bay in the course of less than ten kilometres. You can imagine how slowly the ground water moves in the Murray-Darling Basin, because it is so flat, and because it is not moving through sand.

That means is you can over-extract groundwater today, and then you can wake up to the problem and cut the extractions and get them back to a sensible level. But the impact of that overextraction may not be felt in the streams and the rivers for many decades to come, and those of you who have interests in the Southern Highlands will know what I am talking about in terms of the Kangaloon aquifer, which is very poorly understood. If that aquifer is mined for water, as Morris Iemma is proposing, that will have a direct impact on the streams, and the impact may be one that is not felt for many, many years. Long after the generation of water planners and politicians have passed away, you will be paying, the environment will be paying, the cost of that over-extraction.

Most of our major cities will need to find substantial amounts of additional water in the next 50 years by reason of growth in demand and climate change. If they do not, then consumption would need to be reduced by more than half in some places (over 50 per cent in SE

Queensland and over 40 per cent in Sydney). Now of course we can manage for a while with some water restrictions. But I don't see any reason why we should ration water on a permanent basis any more than we should be rationing electricity. We need to get additional water into our cities.

Perth, unlike any other city, has access to large groundwater resources. And they are doing everything to try to secure water. Desalination is the most expensive at \$1.16 per 1000 litres, groundwater is pretty expensive. The cheapest source of water is actually thinning out the catchments - just cutting down some of the trees in the catchment areas so that they get more run off into their dams. Recycling is just a little cheaper than desalination. In our cities, that's basically the proposition with the dams, the Darwinians are alright. Everybody else has got a challenge. Queensland is in the middle of an election that is, in large measure, based on arguments about water and that state is particularly challenged. One issue is private sector participation in the water industry; how do we get more competition into the water industry, particularly the urban water industry? We have seen enormous productivity gains in Australia through competition reform in gas and electricity, in telecommunications, and yet there hasn't been enough in water because it is dominated by big government owned monopolies.

One of the challenges is that water is very cheap. But just remember that there are no, virtually no additional sources of water in any of our cities for a cost of less than \$1.20 a kilolitre. So we are pricing water almost invariably at a cost lower than the cost of actually getting more water. Which of course provides a disincentive for investment.

Now I want to talk a little bit about Sydney, and a particularly interesting opportunity right here, just a few kilometres away from us. As you know the state government has abandoned its plan for a desalination plant, seems to be reluctant to take on recycling on a large scale and has said that it has some opportunities to mine fractured rock aquifers, in particular at Kangaloon and at Leonay at Penrith.

Mangrove Mountain is quite a good aquifer, but as you would know the Central Coast, NSW is desperately short of water and if you pump any more water out of that aquifer you will only make the Central Coast problem worse, so that is really out of the question. But each of these aquifers, Leonay and Southern Highlands, are only expected to produce water over a short period and very little is known about them really. The biggest aquifer, the one with the most water, is actually the Botany Sands Aquifer from Centennial Park and Moore Park down to Botany Bay.

Last week I convened a meeting of everybody that knew anything about the Botany aquifer, in particular Professors Ian Ackworth from

UNSW and Noel Merrick from UTS and a number of other people. I did so because there is an opportunity here to develop in a very sustainable way a substantial additional water source for Sydney.

How does it work? Well we get a lot of water, a lot of rain in the Eastern suburbs, a lot more than you do in the Warragamba catchment. And the water comes in at the north, it runs down into the ponds in Centennial Park, and it soaks into the ground. And then works its way down to the bottom, down to Botany Bay, at about 150 metres a year.

Well, isn't it poisoned? Well certainly in the area around the old ICI plant or the Botany Industrial Park, it is particularly unpalatable. And indeed Orica, the successor company to ICI, has established a large recycling plant there which is pumping the water out so it cannot get into Botany Bay, removing the toxins and then actually selling the recycled water to other industrial users. The government has also advised people not to extract water from bores where there are a number of other sources of industrial pollution because of course there's been a lot of industrial activity there over the years. Even petrol stations can cause a lot of leakage. But fortunately the northern part of the aquifer and indeed most of the aquifer is relatively pristine. This is a complete accident simply because it's largely parks. The quality of the water in the upper Botany aquifer, with the exception of a higher concentration of iron which comes from the sandstone and is easy to remove, is actually on all measures cleaner than Sydney tap water.

What's fascinating about that is you have all of the stormwater from Bondi Junction that rushes all the way down into Centennial Park and by the time it gets to the bottom of the park to the racecourse it's pretty much clean. One of the possibilities for using this aquifer is to either direct more stormwater into it, which would require some engineering work naturally, or indeed to recycle waste water because there are obviously two big sewage plants both to the north and the south, at Bondi and Malabar. Recycle that water to a very high standard of purity and then recharge it into the aquifer. You could pump the water back in as this slide shows, or simply just use it to fill the ponds. That's a technique that's used in many parts of the world, particularly in California, but also now in projects that we are supporting through the Australian Government Water Fund in Adelaide and in Western Australia. What that would enable you to do is to keep all of those ponds full all year round; the water would go through the sands and would be removed or could be removed after 10, 15 years of travelling sedately through those sands.

Now I've touched on a few issues and I'm over my 30 minutes. I would simply say to you, we are better situated than any country in the world to deal with our water challenge. It is a global challenge. We're better situated for three reasons. Firstly, we have more water

than a lot of other places. Admittedly it isn't all in the right place but we have water. More importantly we're a prosperous country, we have the technology and the science to ensure that we can maximise the water we have to recycle if we need to go to that step or to desalinate.

Secondly, we have a national commitment to water policy and water reform. The National Water Initiative is a vital document because it sets out the framework for ensuring that our water future is both secure and sustainable. Bringing allocations back to a sustainable level, giving security to those entitlements and then enabling them to trade. Why? Not because we're pious defenders of the sainted memory of Adam Smith but because it is only the market that can allocate any scarce resource to its most efficient users. But, finally, the reason I believe we are better situated than most countries is because of our commitment to public debate, and I want to read to you a passage quoted in a great new book that hasn't come out yet by Daniel Connell about the Murray-Darling Basin Commission. He quotes Richard White's history of the Columbia River:

In a democracy boredom works for bureaucracies and corporations as smell works for a skunk. It keeps danger away. Power does not have to be exercised behind the scenes, it can be open. The audience is asleep. The modern world is forged amidst our inattention.

Now it is our obligation, and my obligation certainly as the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Secretary with responsibility for Water, to ensure that we maintain a lively and engaged debate about water issues. Because we have been too complacent right around Australia about water and we have been asleep, we the audience have been asleep, because the water planning has been too dull.

Well it's no longer dull - it's the difference between prosperity and falling behind. In many places it's the difference between life and death. We are equal to the water challenge, it is a great one. And the key to ensuring that we meet it and that we hold governments, state governments, national governments, local governments to account, is to ensure that we have a lively debate that is an informed debate. And that we don't allow bureaucracy to benefit and planners to benefit from a bored and inattentive audience.

As long as we're awake, as long as the debate is lively, as long as it is well informed, that is the best platform for good policy. And that's why I thank The Sydney Institute very much for inviting me to speak to you tonight.



Photo - David Karonidis

Dr Clare O'Farrell

Michel Foucault, the French philosopher, was one of the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century. His central topic was the struggle of individuals against the power of society. During his 25 years of writing, Foucault concerned himself with the technologies of power and the reasons why individuals conform to the rules of society. Dr Clare O'Farrell, a lecturer at the School of Cultural and Language Studies in Education, Queensland University of Technology, and author of *Michel Foucault* (Sage Publications, 2005) has written what has been described as "a marvellous introduction to the work of Michel Foucault for that ever growing number of readers who are working in what has come to be designated as cultural studies". Clare O'Farrell addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 29 August 2006

FOUCAULT AND POST-

MODERNISM

Clare O'Farrell

I would like to thank Gerard Henderson for the invitation to speak at The Sydney Institute.

