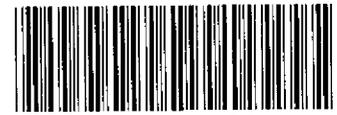


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DO IT YOURSELF FEMINISM



Photo - David Karonidis

Kathy Bail

Kathy Bail, the editor of *Rolling Stone* magazine, is also the editor of *Do It Yourself Feminism* (Allen & Unwin 1996) – a raunchy collection of essays from younger feminists about how feminism works for them. The collection began as an answer to Anne Summer's challenge to young feminists following Helen Garner's *The First Stone*. Kathy Bail spoke for The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 22 October 1996.

DO IT YOURSELF

FEMINISM

Kathy Bail

Since its publication a few weeks ago, there have been two opposing responses to *DIY Feminism*. First, it's so cool. It looks great. It's in my language. Second, it's "banal". It's "narcissistic". It's a cynical marketing exercise. It is certainly a hot topic and I hope we can add some kerosene to the fire this evening.

Let me tell you a little about the origins of do-it-yourself or DIY. A DIY philosophy characterised the punk rock revolt of the late 1970s. Basically, all you needed to start a band was the ability to play three chords on a guitar. Formal qualifications didn't matter, but having the right attitude certainly counted. Bands created their own independent labels rather than signing with major record companies; they designed rough, no-fuss album covers and posters; they made their own T-shirts with individual slogans or scrawled their messages on their bodies. These artists wanted to have a say in the way in which their music and art was produced and distributed. They formed small groups and alliances and worked together to build an alternative culture. It was a reaction to boring, over-blown stadium rock and corporate polish and control. This creative rush came from the ground up; punk was nasty, comic, energetic and in-her-face.

This was also the era when the fanzine came into its own. Zines are independent self-publications that rarely make a profit and are borne out of a particular passion or obsession. They are hand-made and photocopied and the content is generally raw, direct and uncensored. In the 1970s, the proliferation of zines, with their individual expression and distinctive aesthetic, was a further challenge to corporate culture and aims.

The DIY attitude is now an integral part of new media and youth culture. It is stronger than ever and now thousands of zines are being published. Many are by women, who give their publications names such as *Girlyhead*, *Cupsized*, *Snatch*, *Bust*, *Girlpatch*, *Nappy Kill* and *Grot Grrr!*. Indeed, one of the main differences between the youth culture of the 1970s and the 1990s is that more women are playing active roles.

Computer technology has enabled people to set up their own record labels and make recordings reasonably cheaply, create home pages on the Internet about their activities and generally get their ideas out of the bedroom and on to the street. And the girls are making a big impression.

Last year, when I started working on a collection of stories and images by Australian women, it was the intersection between this thriving DIY culture and feminist politics that most interested me. I wanted to document what a diverse group of younger women were doing, to encourage them to tell personal, anecdotal stories about their lives, and then present them in a style and format with which similar women would identify.

It seemed that younger women were just like the punk musicians who started out playing three chords; they had inherited three basic feminist beliefs: that women should not be discriminated against on the basis of their gender; women should earn equal pay; and women should have the right to control their fertility.

While they recognised how fortunate they were to have inherited these rights from an older generation of women – who fought damned hard to get them – they were not shy about questioning the current strategies and views of the second wave to the point where many did not even want to call themselves feminists.

The “noise” the DIY women were making had very distinctive qualities and strengths. However, very few older women had any sense of it. Generally, those who acknowledged it didn’t see it as positive or constructive. I felt that if we didn’t assert this DIY spirit, then feminism was at risk of leaving behind a generation of women who had much to offer it.

For those of you who may not have met a DIY feminist, here’s a caricature: she always has the right line when a bloke at work makes a sexist comment; she has a modem (that she uses to access information and to network); she knows how to fix the spin cycle on a washing machine; she keeps a vibrator by the bed, she plays guitar, she likes wearing chest graffiti (a cheeky T-shirt that says something like “Love Interest”), she was told that she could be whatever she wanted to be when she grew up (even an astronaut), she is obsessed with Barbie dolls, she draws comic strips, she always has an opinion on Melrose Place, she worships Lisa Simpson, she is particular about the colour of her lipstick, she believes action – from the bedroom to the boardroom – is everything; she feels that it’s quite a good time in history to be a girl. She is full of contradictions.

In a collection of stories by women about music called *Rock She Wrote*, editor Ann Powers recalls getting drunk with a group of friends after they’d hosted a women’s studies conference. Powers writes:

Each woman was challenged to say something shocking, forbidden, about herself, "I love Guns N Roses!" I declared. The room resounded with groans, "But that Axl's such a womaniser!" declared an elegant doctoral student, who, I knew, could easily devastate me in any discussion of post structuralist theory. How could I explain to someone who hadn't spent her life gulping mouthfuls of rock's wild air that even if your consciousness had been raised, the music's misogyny was something you could dodge if you listened wilfully enough, and that the rush was worth it? Or that sometimes the roughness draws you into the fantasy, as if it were a chance to slay a dragon?

This is a familiar conundrum. Feminist ideology often forbids and condemns what often attracts me.

A couple of weeks ago, I went to see the band, Garbage, at the Hordern Pavilion. When lead singer Shirley Manson (who was wearing a mini skirt and singlet with a Playboy bunny on it – just the institution that Gloria Steinem objected to in the 1970s) put her arms up like a weightlifter and sang the words "Stupid Girl" I got shivers down my spine. The audience, many of whom were female, were happily singing along. At first I didn't exactly know why the scene made me feel so good. Perhaps it had something to do with Manson's confidence, her expressive sexuality, and the humour of it all. Now cut to the same venue one week later for a reunion concert by the Sex Pistols. There were very few women in the nostalgic thirty and forty-something audience and certainly none on stage. I had a rotten time getting knocked around in the beer-fuelled crowd by clumsy and aggro men who were singing along to the words, "No future". They're right – that attitude doesn't have much of a future. Give me 1990s music and mixed 1990s crowds any day.

My feminism has to fit in with the day-to-day pressures and commercial realities of my job at a magazine with a predominantly male readership. I can't afford to be a purist nor do I want to be. However, there's a constant tug of war between my principles, my pleasures and my work.

This is what many of the contributors to *DIY Feminism* have dealt with in their stories and images. Each offers different survival strategies. When they detailed how they dealt with particular situations every day – sexual harassment in the workplace, discrimination in male-dominated areas, the pressures to be a particular body shape – a different brand of feminist activism emerged.

The collection shows that feminism is much more than a literary or university-based discourse. *DIY Feminism* is not a book about how young women *should* behave but a report of how they are behaving.

Here's a taste of some DIY Fem action:

– Libbi Gorr has stormed TV sports and comedy in her frocks and Docs and recently redefined "infotainment" in her Elle McFeast special on breasts.

- Sheryn George is working at a pro-sex magazine that takes a feminist stance.
- Julie Bennett in her zine *Jellybean Ranch* decided to reject celebrity and celebrate her own reality. What started out as a “fun way to gain some skills and communicate with friends” empowered her in ways that went beyond her expectations.
- Adalita Srsen, blazing a trail in sonic rock, speaks frankly about the highs and lows of being a girl in a band.
- Sam Difference is inspiring and challenging women in her zine *Grot Grrrl*.
- VNS Matrix is creating cool computer games for girls.
- Rosie Cross is building an archive of interviews, information and ideas at her website, *geekgirl*.
- Meredith Osborne is charting the changes in the industrial relations landscape from her position in the Sex Discrimination Unit at the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.
- Natasha Stott Despoja is paving the way for young politicians in the Senate.
- As Elizabeth Henderson and Alexis Roitman report, many young women are developing strategies to deal with discrimination and sexual harassment in large companies.
- Lisa Gardiner is a counsellor at a rape crisis centre where she balances the needs of her clients and the demands of the bureaucracy.
- Kaz Cooke uses humour and wit to provide her analysis of current affairs from a feminist perspective.
- Misha Schubert is encouraging young women to set up their own groups within women’s organisations.
- Aboriginal women like Athlea Seif and Lynette Morris throw the issue of racial discrimination into the mix and are “fighting” to keep their families and communities together.
- Bilyana Vujcich uses ink, spoken word, photography, video and music to bring people into a “state of awareness and out of denial”.
- Rebecca Cox, whose feminist mum wanted her to play with Meccano sets when she was longing for Barbie, is asserting an individual style of sexual politics.
- Belinda Holland is bringing up two boys, singing original songs like “Supermodel Blues” then summing up her experiences in satirical drawings.

In some ways, these women are reclaiming women’s liberation, taking feminism back to the days when its adherents claimed “the personal is political”. Their irreverent DIY attitude, their willingness to explore different sexual identities, and their confident femininity could be seen as a reawakening of feminist consciousness.

Teenage girls have told me that they are interested in the book because it is written in “their language” – it’s raw and direct, like graffiti on a toilet door. It introduces new role models to them.

Younger women shouldn’t be discredited because their language and style might be different. They are redefining feminism in their own ways not those of an older generation. Sure, it seems disorganised, but it’s still effective. Women have developed ways to articulate what matters to them – from T-shirts with chest graffiti to info-rich websites.

The Internet, comics, zines and TV can be valid channels for information about gender-related issues. While many commentators trash this kind of media, I’m more optimistic about what can be achieved in these areas of popular culture. An American zine called *Bitch* rates women’s magazines such as *Cosmopolitan* and *Allure* according to the percentage of the magazine that you might actually want to read. *Cosmo* gets 18 per cent (and that’s pushing it). What a change from the days when we were told by feminists that these magazines were beyond the pale.

DIY women are always ready to act – they take a stand every day. This is much more than a “lifestyle” – it’s a fertile ground of activity and comment. In a campaign on, say, abortion rights, it would be wise to utilise their skills and their energy. Women will get involved politically if they know they will get individual respect.

The defiance of labels and categories is now well-documented as a generational characteristic. Yet advertising agencies and newspapers are continually trying to pin down the twentysomething generation with labels like “Generation S” (for the Simpsons) which *The Sydney Morning Herald* invented for a series of articles about youth subcultures. Rarely do they demonstrate an understanding of the fluid and hybrid nature of youth culture and the wariness about group identification.

This is one of the reasons why young women are cautious about organised feminism: the identities that they are fashioning often conflict with the structures and images of an earlier era.

I do not argue in the book that organised women’s lobby groups are irrelevant. I believe that changing political structures and legislation is crucial. I’m simply pointing out that there’s something else going on in the political culture and that we should take advantage of it rather than dismiss it. Feminism is too important to let the academics and established commentators keep it to themselves, especially when they fail to tackle what is happening now. I would, however, like to think that young women who are inspired by the stories in *DIY Feminism* will go on to read women’s studies texts and to seek out further analysis of gender issues. In many respects, the book is a starting point. Generally, DIY feminists pride themselves on being so damned practical. As Bilyana Vujcich, a contributor to the book, told me, they put some kickass feminism in their bag before they head out everyday. I have

found little evidence of a victim mentality. Women don't want to identify with anything that shows them to be at a disadvantage. While they will use the law when it is justified, most women prefer to confront unenlightened individuals on a personal level. They recognise that gender discrimination results from more than a lack of legislation.