My talk tonight will deal with the famous French philosopher Michel Foucault and debates centred around his career and works.¹ Foucault, who lived from 1926 to 1984, is one of the most influential thinkers of the twentieth century. His ideas have been used extensively across the entire range of the humanities and the social sciences and in professional disciplines such as education, health and management studies. His work tends to attract dramatically polarised responses – Foucault has been both idolised and bitterly condemned. I would like to look at some of the dynamics of that reception as well as what it is about his persona and work which generates such strong opinions and reactions.

Foucault's name often crops up in popular discussions around postmodernity – this in spite of the fact that he made no claims himself to belong to this movement of thought – on the contrary in fact. In view of this perceived connection, however, I would like to begin with a few comments on the recent debate in the public media over postmodernism and its apparently pernicious effects on what is currently being taught in schools and on literacy in general. Even the Prime Minister, John Howard, has weighed in on these discussions with widely reported remarks on the negative impact of so-called postmodernism on the teaching of both English and history in schools. It is not entirely clear what the contributors to these debates actually mean by “postmodernism”, but generally speaking the word seems to designate an approach which combines impenetrable jargon with political correctness, an unwarranted attention to the products of popular culture and a heedless disregard for such things as objective truth and facts.

The argument runs that school students are being taught slabs of incomprehensible “theory” derived from French and German philosophers (Foucault's name often figures prominently) and force fed a diet of “political correctness” at the expense of basic skills such as knowing

how to spell and punctuate and also at the expense of the acquisition of basic “facts” about culture, history and historical chronology. Furthermore, it is argued that the great eternal canon of Dead White European Males which every school child should memorise is being replaced by an undue emphasis on the disposable ephemera of popular culture. In an interview broadcast on the ABC on the 20 April 2006, John Howard announced that he was in agreement with, to quote him, “the views of many people about the so-called postmodernism”. He went on to add: “We ...understand there’s high quality literature and there’s rubbish, and we need a curriculum that encourages an understanding of high quality literature and not the rubbish.”²

Understandably, these remarks have generated a lot of attention and debate in the media and in educational circles and have added fuel to the fire of a long standing campaign in *The Australian* against the evils of postmodernity and programs of “critical literacy” in schools. There are, of course, a number of manifest contradictions and confusions in this debate as others have pointed out. On the one hand, there is the argument that high-level theory which is difficult even at post-graduate university level is being taught in schools. This paradoxically co-exists with the argument that school students are being taught the trashiest of popular culture and that as a result, in Howard’s terms, we are seeing a “dumbing-down” of the English syllabus. There is no doubt that there are serious problems which have been generated by the garbled uptake of poorly understood ideas, but this is not sufficient argument to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

One particularly extreme contribution to this debate was offered by Giles Auty in the *The Australian* on the 21 April 2006, the day after Howard’s radio interview.³ Auty begins by conflating Marxism and postmodernism – two world views which are generally recognised as quite divergent, and blames them for “the present, covertly politicised and academically disastrous model” of education. According to Auty the embodiment of these two ideologies, and “the posthumous arbiter of the way our children and university students are taught” is none other than Michel Foucault who, in Auty’s account, emerges as something akin to the Osama bin Laden of the intellectual world, exercising his baleful influence over the literacy skills and political views of “hundreds of thousands of children now attending Australian schools”. Leaving aside Auty’s lurid account of Foucault’s alleged personal habits, this opinion piece is worth mentioning in so far as it rehearses a well-worn and familiar script of accusations against Foucault which usually run as follows.

First of all is the claim that Foucault doesn’t believe in objective truth or things like facts and subscribes to an extreme postmodern position that anything goes. In short, if you believe it, then it’s true.

Furthermore there is no truth, only power. What people take to be true is in fact merely the product of struggles for power.

Secondly, Foucault was an amoral nihilist, an anarchist who was only interested in dismantling and destroying existing systems of order and then proposing nothing in their place – generating general despair, apathy and political nihilism amongst those foolish enough to read his work.

Thirdly, he and others such as Jacques Derrida (founder of deconstructionism), Jean-Francois Lyotard (author of *The Postmodern Condition*) and Jean Baudrillard (famous for his notions that modern culture represents nothing but itself), are responsible for creating an impenetrable wall of jargon which has had a woeful effect on clear English expression and prose in a number of academic disciplines. This “wooden tongue”, as the colourful French expression describes the vocabularies of ideologies, has trickled down to afflict the English and history curricula of schools.

Lastly, and by no means least, Foucault’s personal morality was highly dubious. He is represented as a self-destructive homosexual who died of AIDS and who may, it is whispered, even have gone out and deliberately infected other people with the disease. This behaviour of course completely negates any value that his work might otherwise have had.

Inflated rhetoric indeed, and all too commonplace within certain media both in Australia and abroad. More balanced or sympathetic accounts usually only emerge in academic journals and books with a restricted circulation, or in the specialist media aimed at an educated or academic public, such as *The Book Show* and *The Philosopher’s Zone* on ABC Radio National. Thus, unfortunately, the general public continues to receive uninformed and often deliberately misleading accounts of the ideas in question, with no alternatives offered to balance the ledger. The most recent public incidence of this kind of rhetoric in relation to Foucault’s work can be seen on the Wikipedia page on Foucault which was, in August 2006, the subject of a fierce no holds barred editing war. Wikipedia is, of course, the handy internet font of all knowledge for many in a hurry. This recent edit war, which is fully documented on the discussion page relating to the Foucault entry, has resulted in the permanent banning of two contributors and the suspension of another. All four positions mentioned above were given more than ample airing in this battle.

Beginnings

After that preamble, I will now weigh in with a positive assessment of the impact of Foucault’s work. I would like to place particular emphasis on the various political and historical events which serve as a context to his work as these are often glossed over, indeed completely

ignored, when his name is dropped, willy nilly, into various moralising tirades about the current decadent state of Western civilisation.

Foucault was born in the French provinces into a comfortable middle class professional family in 1926. His father was a surgeon who expected his son to follow in the family profession. In 1946 he entered the prestigious Ecole Normal Supérieure in Paris. This institution, which was founded in 1845, was originally a teacher training college but developed into a very elite institution which has over the years produced a number of France's top intellectuals, scientists, politicians as well as Nobel Prize winners. Louis Pasteur, Jean-Paul Sartre and Georges Pompidou all number amongst its alumni.

Foucault like every other self-respecting young radical student at the time joined the local Communist Party cell at the Ecole in 1950. His decision to join was influenced by events in the war in Indo-China but his tenure was less than enthusiastic - he seldom turned up to meetings and left in 1953 when a number of Jewish doctors were arrested in the USSR for alleged treason. Interestingly, Foucault's uncompromising rejection of anti-semitism also emerged later in his career. After a serious terrorist attack on a well-known Jewish restaurant in Paris in 1982 which left several dead and many wounded, Foucault would eat there as often as possible as a gesture of protest against terrorism.

But let's go now to the political and intellectual climate at the end of World War II in France. Right wing ideologies which had advocated adherence to homeland, traditional family values, respect for authority and the army were severely discredited in the aftermath of the German occupation, and the actions of the puppet Vichy government led by aging World War I war hero Marshall Pétain. The void left by the collapse of right wing political philosophies was initially filled by a variety of left wing, Marxist, Catholic and atheist versions of existentialism. The Communist Party which made much of its (somewhat late) contribution to the Resistance also acquired a glorious and illustrious cachet in the public eye as a result. Remnants of right wing philosophies, nonetheless, survived notably in the form of Gaullism. All these various movements were grouped under the broad umbrella of "humanism". The main assumption of this philosophy was that something called "human nature" determined how people lived and acted in the world. Human nature, depending on your point of view, was either God-given or a natural biological template which remained constant throughout history and which could be gradually uncovered and defined via the efforts of both the physical and human sciences, or, if one was of a literary and philosophical bent, through a process of artistic and philosophical introspection.