In her essay in *DIY Feminism*, Fotini Epanomitis says: "I suspect that the victim mentality in feminism is the territory of the privileged woman. Women with little power are not interested in abandoning themselves to powerlessness but in negotiating what little power they can get for themselves."

Some of you may have followed the discussion and reviews of *DIY Feminism* in the newspapers over the past few weeks. The response has been illuminating. Far from undermining what DIY women are saying, the limited parameters of much of the criticism illustrates the need for a broadening of feminist perspectives. Women who want to indulge in a damning and judgemental view of younger women shouldn't be surprised that rather than engage in a lop-sided debate in traditional media, most young women usually ignore them or shift the debate elsewhere.

The responses tend to fall into five areas:

First, there's the die-hard revolutionary response.

You know you're in the company of these romantics when lines about communism and capitalism dot their discussion of feminism. In her column in *The Australian*, Beatrice Faust dismisses DIY feminists as consumers of capitalist technology. Whose technology does she want us to use? This argument about capitalism is as ridiculous as someone dismissing her arguments on the basis that Rupert Murdoch pays her a wage. In *The Australian's Review of Books* Rosemary Neill says DIY feminism makes about as much sense as do-it-yourself communism. The analogy might be of some use if feminism was all about a small clique storming the ramparts and imposing their own unelected rule. Such nostalgia for the language of mass politics isn't an alternative to new feminist strategies.

Faust and Neill's responses show a lack of understanding of the do-it-yourself ethos in popular culture. DIY does not mean that your actions should be purely self-serving or that you avoid any co-operation with others. It's more strategic and inclusive than that. DIY frustrates them because it seems disorganised and open-ended yet that is its attraction to so many others.

Second, there's the fear of new media and non-professionals.

The ambivalence towards feminism shown by young women is partly a reaction to the professionalisation of the field. It's as though a roadblock of texts, both historical and theoretical, confronts anyone

who wants to get involved. I deliberately asked the women who contributed to the book to write from their own experience. They brought with them a sense of humour and an appeal that's as much to the heart as the head. Academic Ken Wark felt sad about this approach, describing the essays as adopting a "banal, confessional style". But the range of work in the collection is a reminder that theory doesn't always come first: new ideas can equally be derived from practice. Impatience with the disparate voices of younger women overlaps with the fear of new media. Girls don't buy computers and modems because they're nice accessories. They use them to publish their opinions and get access to the views of others in a forum where they are less likely to come across inflexible columnists who trash their culture.

Young people began exploring mediums like zines and the Net because it gave them the chance to speak and not just be spoken to. They are criticised by those working in traditional media for being self-obsessed and indulgent. Academics and feminist commentators continue to make contributions of value. However, people outside those hierarchies can also offer useful perspectives that wouldn't otherwise be encountered.

Third, there are those who despair at the superficiality of style-conscious middle-class girls who like to rock.

I probably shouldn't be surprised that the format of *DIY Feminism* is not regarded as part of the book's argument but as a mere marketing add on. For most critics, the text is where you find the ideas and the images are only a marketing ploy. Younger people are more likely to read the two together. That doesn't make their culture more superficial. In many ways, it makes it more sophisticated.

Rock music tends to get the same kind of treatment. It is seen as merely an arm of the entertainment industry pushing superficial ideas that assist sales of consumer goods. I wouldn't deny that it's an area of multiple and contradictory meanings, but this requires engagement not denial. The twentysomething generation has grown up in a culture saturated with advertising images and slogans. Its response has been to throw back its own irreverent slogans, logos and catchy one liners. For example, Riot Don't Diet, Revolution Grrrl Style Now, Ms Bimbo, Liberty! Equality! Nerdy!

Ignoring the intersections of feminism and popular culture leaves us with a high-brow feminism with limited appeal. When there are still battles to be won, that's definitely not the way to go.

Fourth, there's the demeaning of identity issues.

One of the key aspects of *DIY Feminism*, and the one that has elicited the most dismissive critiques, is the importance placed on the issues of identity. This has been predictably seized upon as evidence of

narcissism – a superficial concern with appearance and fashion. The refusal to accept that these areas could be valid ways of exploring feminist ideas comes from people who, I guess, imagined that the old style of simple haircuts, no makeup and baggy clothes was a way of acting normally and never a fashion.

According to Beatrice Faust, such expressive politics merely provides a “buzz” that keeps women from recognising and overcoming their powerlessness. But the tendency of youth to make statements about their ideas and identity with one of the few outlets at their disposal – their body and their look – is something I view positively. Social and political changes can occur without being negotiated through institutions. Nobody is suggesting that dying your hair and getting a piercing is all it takes to be a feminist.

It is bizarre that identity issues that deal with women’s self-confidence are regarded as a threat to other more institutional attacks on powerlessness. The rejection of these issues as mere ego or self-indulgence is, apart from anything else, bad political strategy.

Finally, you get dire warnings that things could get worse.

Some critics have convinced themselves that DIY women are committed to avoiding co-operation with other women. Asking what young women are going to do if the political situation changes is okay but it’s a poor way of criticising the appropriateness of their response to the situation they currently find themselves in. At the moment, there isn’t a single, overriding issue to focus women’s attention. If, as I said earlier, we had a fight on our hands about legalised abortion, then many young women would want to be involved. And their concerns and strategies would overlap to a large extent with those of an earlier generation.

DIY feminism is an acknowledgment that women are working out a range of gender-related issues in their day-to-day activities and experiences. They are making incremental changes: for example, by demanding more flexible work arrangements and child-care facilities; by helping to set up procedures to deal with sexual harassment; by giving women information about eating disorders.

This might not be as revolutionary as some would like, but it happens to be realistic and inclusive.

This book shows that the development of feminism relates to what women *do* as much as to what a select group of women *write*. I believe it is important that the views of women like those in the *DIY Feminism* collection are recognised. They are breaking down the idea of feminism as a fixed and formed ideology that is resistant to change.

As we approach the turn of the century, there’s a lot of action outside the more conventional forums if you care to look. Some of this activity takes a more overtly political form; other gestures are more personal and relevant to a particular situation.

Listen to the feisty words of 24-year-old Julie Martin, who has been a fan of death metal music since she was 12 and is still a part of this testosterone-driven scene. In an interview in *Rolling Stone*, she told Matthew Hall: "It is a very guy thing. Not many girls go to gigs. Maybe because it's just not very glamorous. Guys don't usually say anything to put you down but during a mosh, or something, they'll feel your tits and your bum. Well, they used to. We all fight back now."



Photo - David Karandis

John Edwards

Former adviser to Prime Minister Paul Keating and author of the Keating biography *The Inside Story*, Dr John Edwards is something of an authority on the Keating years in power. In an address to The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 6 November 1996, Dr Edwards reviewed Paul Keating's contribution to Australian history, along with some of the former prime minister's lesser known qualities.

WRITING ABOUT

PAUL KEATING: INSIDE THE INSIDE STORY

John Edwards

Paul Keating was Treasurer for eight years, then Prime Minister for something over five years. He was, I think, the most interesting and, in many ways, the most influential politician in those thirteen years of high office. Now he has all but vanished. Behind the scenes he offers his counsel but he does not give media interviews. He doesn't write newspaper columns. So far as I know he is not writing his memoirs. He has given a couple of formal speeches on foreign affairs issues. Otherwise he discreetly goes about what is now his private business. Malcolm Fraser, Bob Hawke and Gough Whitlam are more visible public figures.

Yet people are still interested in Paul Keating. They are still intrigued by who he is, what he did, how he did it and what it meant. My own biography of him has sold very well, and in all there are eight or nine books already published or being written that are all or substantially about Keating. When you reflect that we have only one or two biographies of Curtin or Chifley and so far only the first volume of Allan Martin's biography of Menzies, the number of books about Keating is quite astonishing. Certainly it reflects the increased scope of contemporary journalism. But it also reflects I think the intrinsic interest of Keating, and the way in which the man and his abilities so closely matched the requirements of the period in which he achieved great political power.

The other Keating books are, by and large, so good that my own would not have been worth the trouble had it not been for several unique characteristics. I was working on Keating's book in the late 1980s, at the same time as I completed an economics doctorate while working as a Washington correspondent. When I approached him for an interview at the end of 1990, he called me back at University House in Canberra after midnight, with a quite unusual idea. He suggested I come and work for him and collect material for the book at the same time. He said it was really the only way to understand it. Part of his purpose I think was that I had the right background. Another part was no doubt that I might be helpful in his coming struggle against Hawke.

Once I started work, Keating and his principal private secretary Don Russell were kind enough to give me complete access to the file of material they had accumulated since 1983. There was a file for example called "landmark documents" which contained key minutes from John Stone, Bernie Fraser and Bob Johnston. Coming straight from journalism, to see one document marked *secret* or *cabinet confidential* was quite exciting. To see hundreds and then thousands was quite overwhelming.

When Keating unsuccessfully challenged Hawke four months later, at the end of May 1991, we arranged for the office files to be taken across to the Horrie Brown library in economic history at the ANU, and I was able to spend four or five months researching the record.

Ninety nine per cent of the documents I reviewed were so boring I could hardly get through my days. Most of what I abstracted I subsequently could not use because while it was mildly interesting to me, it would be quite mind numbing for any one else. A large part of the job of writing about Keating in the Treasury years was cutting material out. Even so there is material here which some reviewers found painful. All I can say is that I found some of it painful too, but if you are writing about a man who was Treasurer of Australia for eight years you cannot skip over the economics. You cannot pretend that Keating was really fighting the Battle of Britain, or chasing Confederates down the Shenandoah Valley.

If you are interested in the way the country really works, however, that documentary record can be fascinating. Like other politicians Keating sometimes presents himself as the sole protagonist of government. The documentary record reminds us of how communal and co-operative power really is. We can see the development of ideas about the economy. Decisions about economic policy are often made on the basis of a view about how the economy will evolve. The documentary record shows us how the politicians and the bureaucracy thought the economy would evolve, at the time they made key decisions.

That period in 1991 when Paul was on the backbenches allowed me to research the documentary record. When he came back as Prime Minister I came with him, and kept researching the book on the side. I kept notes. In government you are supposed to keep notes, so I had them anyway. When we had sub cabinet meetings or office discussions with other ministers, the staff wrote things down in big red covered notebooks. In his review of my book John Dawkins recalled me in those meetings, not saying very much and taking notes all the time. He said it gave him the creeps. Strangely enough, however, it was never discussed in my presence, and no one ever asked me about it. I don't think I could have been more open about what I was doing, though when I actually published the book people seemed to be quite surprised. I

suppose it is always surprising when we finish books. Certainly it is surprising to the writer.