At the end of the 1950s, however, a number of events in France and abroad such as the Khrushchev report which condemned

Stalinism, the Algerian war and the Communist suppression of the Hungarian Revolution produced massive political disillusion in the ranks of intellectuals. As a result, a number of them turned away from overtly political material to examine “scientific” areas which appeared to be more ideologically neutral and also of more immediate concern. These young intellectuals rejected what they saw as the politically compromised and out of touch humanist approach. One of the members of this new movement was Foucault who notes in relation to this period: “The experience of war had shown us the urgent need of a society radically different from the one in which we were living, this society that had permitted Nazism that had lain down in front of it... A large sector of French youth had a reaction of total disgust toward all that.”²⁴ This new movement was dubbed “structuralism” by the press.

Generally speaking structuralism rejected the idea that there was such a thing as a universal human nature which was able to explain all of history and existence. Structuralists argued that meaning was determined by the relation between things – it was not located in the things themselves. Rather than trying to discover what a human being truly was in his/her essence, structuralists were more interested in looking at the structures underlying knowledge, culture, society and language. So, for example, literary critic Roland Barthes argued that the author simply was the conduit of a language that already had its own meanings and structures before the author even started writing. Marxist thinker Louis Althusser suggested that history was simply a process that people acted out – they were not in charge of it at an individual level.

Michel Foucault’s work fitted into this general movement of thought. If we wish to describe his work in terms of its subject matter, his early work in the 1950s and 1960s fell within the general area of the history and philosophy of science and the history of ideas. In the 1970s, he focused more directly on the area of the history of the institutions and the State before going on to examine the history of ethical systems in the early 1980s. He also wrote about literature and art, historiography, current events and politics. The key word here is history. Foucault was as much a historian as a philosopher. He was interested in discerning patterns of order in historical systems of knowledge without resorting to vague organising categories such as “genius”, “progress”, “rationality”, “cause” and “effect”. These patterns of order were, he argued, quite specific to time and place and although they couldn’t be used to predict what might happen tomorrow, they were very useful for understanding the substrata on which our current societies rest and for opening up awareness concerning avenues for possible change. But we are perhaps veering

off into abstractions here and this might be a good point to start looking at the actual concrete content of Foucault's work.

Foucault's work

Foucault published his first works in 1954 on psychology, but came to wider attention with the publication of his book *Madness and Civilisation* in 1961. A full translation into English of this enormous 700 page volume was only just published this year in 2006. In this work Foucault traces the history of how madness has been dealt with in the Western world from the thirteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century. His history covers a broad sweep of disciplines, ranging from art and literature, to science, medicine and economics. He took a sympathetic view of the plight of those who were mad and argued that the modern scientific definition of madness as "mental illness" was not necessarily an unambiguous advance in human history.

If the book made little impact when it initially appeared, by the end of the 1960s sales had increased dramatically, particularly after the publication of Foucault's bestseller *The Order of Things* in 1966, and the general growth of interest in marginal groups and experiences. A group of traditional psychiatrists organised an entire conference in 1969 in France to denounce the book and its less than flattering portrayal of the somewhat shady historical origins of psychiatry. The anti-psychiatry movement latched onto the book with the anti-psychiatrist David Cooper providing the preface to the abridged English edition in 1967. If Foucault was sympathetic to the movement he emphasised that his work did not really fit comfortably within its boundaries. The difference lay in the fact that while the anti-psychiatrists claimed that madness was the result of social exclusion, Foucault maintained that there was a concrete biological basis for forms of behaviour usually designated as indicative of madness or mental illness.

This is an important point. One of the misconceptions concerning Foucault's work is that he ignores concrete reality at the expense of so-called discourse. According to this misconception, things only acquire reality as the result of social practices or the way we talk about them. Foucault, contrary to this, holds that there is in fact an intractable physical reality – but the way we describe, interact with and focus on it is highly variable and by no means fixed. The only way we can apprehend this raw level is by means of a whole panoply of complex cultural and conceptual tools which differ considerably according to historical period and culture. Foucault argues that the way we link words and things is by no means obvious, and that there is simply no way of pronouncing any of the links we make between words (or knowledge) and things to be absolutely true for once and for all.

If this lack of certainty is a matter of despair for some – Foucault sees it as a reason to be optimistic. Ideas and practices which have oppressive and unjust effects on people and limiting effects within knowledge and science can always be changed. Whole sections of the population need not be condemned to a lifetime of misery in the name of some spurious truth – whether this be scientific, religious or political. Foucault notes: ‘It is one of my targets to show people that a lot of things that are a part of their landscape – that people think are universal – are the result of some very precise historical changes. All my analyses are against the idea of universal necessities in human existence’.⁵

This is not an argument that there is no such thing as truth. Foucault states quite explicitly that he is not engaged in a “skeptical or relativistic refusal of all verified truth”.⁶ What he is interested in doing is examining the historically and culturally specific rules which regulate how people are able to gain access to the truth and how truth is distributed throughout the social body. For example, one can look at who is authorised to speak the truth (priests, scientists, experts, journalists, therapists of all kinds). One can also analyse the methods which are recognised as valid in producing and organising statements recognised as true (scientific research, historical research, therapeutic or religious introspection). Thirdly one can focus on institutions which are socially authorised to distribute truth (schools, churches, political parties, colleges of experts, academic journals, the media and so on).

This seems a timely point to introduce a notion indissolubly linked with Foucault’s name, that is power. Foucault defines power as the capacity of one structure of actions to modify another structure of actions. It is not something that can be owned and it has to be exercised to exist. In Foucault’s view, the production and deployment of truth is intrinsically linked with the exercise of power. The commonplace handed down from Plato is that power and truth are at opposite poles of the spectrum. But one has only to cast a cursory glance at the politics involved in research funding to counter this argument. Clearly, a well-funded medical researcher in a fashionable area such as cancer is going to be able to produce a lot more in the way of “truth” than an unfunded researcher in a less glamorous area such as fibromyalgia. Foucault’s 1963 book *The Birth of the Clinic* makes this very point in relation to the development of modern clinical medicine in France from 1769 to 1825 relating the formation of medicine as a science to complex political, economic and social factors at the time. Foucault is careful to point out that the involvement of these factors does not invalidate the internal conceptual apparatus of science or other forms of systematized knowledge. In short, knowledge

and science still remain operational in relation to the physical and external world.

Foucault's next book *The Order of Things* published in 1966 was an instant best seller. It was hailed as one of the manifestos of the new structuralist movement – even if most of the people who bought the book didn't get beyond the first chapter and with good reason. This is probably Foucault's most difficult and specialised book dealing with the history of economics, biology and linguistics. The press ignored the specialist content, however, and zeroed in on Foucault's provocative statements that Marxism constituted a mere storm in a children's paddling pool, and that the Man revered by humanism was dying if not already dead. These statements provided fertile fodder for controversy in both the structuralist and humanist camps.

Two years after the publication of this book in 1968 student uprisings erupted around the world. Just as an aside here, with the increasing all pervasiveness of American culture, if until recently it was events in Paris in 1968 that have been held up as iconic – America is now jostling to occupy the whole stage as it attempts to do in so many other cultural and historical domains. Foucault was living in Tunisia at the time and was deeply affected by what happened to the students there – beatings, torture and years of imprisonment for merely distributing political tracts. He took risks himself – hiding a student printing press at home, an action which if discovered could have had serious consequences. He returned to France at the end of 1968 determined to take an activist and politically involved stance. In this he was not alone, 1968 marked the radical politicisation of not only intellectuals, but students, workers and a variety of socially disadvantaged groups and ushered in a decade of general social unrest and contestation.

During the 1970s Foucault was to be found at the forefront of both militant and intellectual activity promoting social justice. He attended demonstrations, chaired committees, signed numerous petitions and founded and was involved in groups which supported prisoners, health workers and immigrants as well as others. Interestingly, France did not develop any active left wing terrorist groups – a feature of the landscape elsewhere especially Germany and Italy in the 1970s. There were some suggestions at the time that it was the moderating influence of Foucault and other intellectuals which helped contribute to this state of affairs in France.

In 1975 in the wake of his activism in relation to conditions in prisons, Foucault published a history of the adoption of the prison from 1757 to 1838 in France as a universal method of criminal punishment. The book was titled *Discipline and Punish*. This is arguably Foucault's best known and most influential work. Using the example of the prison he traces the emergence of what he describes as

a “disciplinary society”, which involves the training of large populations of individuals to act in an easily manageable way. Institutions such as schools, prisons, military barracks, factories and hospitals all acted as conduits for this kind of training through the use of architecture, timetabling and the regimentation of physical activities and gestures. Compliance was guaranteed through complex systems of surveillance.

In 1976 Foucault published the first volume of a *History of Sexuality*. This book argues that, far from repressing sexuality, modern European thought has done nothing but talk about it endlessly – proliferating scientific and institutional categories to deal with it. He also outlines ideas on how power is exercised and resisted in the social body and introduces the notion of “biopower”, an idea which has found considerable fortune in recent years in the works of commentators. By biopower Foucault means the management of births, deaths, reproduction and illnesses of the population by the modern State. In the late 1970s, Foucault also introduced his now widely used notion of “governmentality” which combines the words “government” and “rationality”. He initially used the term to describe particular ways of administering populations in modern European history within the context of the rise of the idea of the State. He later expanded his definition to describe the techniques used to guide people’s everyday conduct and freedoms at every social level. This idea has been vastly popular and has generated a huge industry applying the notion to the development of professions and the operation of bureaucracies worldwide.

In the 1980s, Foucault turned his attention to the history of ethical systems in the West and examined the work of the Ancient Greek and Roman philosophers. Hitherto his historical period of choice had always been the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century in Europe. Again, this work has been widely influential, giving commentators historical tools to reflect on how human beings fashion themselves as entities able to make choices about how to act in relation to each other and their external environments. He published two further volumes of a *History of Sexuality* in 1984 a month before his death from AIDS. These volumes dealt with Ancient Greek and Roman attitudes towards sexuality and ethics as handed down in a number of philosophical texts.

Evaluation

So what is one to conclude from all of this in the context of the kind of critiques that I outlined at the beginning of this paper? Why should Foucault’s work continue to be taken seriously? There is no doubt that Foucault’s work is difficult. He willingly admits that his writing style is somewhat convoluted, but there is also the fact that

writing that challenges usual ways of organising thought is going to require some effort on the part of the reader. Foucault was also writing for an educated, indeed a specialist audience and without this background some of his work is hard to access. Added to this, reading his work in English entails dealing with problems in the translation of both language and cultural assumptions. This complexity has led to misunderstandings and faulty characterisations of Foucault's work. Foucault complained about this himself, mentioning the reduction of his books to slogans and the fact that people often acquired their ideas about his work from the secondary literature rather than from the original texts.

Questions about Foucault's personal life and its relation to his work raise complex and long rehearsed questions about the relation between the author and his or her work and also about attitudes towards homosexuality in contemporary society. Many of the more scandalous allegations about his behaviour are not backed up by any evidence and it is unclear what implications they have in terms of the actual content of his work. Discrediting authors' work by *ad hominem* arguments is a long-standing rhetorical device and of debatable merit. Artistic and intellectual production needs to rise and fall on its own terms and generally this is the historical test for any body of work.

Why do people get so upset by Foucault's approach and characterise him as having no regard for truth? The fact of the matter was that he was not prepared to just accept at face value what is conventionally offered up as truth. Neither was he prepared to "tell people what to do", as the accepted model of how a philosopher should conduct him or herself often has it. His view was that many so-called truths which are accepted as self-evident have very precise historical origins and are often maintained in the interests of particular distributions of power within the social body. His work was about the careful historical examination and taking apart of these processes. From this a number of commentators have concluded that Foucault was out to destroy what all good thinking people know to be unquestionably true and that he was prepared to use any means possible – including inventing complete fictions – to achieve his ends.

The fact that some of the more garbled applications of Foucault's ideas sometimes veer closely towards this position certainly does not help. But even a cursory examination of Foucault's actual work simply does not bear this out. At a technical level his work is underpinned by a wealth of empirical research, with rigorous methods of historical archival investigation and analytical methods of comparison, verification and citation. Foucault was a familiar figure at the National Library in Paris and numbers of people have mentioned seeing him in the main reading room day in and day out. So why isn't this enough to convince those who insist that he made it all up? One reason is that

he deals with empirical material often ignored by others and arranges more familiar material in new and unexpected ways. Another reason is that he argues that this empirical material is already an interpretation, it has already been selected, and organised in particular ways. The idea that the “raw material” of research is not neutral, which if not new is often conveniently ignored, also throws into question the efforts of other researchers and analysts, who thus find the foundations of their own work uncomfortably undermined.

But one cannot draw the conclusion from this that Foucault is claiming that nothing is true and that what is designated as truth simply serves the interests of power and that attempts to guide the behaviour of others are always bad. What he is suggesting instead is that we just need to be very careful – too easy an acceptance of the status quo at either the level of knowledge or social organisation can lead to the acceptance and perpetuation of myth, injustice and the restriction of reasonable freedoms within the social body.

Foucault’s work has helped to free up ossified points of view and has provoked many to reassess their own ideas, to start debates and to use his work as a springboard for further research in a wide range of disciplines. Foucault’s relentless challenges to the status quo are not an invitation to do away with all constraints. As he says:

The important question here, it seems to me, is not whether a culture without restraints is possible or even desirable but whether the system of constraints in which a society functions leaves individuals the liberty to transform the system. Obviously, constraints of any kind are going to be intolerable to certain segments of society. The necrophiliac finds it intolerable that graves are not accessible to him. But a system of constraint becomes truly intolerable when the individuals who are affected by it don’t have the means of modifying it.⁷

Foucault offers a fundamentally optimistic point of view. The present situation in any domain is not set in stone and is instead the product of a whole collection of actions and decisions undertaken by many people over a long period of time. This means things can be changed. Such optimism seems to be in short supply at present and is in my view a major reason to continue to read Foucault’s work.

ENDNOTES

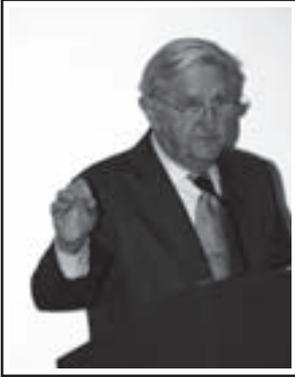
- 1 I have discussed Foucault’s work at length in two earlier books: *Michel Foucault: Historian or Philosopher?*, London: Macmillan, 1989 and *Michel Foucault*, London: Sage, 2005.
- 2 John Howard, “Interview with Madonna King”, <http://www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/interview1892.html>, 20 April 2006.
- 3 Giles Auty, “Top Marx for our educators. Marxism should not keep infiltrating the English curriculum”, *The Australian*, 21 April 2006.