So those were the main sources – the documentary record, and notes on what I saw. Most days I would talk to Keating or be involved in meetings with him. I loved listening to him. We would fly around the country in the VIP jet, going from one meeting to another, and he would sit there in one of two facing chairs on either side of the aisle, and chat. He would complain about getting older and losing energy. He would complain about the way Hawke had hung on to the job, and interfered with Keating's preferred timetable. He would talk about buildings and painting and music. He would talk about life after politics. Only very rarely would he talk about an everyday political issue. When he did it was in a kind of shorthand – just a quick concept. After a while everyone on his staff spoke the same kind of language.

The way in which this material was collected determined the structure of the book into three parts.

The first part follows Keating through to 1983. A lot of the incidents there and the characters there are people I also knew in the 1960s and 1970s – John Ducker and Barrie Unsworth for example, or Geoff Cahill and Bob Carr and Laurie Brereton. The goal of that part of the book was to trace how Keating's career and ideas had developed prior to him becoming Treasurer in 1983. His reflections on the Whitlam years were important, for example. His experience with the globally most competitive sector of Australian industry at the time, mining, was also very important. And of course the things he learnt from his father, and the way his father smoothed his way into a political career, was also important.

The second part is based on the documentary record of Keating as Treasurer. This period is often portrayed as one where Keating strode around making big decisions, and later got into a big fight with Hawke. But the documentary record tells another story. The big themes there are the behind the scenes relationship between Keating, his personal office, the Treasury and the Reserve Bank. Of course cabinet and the Prime Minister are part of it, but the most interesting part to me was the interplay of prediction and policy, of the changing rationalisations of policy as facts and perceptions changed. There are as many defeats for Keating as there are successes. But there was also a consistent push to open the economy up, while keeping a broad base of support through the Accord. Perhaps I am biased by my own interests, but I do think what Keating did as Treasurer was not only good for the country, but also the most important thing he did in his years in office.

The third part of the book is based on what I saw working as an economic adviser in his office when he was Prime Minister. It covers the struggle against Hewson in some details, and then I suppose rather summarily deals with what turned out to be Keating's last three years in

office. Many critics have said the first part of the book is the weakest, and I think that is probably true. The explanation is simple: I ran out of time and space and money. In a better world I would be still writing and researching the book today.

There was a lot of luck in the making of the book. There was the coincidence of my interest in economics, in the Labor Party and in the changing ideas of the 1960s and 1970s and 1980s, with Keating's rise to power in circumstances which embodied all those interests. It was lucky for me that he invited me in to his office to do the book, lucky that he then challenged Hawke and so allowed me six months off to go through the record, lucky that he won against Hawke, and that he invited me to rejoin him. Lucky then that he subsequently won the election against Hewson. To have a whole sequence of outcomes like that, all of which were necessary to the production of the book, was quite extraordinary. For example, I had a huge amount of material by March of 1993, but I would never have had an opportunity to write it up unless he had won, because that was when Penguin paid me an advance that was large enough to make it at least a possibility. In the end the possibility of doing books like that depends on luck and funding and it's no wonder there aren't many of them.

I suppose there are some issues of confidentiality involved here, though as a matter of fact no one has raised them. I recall when I last worked for a minister, which was briefly as press secretary for Labour minister Clyde Cameron for all of four months in 1973, political science Professor Henry Mayer told me write everything down. I didn't because I was too lazy and didn't understand how to put it together. I also thought there was perhaps an ethical issue – you could find out all about government, but as my editor at the time said, you would never be able to write about it. That's what I thought at the time, and then I saw years later, when Clyde Cameron published his diary, that he had had no such inhibitions, and in fact amongst thousands of others quoted telephone conversations with me.

Years ago I wrote a book about Malcolm Fraser, and in the early 1980s for reasons I cannot now recall I wrote in the US a narrative history of the MX missile system. With those books the big problem was getting material. With the Keating book the problem was the reverse. I had literally roomfuls of material. I had hundreds and hundreds of thousands of words of notes, and documentary abstracts. This was without touching the newspaper clips or Hansard or the public record. It was a nightmare. There was so much stuff that here I am months and months later, and my ANU office is still stacked with material, as is my home. There was endless material on a politician who had been in public life for over a quarter century, who had been Treasurer longer than anyone had ever been Treasurer in a federal Labor government, at a time of rapid economic change. Who had then

become Prime Minister in dramatic circumstances, and gone on to win an election victory very few people expected. I had all this, and a contract to write 100,000 words in a year or so. It couldn't be done, and the book grew, and the months slipped by. It was quite a difficult period, but as my publisher recently conceded "all's well that ends well".

Most of the criticism has been reasonably favourable, and some strictures well taken. Given another couple of years it would I hope be a better book. The book no doubt deserves sharper criticism than it received. But one criticism I found hard to fathom. Leading off what was the only seriously hostile review the book received, former Treasurer John Dawkins said it had failed to answer or even to ask the key question in Keating's career, which is why he lost the election in March.

Now this is something I feel quite strongly about.

There have been a great many assertions since March about why Labor lost. Most of these assertions take the form of saying, if only blah blah then everything would have been different. Over a meal and a glass of wine, we learn that if only Keating had listened to my advice and done blah blah blah he would be Prime Minister now. Within the Labor Party these discussions are generally of two kinds. They are intended to push for the adoption of a certain policy position, and the further promotion of the people advocating such a position. Or they are intended to defend the record as someone involved in the election, who is still making a career within the party.

The allies of the Labor Federal Secretary, Gary Gray, for example, say that Gary Gray warned Labor would lose but couldn't get Keating's ear. These stories are true but beside the point. What would Gary Gray have done that would have turned it around? Gary Gray's experience in 1996 was identical to Bob Hogg's experience in 1993. Bob was warning Keating that he would lose, he complained he couldn't get in to see him, he complained about the policy line and he knew that Labor would lose. The only difference was that in 1993 we won.