- 4 Michel Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault". In J.D. Faubion (ed.) *Power*, New York: the New Press, 2000, pp. 247-8.
- 5 Michel Foucault. "Truth, power, self: an interview with Michel Foucault", 25 October 1982. In L. Martin et al (eds.) *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988, p. 11.
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- 7 Michel Foucault, "Sexual choice, sexual act". In P. Rabinow (ed.), *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth. The Essential Works of Michel Foucault 1954-1984*. Volume One, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1997, pp. 47-8.

FUNCTIONS - 2006



Photographer: David Karonidis



Peter Coleman



Leonie Kramer

Photo – David Karonidis

The poet James (Jim) McAuley was a controversial figure who left a body of work unmatched by most Australian intellectuals. From his poems, his hymns, the Ern Malley hoax, his profound essays on the decolonisation of New Guinea, his association with major figures like B.A.Santamaria and Sir John Kerr, his involvement with the Industrial Groups in the ALP and with the DLP to his founding of the magazine *Quadrant*, Jim McAuley did not fit within the literary establishment. On Tuesday 5 September 2006, Peter Coleman, former MP, journalist and author, *The Heart of James McAuley: Life and Work of the Australian Poet* and Dame Leonie Kramer AC, former Chancellor Sydney University and editor, *James McAuley: Poetry, Essays and Personal Commentary* & *James McAuley, Collected Poems*, discussed their recollections of McAuley and his work.

JAMES MCAULEY:

TWO VIEWS

Peter Coleman

One of the first things that struck you about Jim McAuley was his sense of fun. The world remembers him as poet, critic and editor. He was indeed a serious poet - tragic, *sentimentalisch*. But he was a very funny man too. Only a great humorist could have written Ern Malley's poems. How can you help laughing as you read Ern's preposterous nonsense?

Princess, you lived in Princess St,
Where the urchins pick their nose in the sun
With the left hand.

Another of Jim's stunts that deserves to be better celebrated was his project of setting up Poets Anonymous, modelled on Alcoholics Anonymous. It would help the clapped-out poet who has nothing to say but who just can't beat the demon verse. Every day he reaches for the pencil, no matter what pain his addiction inflicts on family or friends. But at a meeting of Poets Anonymous, he will hear fellow sufferers, who have conquered the habit, stand up and confess frankly: "I am a poet. One small lyric is too much for me, and one endless epic is not enough. I used to write sonnets, two, three or even four a day. Then odes, then epics. Then I found Poets Anonymous..." Jim said he was having talks with Treasurer Bill McMahan about giving grants to poets who undertake not to write a word for the period of the grant. That might help them give up the addiction.

Still, it is Jim McAuley the poet I want to talk about today. When I began writing *The Heart of James McAuley*, Jim had only recently died - in October 1976. His legend was fresh in memory and he was widely and deeply honoured. My contribution to the obsequies then was to bring out a memorial issue of *Quadrant*. Looking back on it now - the March 1977 number - it confirms the general goodwill towards Jim at that time. It begins with a tribute by his friend, the poet A.D.Hope:

Standing on this late promontory of time,
I match our spirits, the laggard and the swift:
Though we shared much beside the gift of rhyme,
Yours was the surer gift.

It ends with a note by Douglas Stewart, another poet and literary editor, on the Requiem Mass held for McAuley at St John's College at the University of Sydney. "How well the Catholic Church can do these things!" Stewart wrote. No Catholic himself, and perhaps more humanist than Christian, he was, he reminded his readers, something of a connoisseur of literary funerals: he had attended the services for Hugh McCrae, Mary Gilmore, Kenneth Slessor, Norman Lindsay and many others. McAuley's was, he said, the most beautiful service, the most perfectly in keeping of them all. This was because McAuley's poems - read by Ron Haddrick and Peter Steele - and his hymns pervaded the whole event.

Between these tributes - Hope's and Stewart's - were the homages of other poets (Vivian Smith, Peter Skrzynecki, Les Murray); old New Guinea hands (Harry Jackman), political collaborators (Richard Krygier, Bob Santamaria), and a number of friends and critics (Donald Horne, Peter Hastings) . Too many to list them all, let me mention a couple.

The scholar Grahame Johnston described his desolation at what he and our country had lost by McAuley's death. Behind the poetry, Johnston felt the pressure of all that Europe and Western civilisation meant and still means. The poet Gwen Harwood, in a different mode, wrote of "the simple, generous and compassionate man that I came to love", the friend who knew it was better to be vulnerable, and wounded, than to hold oneself aloof in critical reserve.

The composer Richard Connolly wrote: "Ah, James McAuley. Strange, great, loving, knowing, lonely man. I shall have other friends, but none will remotely resemble you. I think I shall not know another man remotely like you. Vale. Pax tecum." All that was barely 30 years ago. But - and this is the point - what an extraordinary transformation a New Dunciad has wreaked on McAuley's reputation in those few years!

Today it is the received view among most OzLit scholars that he is a poor poet, of reactionary politics, and of bad character; no calumny is too gross but someone will pass it on. He is, they tell us, deservedly forgotten - while at the same time they produce a library of books and articles that keeps his memory vibrantly alive.

Why these bitter attacks? Where do they come from? One squad of critics is the modernists and postmodernists still seeking revenge for the enormous success of the Ern Malley hoax - played on them by Jim McAuley and Harold Stewart. Having licked their wounds since 1944, they now pretend that Ern's forced rhetoric, absurd bathos and banal ideas are not only advanced high art but McAuley's (and Harold Stewart's) best work. They republish or anthologise it and sponsor magazines devoted to its genius.

The hoax can be read at several levels. At one level is the great joke at the heart of the affair. Only the humourless can fail to laugh at Ern's demented fustian. At a deeper level there is the hoaxers' self-purging. The real target of the hoax is McAuley himself and the sort of poetry he used to write as a younger man. Michael Heyward's *The Ern Malley Affair* overlooks this essential point and even disposes of McAuley's key to the hoax, his *The End of Modernity*, in one dismissive sentence. At another level still - and this is a lasting achievement - Ern's story, as told in the poems and in the letters of his sister Ethel, is one of the great creations of Australian fiction; the tragic-comic tale of the dying, despairing bohemian poet nursed by his loving sister as he coughs out his last masterwork, sixteen spasms of gibberish. The modernists miss all these readings.

A second cohort of campaigners against McAuley has been the liberal humanists, the freethinkers of Australian Orthodoxy. Early in the 1950s, McAuley abandoned the anarchist secularism of his youth and returned to Christ. Worse still, he even wrote poems about it. But, as Les Murray warned us all, the non-god of Australian atheism is a jealous absence, and the unbelievers will smite the Christian faithful, hip and thigh.

They may tolerate Buddhism or Islam or any superstition from astrology to scientology to the Da Vinci Code... but not the faith of our fathers. Michael Ackland, for example, in his *Damaged Men*, writes with sympathy of Harold Stewart's unworldly Buddhism but shows no sympathy for McAuley's unworldly Christianity.

When McAuley, for example, published his *Letter to John Dryden* with its appeal, *deep in the heart's abyss*, to the ground-plan of the Christian mystery, the godless were furious. Some remained unforgiving. Jack Lindsay, Amy Witting and A.D.Hope ridiculed him in song and ballad. His old collaborator, Harold Stewart, the other half of Ern Malley, called him a "Popish pomposity." Max Harris alerted *Quadrant* readers to the tell-tale detail that McAuley was rumoured to contribute to a Jesuit journal.

These poets form a sort of "unity ticket" with those "smorgasbord Christians", the liberals who pick and choose among doctrines as their fancy suggests. McAuley had satirised them in his 1963 poem "Liberal or Innocent by Definition":

Unbiased between good and evil...
They can never be convicted,
They have no record of convictions.