One big one getting a run at the moment is the idea that Labor's position on tariffs and privatisation of Qantas and Australian Airlines and so forth added to insecurity in the workplace. Now that may be true, but the important point is that most of it happened in the 1980s rather than the 1990s. They are reasons Keating should have lost in 1993.

The whole notion that Australia today is a more insecure place than it was in the 1980s is, I think, absolute bunkum. Unemployment was higher in 1982 and 1983 and again in 1992 and 1993 than it is today. Real wages have been rising quite consistently over the last three years. Up until December 1995 we enjoyed one of the biggest employment booms in our history. Even now, when we are in a bit of a

lull, we are still in the midst of the longest expansion in recent Australian economic history. All of us, rich and poor, enjoy a health care system that is among the best and the fairest in the world, we can all send our children to good schools. If we fall on hard times we are all entitled to unemployment benefits and family assistance and so forth. If our assets are not too great, we are all entitled to a pension which in real terms is better than it was in 1983.

These are facts, as distinct from the windy ratbaggery you hear on talk back shows.

One thing that has happened I think is that we baby boomers are older and crankier and borne down by mortgages and families. We don't travel as we once did, or eat out as we once did or even have dinner parties as we once did. But there you are, the life cycle makes certain immutable impositions on us, certain tricks that nature plays and which each generation learns in its turn.

But apart from the silliness of most of these arguments, I think the whole premise of the debate about the last election is wrong.

Almost all of the policies on which Labor ran in 1996 were also the policies on which it had run in 1984, in 1987, in 1990 and in 1993 – winning on each occasion. I leave out 1983, not because a drover's dog could have won it, but because Labor was elected on a platform which by and large it wisely junked the weekend it was elected. One, two, three, and then four victories. One defeat and the critics are all saying, yup, I told you so, I knew all along.

I think that one reason a slice of the electorate moved was because they thought things were actually okay and they could take the risk on Howard, who promised no changes. And they were quite right. Howard has not made many changes, and can't make many changes. There is not much the Howard Government has done since it was elected which could not have been done by Labor – and I include the budget.

The election outcome in March 1996 was determined around the time Howard became Opposition Leader. Once that happened the polls shifted against the government and did not recover. I can recall going to a meeting as late as the end of 1994 when the general and sensible view was that Labor would certainly lose unless the polls improved, but that the Prime Minister and his office intended to keep batting away.

With the single exception of 1993, the electoral story of Labor was one of a gradually diminishing primary vote, which eventually tipped it over into defeat.

Certainly Keating's personality was part of it, and the office part of it, and the government as a whole part of it, but I do not think there was, in the circumstances, a different selling strategy that would have worked, or a different electoral stance that would have changed the outcome.

If Labour's loss in March needs no special explanation, it can hardly be the most important episode of Paul's career. He was a professional politician for fourteen years before he got into government. He was Treasurer for eight years of important reforms. Then he was Prime Minister for five years. He would or anyway should have retired this year or next even if he had been re-elected.

A larger question is whether his period as Prime Minister was as important as his period as Treasurer. There also I have a strong view, which by and large the critics have not accepted.

Conventionally in Australia we write about the Prime Minister as the leader of the nation and the leader of government. We report everything in terms of the successes or failure of the "Keating Government" or the "Howard Government", and impose upon the Prime Minister responsibility for all the decisions made within what we call "his" government. We have come to think of our government as presidential. Some people even think of it terms of running of an old style corporation, with a chief executive to whom everyone reports. But from the perspective of being inside the government, and particularly from the perspective by the record of advice and decisions, the Prime Minister really is more the committee chairman of Westminster constitutional theory than a chief executive.

The government as a whole has more power than a US president, but the Prime Minister has less. For example, the information flows within government do not always include the Prime Minister and his office or even his department. Impending decisions of the Reserve Bank will be known at Treasury, but are not always known in the Prime Minister's office. Treasury has almost complete control over budget parameters. With the Department of Finance it controls parameters, spending and revenue projections. Since these are only estimates and are always wrong to some degree, it is very often the case that a variance embedded in the estimates or parameters matters more to the outcome than budget decisions taken by cabinet. It's true that to have validity, major spending or taxing decisions have to come to cabinet and it's true that the Prime Minister and his department have authority over the cabinet schedule. But a persistent minister could make it difficult for the Prime Minister to refuse to list an issue, and make it difficult for the Prime Minister to oppose the submission.

My conclusion was that Keating's time as Treasurer was more important than his time as Prime Minister. It's a view I know he himself does not share. No doubt Don Watson's forthcoming book on Keating will go some way to redressing the balance.

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Photo - David Karonidis

Patricia Faulkner

Child care in Australia is a \$2.4 billion operation and the management and allocation of the tax dollar for child care is now being debated. Patricia Faulkner, a director of KPMG Management Consulting and Chair of the EPAC Taskforce on Child Care, presented the EPAC Child Care Report to Prime Minister John Howard in November 1996. To discuss the findings of that report, Patricia Faulkner addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 12 November 1996.

THE EPAC REPORT:

FUTURE CHILD CARE PROVISION IN AUSTRALIA

Patricia Faulkner

In August 1995, the then Prime Minister, Mr Keating, established a Task Force under the auspices of the Economic Planning Advisory Committee (EPAC) to report on the future of child care provision in Australia. In undertaking this assignment, the Task Force was asked to focus on:

- i) the factors influencing future demand for child care;
- ii) best practice in the provision of child care;
- iii) possible future structures for and the impact of government policy on availability, price and quality of child care;
- iv) medium to long term goals for child care and linkages with other children's services; and
- v) the relationships between players in the sector and any desirable changes to these relationships.

In October 1995, the Task Force commenced work, and on 31 October 1996 presented its final report to the Prime Minister. The final report of the Task Force will be released publicly tomorrow and tonight I will outline to you the principal findings contained in the report as well as outlining the process undertaken to reach our conclusions.

The then Prime Minister, not the Minister responsible for child care policy, commissioned the Task Force to undertake this inquiry. None of the four members appointed to the Task Force were child care industry experts. The members were: Patricia Faulkner, (Chair) KPMG; Bruce Hartnett, National Australia Bank; Wendy McCarthy AO, the Heritage Commission, Sydney Casino, Canberra University; Glen Withers AO, EPAC. In addition, the Task Force was set up under the auspices of EPAC, a government economic research group, which was capable of advising government independent from the policy and finance agencies within government which usually provide this advice.

Given this approach, it is possible to deduce that child care policy was a difficult issue for the government, and the Prime Minister was seeking an alternative approach to policy formation and, hopefully,

some fresh perspectives. After more than a year investigating this industry and meeting with parents, child care providers, provider associations, academics unions and government agencies, I understand why the then Prime Minister took this approach.

The child care industry is composed of dedicated people with clear, but divergent views about how the needs of children are best served. People in the industry become firmly attached to their part of the industry. In the community based sector, providers believe they offer the highest quality care. So too do providers in for-profit centres. Those providing family day care believe a home based setting is the best place for children. Those in centre based care extol the virtues of a more institutional form of care. It would have been very difficult to get an independent view if the members of the Task Force had been industry insiders.

In addition, parents themselves are very torn about child care. They feel variously pressure, concern, guilt and pain in making choices about their children's care. Should I stay at home? Can I afford to? Will it damage my child if someone else cares for him? Will it disadvantage him if I do? Will I miss out – will he prefer his carer to me? Can I cope with the juggle?

The community is also divided about child care and the benefits of the new family roles that have evolved in the past 25 years. Our daughters are now completing secondary schooling at higher rates than our sons. Many of them have grown up in families where two parents are in the workforce. There has been growing, but fragile, acceptance of the notion that women have a right to combine child care with paid work.

Young women expect to work for a number of reasons:

- to contribute to family's economic well-being;
- for intellectual stimulation; and
- for social contact.

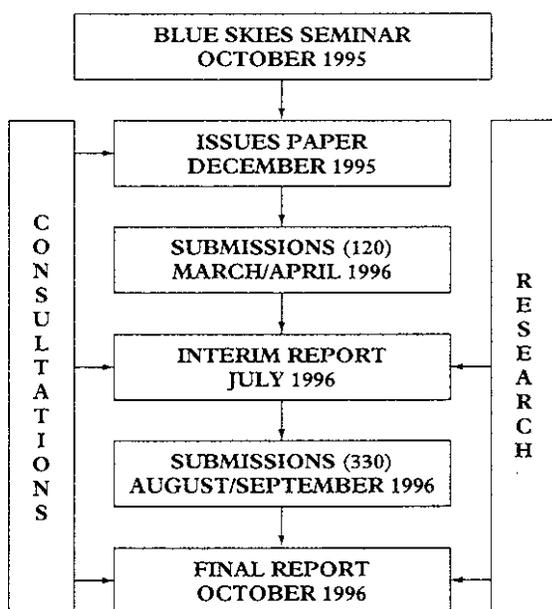
However, there is still a lingering and pervasive doubt in some sections of the community about whether this is good. The Task Force heard on a number of occasions, that maternal care is the best form of care and that government assistance for child care encourages women to stay in the workforce to the detriment of their children. We also heard the opposite view, that is, that quality non-parental child care and parental workforce participation are good for both parents and children. The proponents of each side of this debate produced research evidence to support their point of view.

The Prime Minister faced a divided sector, parents who are grappling with extremely difficult choices and were seeking government support and sympathy and a community which still debates whether they should have let the "genie" of women's workforce participation out of the bottle. Half way through the enquiry's life, the government changed and the Task Force sought to confirm that the new Prime

Minister wanted the enquiry to continue. He obviously saw the potential benefits of such independent, but arm's length, advice. In June 1996, we also received a formal reference from the new Treasurer requesting us to advise him on the issue of FBT exemption for child care expenses. In summary, the terms of reference (TOR) and Task Force were set up by the now departed Prime Minister, the TOR were augmented by the current Treasurer and we have reported to the current Prime Minister.

The approach

Our approach is set out in the figure below:



Given our brief was to look to the child care demands, needs and policy in 10-15 years from now, we initially attempted to construct a blue skies vision for the future. The Task Force members, together with some industry, community, corporate and academic experts and consultants, met to look at the type of child care policy and services needed for the future.

From this discussion and our TOR, we defined a set of research assignments and an agenda for broad based consultations. What followed was extensive consultations, commissioned research, 450 submissions and our interim and final reports. Our blue skies approach, however, was abandoned in the course of our consultations. The

community with whom we consulted found the blue skies approach difficult to embrace for two reasons:

- i) it was not concrete enough; and
- ii) a blue skies approach required changes in other systems, eg tax and social security, which were beyond our brief.

In the end, we had to steer a middle course – setting out broad directions for policy and the system in the longer term, establishing some principles to guide the transition and leaving the detail of the transition to the government and the community to negotiate.