A third and vociferous cohort of the New Dunciad is political. McAuley was one of the few Australian poets, perhaps the only one, whose life's quest comprehended not only poetry and religion but also politics and social life. He was for over fifteen years deeply involved in

the crisis in New Guinea and wrote some of the most enduring essays in the literature of decolonisation. When he then moved to academia, he wrote wisely and urgently on the crisis in our schools and universities. His polemics provoked controversy. But the most furious critics of all have been the Left, enraged that McAuley's anti-Communism turned out to be right all along.

He was one of the very few Australian writers who engaged with the great theme of his age - the totalitarian temptation that gave the world Auschwitz and the Gulag. At every stage of his life from youthful anarchist to ALP pamphleteer to DLP Cold War warrior to self-styled "friend of the Liberal Party", he left behind poetry and polemic of permanent value.

In his last public statement, a sort of dying declaration, he was able to say:

I am now fortunate enough to be able to say that never in my life have I been an advocate or an apologist for movements or regimes that trample systematically on liberal principles and human rights and are essentially based on murder and lies.

I have never defended the misdeeds of any terrorist organisation or dictatorial regime of any complexion. I have never been a retailer of propaganda made in Moscow or Peking or Hanoi or any other centre devoted to the subversion of free countries like Australia. I have never blurred the distinction between free and unfree systems or exalted an unfree system above ours. I have never denied that offensive action by a totalitarian power is aggression; I have never stigmatised defensive action by the victims as provocation.

For some leftists - Cassandra Pybus in *The Devil and James McAuley* is a recent case - this merely demonstrates what a neurotic Cold War warrior he was. He must have been, she thought, a repressed homosexual. Such critics set the tone.

There have been exceptions. One is Dame Leonie Kramer's *James McAuley*, - her selection of his poetry and essays and her perceptive commentary on them. Another is Lyn McCredden's *James McAuley*. Her style is, for my taste, too burdened with the arcane argot of post-structuralism but she responds to the beauty of McAuley's poetry and communicates this to readers.

In writing *The Heart of James McAuley*, I set out to do what Grahame Johnston had called for in the 1977 memorial issue of *Quadrant*, that is, to do justice to all aspects of Jim's work - his poetry, his politics, his religion, the whole man. I am grateful that Anthony Cappello decided to republish it, after some 26 years. My hope is that it will do a little to combat the dunces who are determined to devalue or nullify the work of one of Australia's greatest poets, perhaps its greatest.

But I do not want to close on too combative a note. It is time for reconciliation. Time for Jim's partisans to recognise that he was sometimes too dogmatic, even abrasive. Time for Jim's critics to acknowledge his greatness. So let me end with a story from an eyewitness (me) of the first meeting of those old combatants, Jim and Max Harris, many years after the Ern Malley hoax but while the passions, rage and hatred it had aroused still reverberated. (Remember Sid Nolan's venomous painting of Jim.)

The meeting was in the old *Quadrant* office. Each of them had been putting out feelers to the other. Jim plainly had respect for Max as a critic. What would be the point of hoaxing a fool? Still, the tension was tangible as we waited. Finally Max strolled in, large as life in bow-tie and cane, looking like Bunyip Bluegum in *The Magic Pudding*. Jim looked a bit like Rumpus Bumpus the Poet.

Max stood in the middle of the office, silent. Work stopped. Jim looked up. Each caught the other's eye. Jim nodded, "Hullo Max." Max nodded, "Hullo Jim." And they settled down to discuss the article Jim had asked Max to write for *Quadrant* on the achievement of Max's magazine *Angry Penguins*. Each recognised the other's integrity. There's a lesson there for all of us.

JAMES MCAULEY:

TWO VIEWS

Leonie Kramer

Peter Coleman's *The Heart of James McAuley* is a valuable basis for this discussion because it sets out chronologically and in detail the diversity and remarkable depth of his writing. I shall try to illustrate Coleman's and Stove's view of his writing by adding my observations of the man and his work over 30 years.

1946 was for me a memorable year. I began tutoring in the English Department at the University of Melbourne. A.D Hope was appointed to the staff as a lecturer in Language, teaching chiefly Old English and Norse, in which he had graduated at Oxford with third class honours. He liked to tell people that his poor result was because he got drunk on the night before the Gothic exam. It was at Hope's home that I met McAuley, who had just published his first book of poetry, *Under Aldebaran*. In later years, Hope said that he learnt from McAuley, a compliment that McAuley rejected. After all, A.D.Hope was ten years older than Jim.

Ten years later, in *A Vision of Ceremony*, McAuley set out a manifesto stating his poetic creed, to which he remained faithful for 20 years, even though his technical experiments and subject matter changed with experience. From this collection, he emerges as a traditional poet in the best sense of the term. He is an inheritor of the tradition of English poetry, and he exemplifies this by reviving forms of poetry which have fallen into disuse, such as the narrative poem and the epic. In *Captain Quiros*, a major work recalling the voyages of the fifteenth and sixteenth century navigators across the Pacific from Spain and Portugal in search of the Great South Land, he acknowledges that "poems in this kind are out of fashion". He revives the epistle in *A Letter to John Dryden*, which attacks, somewhat stridently in places, what he sees as some of the evils of our times. Yet he understands Dryden, for, like him, McAuley felt that, in Dryden's words, he was "betwixt two ages cast/ The first of this and hindmost of the last". He believes that "the secret springs" of poetry are the spiritual convictions of its writers, that "the art of words" derives from a contemplation of the Word of God; and that poetry fulfils its

function of revealing spiritual truth by being first of all intelligible. "Not in opaque but limpid wells/Lie truth and mystery". His poetry demonstrates that this is not a formula for religious verse, narrowly conceived, and his reference to intelligibility looks forward to the Ern Malley hoax. In this early collection, his most characteristic writing is to be found in the shorter poems. In reviving the spirit of poetic tradition, rather than its particular forms, lies his greatest achievement, and these poems foreshadow the remarkable lyrics of his later works.

A Vision of Ceremony also anticipates two subjects that begin to explain the hostility he encountered from critics and some poets. In his foreword to Peter Coleman's book on McAuley, Robert Stove eloquently describes the reaction to his conversion to Catholicism. Like Dryden, McAuley found an answer to contradictory philosophies in religious orthodoxy. He is less puzzled than other commentators by Dryden's defence of the Anglican faith in *Religio Laici* and of Catholicism in *The Hind and the Panther* five years later, though Dryden's reasons for this change might have been influenced by the politics of his day.

McAuley suffered many doubts and anxieties about his faith, and was acutely aware of how difficult it was to meet the religious aspirations he set for himself. The skeptical questioning of his youth was not abandoned in his later life. I witnessed a curious example of this when we were part of a group of writers and academics who toured India in 1970. It was a second visit for McAuley, and he remarked on the changes that had taken place for the better. Three of us - McAuley, George Russell, a professor of English at the University of Sydney and a Catholic, and I, a Protestant - had arrived at the end of our journey in what was then Madras. Jim insisted on our going to mass in the cathedral. We were the only ones there, and the service took place in a small crypt-like space, where, according to legend, Doubting Thomas had preached. Much later I learnt that Thomas was the only disciple who did not believe that Jesus had appeared to them after the resurrection, until he had seen his wounds. Those many people who attacked McAuley for his supposed religious extremism, largely because of his association with Santamaria and the DLP, failed to understand the complexity of his mind, as well as his heart. His poetry reveals the subtlety of both, which even the most accomplished prose cannot do.

The second subject anticipated in *A Vision of Ceremony* is his critique of certain tendencies in contemporary poetry in the 1940s, in particular its drift into obscurity. The Ern Malley hoax was a joke with a serious purpose, which was to find out whether the poets who followed the fashion and the editors and critics who praised them for their innovative poetry, could actually make sense of it. There is no

need to revisit it here. Had it not been for the absurd hounding of Max Harris for publishing what the Gilbertian Adelaide police deemed to be obscene, it would have had a short life. A number of poets and critics were outraged by the attack on modernism, which reinforced their conviction that McAuley was a right-wing reactionary, out of touch with the present, and afraid of the future, or, as we now absurdly say, of “moving forward”.

McAuley had studied and translated modern European poets and, like Christopher Brennan, understood the importance of symbolism in poetry. There was some evidence at the time that Ern’s models were not avant-garde Europeans or Yeats, but the English apocalyptic school. I became convinced of this when, at Harvard, I undertook a minor research project on this movement. The notion that McAuley wrote better poems as Malley, seemingly forgetting his collaborator, Harold Stewart, was ridiculous. Ern, however, lived on in some anthologies while McAuley was banished.

He fought on a much more serious front against the invasion of progressive education. He established the Australian Council for Educational Standards (ACES), with which I was associated from the start, as I had been with *Quadrant*. Both ventures were criticised for trying to turn back the clock, and a State Minister of the time accused us of looking in the rear-view mirror, as though that habit was a crime rather than a precautionary measure. Sometimes Jim was like an Old Testament prophet, prophesying doom. But he was right in foreseeing the breakdown of traditions of learning, and the weakening of the values of “the vision of ceremony”. Those of us who resisted the inroads of American educational theories which were already being challenged in their homeland, foresaw the damage they would do. We’re only now trying to repair it.

In 1969 *Surprises of the Sun* was published. The autobiographical poems surprised his readers, and to some extent the poet. The following year, from hospital, he was trying to prepare his collected poems for publication by Angus and Robertson. He handed over the task to Douglas Stewart, with me as an assistant. From that experience I came to understand better his poetic aims and values.

As Coleman and Stove point out, his achievement has still not been fully recognised. He was a man of great learning, in anthropology, theology, sociology and political history, an expert on New Guinea and the Pacific, a student of language and a musician, whose interests and practice included both jazz piano and church organ music. He wrote hymns set to music by Richard Connolly, many of which became part of church ritual. As a scholar, he displays the range and quality of his mind. As poet, he offers glimpses of his heart. In his dying days he wrote some of the finest lyrics in the language, in which, in Pater’s words, he “aspires towards the condition of music”.

They are full of images of his familiar world and reflections on being human. They seem simple, but are profound. It's hard to understand why many school students have been deprived of poems which they can immediately comprehend and enjoy, and which, as they grow in understanding of their world, will yield further meanings.



Photo – David Karonidis

Greg Sheridan

According to *The Australian's* Paul Kelly, Greg Sheridan's *The Partnership: the inside story of the US-Australian alliance under Bush and Howard* is a story filled with revelations, accounts of secret meetings and insights about the Australian-US alliance. In writing the book, Sheridan had unprecedented access to leading political, military and bureaucratic figures involved in the US-Australia alliance on both sides of the Pacific and in Asia. Greg Sheridan is foreign editor with *The Australian* newspaper and addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 12 September 2006 to reflect on some of the issues covered in his new book.

INSIDE THE

AUSTRALIAN-US ALLIANCE

Greg Sheridan

I was motivated to write my book, *The Partnership: the inside story of the US-Australia alliance under Bush and Howard*, by the desire to provide something for my three sons to read on the alliance which actually shared the majority view of Australians, that the alliance makes a big contribution to Australian security. Even more rare is the notion of a book which supports the Australian deployment in Iraq.

However, in undertaking this book I found an astonishing number of untold stories. Because virtually all of the books written on the US-Australia alliance under Bush and Howard are polemical rather than narrative, or even truly analytical, a whole range of important, even perhaps historical stories are simply not being told. I mean, here, the inside stories of Australian diplomacy and especially of the Australian military contribution in the war on terror. Whether you agree with the deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan or not, the Australian soldiers have undertaken remarkable military actions which deserve to be much better known.

But tonight I can't encompass all of that. Instead I just want to offer a few reflections on an extraordinary time in the US-Australian alliance, offer one or two thoughts about its intelligence and military dimensions and ask some questions about its future sustainability.

I contend that the US-Australian alliance has never been closer since World War II, though it certainly has been close before. One way the alliance has been misunderstood is to assume that it is always run by the Americans and the Australians just go along, agreeing to whatever the Americans want to greater or lesser degree. In fact, in an asymmetric relationship, while the preponderance of power resides with the bigger player, the initiative often resides with the smaller player.

The tragic ignorance of Australian history, especially in Australian schools and universities, means we don't appreciate the rich heritage of profound strategic understanding and initiative Australian leaders have shown over the last century in their hard-headed pursuit of Australia's national interests. You think of Alfred Deakin inviting

Teddy Roosevelt's fleet to visit Australia, against the wishes of the British at the time. You think of the pivotal military role of John Monash in the latter stages of World War 1 and then Billy Hughes' insistence on Australia's voice at Versailles. You think, of course, of John Curtin in World War II.

Or maybe the extraordinary accomplishments of Percy Spender. Nobody named Percy, especially not a conservative politician, is going to get a fair go in contemporary commentary. But Spender was substantially responsible for the ANZUS alliance, for the Colombo Plan as it applied to Australia, and for Australia's early commitment of ground troops to the Korean War. Or recall Black Jack McEwan's role in the historic trade treaty with Japan. Or the Menzies Government urging the Americans to get involved in Vietnam. You may agree or disagree with Menzies' policy, but certainly the Menzies and Holt Governments were pursuing what they thought to be Australia's national interests. Or you think of all that Paul Keating achieved, and I think it was a lot, in APEC.

Now I believe that John Howard and Alexander Downer are operating in the direct line of that tradition. The personal relationship between John Howard and George W Bush was transformed by the terror attacks of 9/11. But the Howard Government, long before 9/11, had wanted specific outcomes, in the national interest and in its own political interests, from the US alliance under Bush. The objectives Howard and Downer wanted included:

- enhanced military cooperation, which makes our military a much more formidable force;
- enhanced intelligence cooperation, which is now at the highest level of intensity it has ever been;
- more influence for Australia in US decision making, especially in Asia;
- and, as a result of that influence, greater US engagement in Indonesia especially;
- a free trade agreement and all that that means for trade in services and for investment flows;
- the enhanced prestige in Asia that comes from visible access to and influence in Washington;
- and, naturally, a pay-off with the voters.

The Howard Government achieved all of these objectives, and it did so at very little cost. It was able to do this partly because it shared a broad world view with the Bush administration. But it was really able to do so because it was willing to share risk with the Bush administration and because it possessed relevant capabilities. One of those capabilities was military. This was not all that Australia had to contribute. Australia's good standing in the region and internationally, its powerful and sizable economy, its diplomatic expertise, its soft

power inherent in the generally good image of Australia around the world - these were all factors.

But the military was certainly a central factor in the alliance over the last five years. The Australian operations in Afghanistan in 2002 were a turning point. This is especially so of the performance of the Australian special forces, the SAS, in Operation Anaconda. I tell this extraordinary story at length in the book but its essence is simple. A number of Americans were injured following the loss of US helicopters. They were sustaining withering fire from Taliban and al-Qa'ida forces to the extent that it was impossible to mount another attempt to rescue them in daylight.

The Americans rely very heavily on technical means of surveillance whereas the SAS is schooled in the techniques of long range and long term reconnaissance and surveillance. As a result, SAS men were in place, high in the mountains, to see precisely where the Americans, and more importantly where the Taliban/al-Qa'ida force were which were moving towards them. As a result, the Australians were able to constantly direct precise American air strikes to keep the enemy away until a night rescue of the trapped Americans on the ground could be mounted. To do this the Australians had to be able to see exactly where the Taliban and al-Qa'ida forces were, while keeping their own positions concealed, and they did all this operating at altitudes that human beings aren't meant to function at. It was a remarkable feat of arms which transformed the American view of the Australian Army, from Anaconda onwards the Americans wanted the Australians at their side.

In Iraq, the SAS followed up by waging the first significant military action of the invasion. They knocked out Scud missile sites making it much more difficult for Saddam Hussein to launch missiles at Israel and bring Israel into the war. This was a key strategic objective for the allies. The SAS also went on to capture the al-Asad air base which it found contained 57 Soviet-made Mig aircraft. There was much more besides from the SAS and it has all led me to conclude that the SAS may be the finest special forces formation in the world. One American commander caught the American mood when he wrote that his men would be happy to storm hell itself provided they had the Australians on their right side.

The intelligence cooperation is also very much a two way street and a good deal of Australian intelligence product, especially concerning Southeast Asia, finds its way to the highest American desks, including the President's daily intelligence briefing. But naturally, given the vast size of the US intelligence establishment, the predominant flow is the other way. And since the Iraq war Australian access to US intelligence has moved to a completely unprecedented level.

President Bush issued a presidential directive commanding that Australian and British access be upgraded to include material that was previously classified as "no forn", meaning to be seen by no foreign eyes. Australians also now have direct access to US intelligence information systems and to real time battle space information, especially for joint operations such as Iraq and Afghanistan. As my book recounts in some detail, there are now Australians posted, both as liaison officers and in line jobs, throughout the US intelligence and military systems. All of this is of great benefit to Australia.

But what does all this closeness mean if the Bush foreign policy has been a complete disaster? First of all, I don't believe it's been a complete disaster. First, let's acknowledge tremendous Bush successes in Asia, an area of critical importance to Australia. The Bush administration has pioneered a profoundly important new strategic realignment with India, which will characterise Asian security for decades to come. It has seen the transformation of the alliance with Japan, so that it is now a reciprocal alliance. Japan is now not just a US client but can itself actively contribute to US and broader global security, as well as continuing to enjoy the US security guarantee. The new Japan is evident in its ability and willingness to contribute troops to Iraq.

The Middle East is of course a mess but it's been a mess under every previous president as well. There have been many mistakes by the Bush administration, many arising particularly from its internal divisions. But much of the judgement about its performance in the Middle East leaves out one crucial actor - its enemy. The enemy gets a say in the battlefield and al-Qa'ida and its allied groups were always going to make any American strategy extremely messy.

Too many commentators seem to think that al-Qa'ida and the global jihadist movement are somehow a function of poor Western policy, that in some bizarre sense we invented them. This attitude embodies a kind of patronising racism which sees the terrorists as less than human - as not exercising independent moral agency and intellectual choice. The terrorists' ideology is coherent and well developed and has evolved over hundreds of years. I think it is profoundly mistaken but to pretend that it is merely a response to Bush, rather than a deeply thought through view of the world is to deny history and to deny the terrorists the respect they deserve.

Al-Qa'ida, as part of its long-term plan to set up a new caliphate, wants to destroy Western societies such as the US and Australia. That there has not been an attack on US or Australian soil since 9/11 is not for lack of trying on the part of al-Qa'ida and its affiliated groups, such as Jemaah Islamiah and Lashkar-e-Topiba. Instead it represents a great operational triumph for Western intelligence and security agencies. We would be mad as well as contemptible to try to run away

from the US in the war on terror. This would damage the war on terror, damage the US and damage Australia.

Two final thoughts on the future of the alliance - one positive, one negative. The positive thought is that the Australian government has tried hard to institutionalise the best aspects of the new US-Australian closeness under Bush and Howard. This is evident in things like the free trade agreement, the new intelligence arrangements, the new military arrangements, and even the sponsorship of a new American Studies Centre in Australia. This is an enlightened attempt to make sure that this new closeness out lives the political lives of both Bush and Howard.

I think it relatively unlikely that American policy will change radically under a new president, whether it's John McCain or Hilary Clinton or anyone else. Whoever becomes president will have to continue to try to prosecute the war on terror vigorously and, whether they supported going into Iraq or not, they will be unlikely to want to risk creating a catastrophic vacuum there by immediate withdrawal. Certainly they will not want to distance themselves from those nations, such as the UK and Australia, which have been their closest allies. So that bodes well for the alliance.

The danger for the future of the alliance resides in the virulent and irrational anti-Americanism and unreality of so much of Australia's academic, media and artistic class. In this battle of ideas within Australia we will shape our own identity, and we cannot rely forever and entirely on the splendid practice of the Australian public of taking no notice of their intellectual class. No, the anti-Americanism of so many Australian elites, so splendidly resisted by the public, is the one real threat to the alliance.

SPEAKERS AT THE SYDNEY INSTITUTE

May 2006 – September 2006

The Hon Morris Iemma (Premier of NSW)
Civilising Capital – Fairness for All

Mark Liebler AC (Co-Chair, Reconciliation Australia)
Reaching Reconciliation: A Journey for all Australians

Dr Martin Kramer (Author; Wexler-Fromer Fellow at The Washington Institute for Near East)
Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran: The Challenges for Israel and the West

Elizabeth Fletcher (Author, *Women in the Bible*)
De Coding The Da Vinci Code

Dr Cassandra Pybus (Academic & author – most recently *Black Founders*)
Race Relations and Early Australian Settlement

Dr John Hirst (Academic and author, *Sense and Nonsense in Australian History*)
In the Middle of the History Wars

Julie Owens MP (ALP Member for Parramatta, NSW)
Dr David Burchell (Author, Senior Lecturer, University of Western Sydney)
Can the West be Won Again? Labor and Sydney's Western Suburbs

Michael L'Estrange (Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade)
Continuity and Change in the Pursuit of Australia's International Interests

Dr Helen Caldicott (Anti-nuclear campaigner and author, *Nuclear Power Is Not the Answer*)
The Hon. Greg Hunt MP (Parliamentary Secretary, Minister for Environment and Heritage)
Nuclear Power – the Answer?

The Rt Hon. Malcolm Fraser PC AC CH (Prime Minister of Australia 1975-1983)
Remembering Robert Menzies

The Hon. Julie Bishop MP (Minister for Education, Science & Training)
Science and Innovation - Big Science. Big Picture

The Hon Kim Beazley MP (Leader of the Opposition, Australian Labor Party)
Leadership in the National Interest

Isabel Kershner (Author, *Barrier: The Seam of the Israeli – Palestinian Conflict* & Associate Editor, *The Jerusalem Report*)
Israel and the Palestinians: Where To Next?

Carl Gershman (President, The National Endowment for Democracy, Washington)
Responding to the New Backlash Against Democracy

Sharan Burrow (President, Australian Council of Trade Unions [ACTU])
A Global Economy Needs Unions

Martin Ferguson MP (Shadow Minister for Primary Industries, Resources, Forestry and Tourism)
Resource & Energy Security – The New Cold War

The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull MP (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister)
Water – From Ancient Rome to Centennial Park

Dr Clare O'Farrell (Lecturer, Queensland University of Technology; Author, *Michel Foucault*)
Foucault and Post Modernism

Peter Coleman MP (Journalist & Author, *The Heart of James McAuley: Life and Work of the Australian Poet*)

Dame Leonie Kramer AC (Former Chancellor Sydney University)
James McAuley: Two Views

Greg Sheridan (Author, *The Partnership* & Foreign Editor, *The Australian*)
Inside the Australian-US Alliance