We did not enter the debate about whether child care is good or bad for children. Instead we adopted the position that child care is an important component of today's society and we believe it will be an enduring feature of the future society. Therefore, our efforts were directed towards looking to the best system rather than debating whether there should be a system.

The industry

Child care is a \$2.4 billion industry. Around 60 per cent of child care costs are sourced from government and the industry employed over 71,000 employees in 1995. Commonwealth funded child care places have increased by 555 per cent since 1983/4.

The children

There are about three million children in Australia under twelve. Just under a quarter of these children are in paid child care arrangements. Paid child care or pre-school arrangements cater for one third of children below school age.

The government role

Commonwealth, state and local governments play some role in child care provision. For 1996-97, the Commonwealth government allocation is \$1.1 billion with States providing an estimated additional \$400 million for child care and preschool services. In addition, the Commonwealth runs a quality accreditation scheme for centre-based long day care and the states variously regulate centre-based long day care providers and sometimes Family Day Care, Occasional Child Care and Outside School Hours Care.

The need for change

Our study of the child care industry has led us to conclude that the structures that have developed to accommodate the rapid expansion in demand for child care in the past two decades will need to change in order to enable all those who want child care to have access to it; and to ensure that the system can deliver on the challenges arising from changing work patterns and changing community expectations as we move into the next century.

We have concluded that, while the existing formal system certainly benefits those in it, there are many outside the system who receive limited support. In addition, the current structure of the child care industry – with its complex regulatory and financial support arrangements and its separate development of types of care – is unlikely to be able to provide the integration and flexibility of services that is required for the future.

The current patchwork system provides means-tested child care assistance, universal cash rebates, exemptions from fringe benefits tax (FBT) for a few, and capital and operational subsidies to community based services. This results in inequities and poor targeting of assistance. Access to FBT exemptions means that a small group of employees effectively enjoys tax deductibility of child care expenses. Operational subsidies mean that a subsidy of between \$15 and \$23 a week goes to all those using community based services, including high-income earners. This subsidy is not available to low-income earners in private centres.

What parents want from the child care system is clear enough: they want quality, affordability and flexibility. They also want to be able to choose to work and not be prevented from pursuing paid employment just because they cannot afford child care or cannot find a quality place. They find the institutional history, which has led to the development of segmented sectors (for example, the pre-school and child care sectors, the community and private sectors) is irrelevant to their needs. They want kindergartens to deliver child care and child care centres to deliver a kindergarten experience. They want to choose a service which meets both their children's and their family's needs.

This may mean that in the course of their children's development they may need a centre-based place, either in the workplace or the community, and at other times a home-based carer or occasional care. When children reach school age, parents want to be able to choose quality care outside school hours and in vacations, and receive comparable support to that they received in their children's pre-school years.

Parental care may be preferred by many parents, but various combinations of informal and formal, centre – and home – based care are already in demand. Whatever the choice, parents want to be assured of the quality of the care for their children.

This ideal of quality, flexibility, affordable child care can only be achieved through the co-operation of parents, providers and government. Quality care is linked to favourable outcomes for children but it costs money. We believe that both parents and government in the future will need to fund this investment in children. Further, we anticipate that the outlays of both parents and government on child care will need to increase if these requirements for quality care are to be met.

Our projections

In relation to future demand, our projections indicated that (assuming constant policy settings) demand for formal child care places is likely to increase by 15 per cent (60,000 places) by 2011. Demand for formal care for 5-11 year olds could increase by 25 per cent (40,000) places over the same period.

This projection is very sensitive, however, to any change in costs of care and reasonably sensitive to changing assumptions about labour force participation of women. We have based these projections on the projection that female participation rates will continue to increase and that, in the foreseeable future, the vast majority of people will continue to work outside their home.

Looking forward, we also took the view that governments, irrespective of their political persuasion, will seek to provide quality services at the same time as seeking to restrain growth in public expenditure. As for other social services, governments are likely to restrict this growth through targeting of assistance, increasing private provision and requirements for co-payments by consumers of service to ensure discipline on both costs and demand.

It is against this background that the Task Force has considered the future child care system. The approach we have therefore recommended is underpinned by two key principles:

- that government assistance should be targeted to those most in need of assistance; and
- that government efforts to ensure quality of care and development for children should be applied evenly across all forms of child care.

A vision for the future

In the report we set out our vision for the future – a future which will provide:

- a full and integrated range of types of care – both centre – and home-based;
- all choices will be supported by a national system of quality assurance and uniform state based regulations;
- a linkage between funding assistance and quality assurance;
- widespread parent involvement in and knowledge of all facets of the care of their children;
- carers who are thoroughly professional and qualified;
- improved management by care providers; and
- full integration of pre-school and school arrangements.

The Task Force has identified the key building blocks of this future system as:

- A new means tested Child Care Benefit would be paid to assist low and middle income families meet their child care costs. It

would be paid to parents so that the dollars “follow the child”, rather than being directed to providers. The rate of subsidy paid to families would be consistent across all forms of care.

- The Child Care Benefit would be payable for all forms of centre – and home-based non-parental care, but if, and only if, the provider meets regulated health and safety standards and quality assurance requirements.
- As well as providing assistance for work-related child care needs, the new benefit would also provide access to child care support for non-work related needs for both respite and child development reasons. Funding for the Child Care Benefit should come partly from rolling in expenditures on current child care assistance programs.
- There would also be a separate fund to support the child care costs of children with disabilities, and other high cost special requirements.

Other important components of the Task Force’s package include:

- the development of a training system from which all staff involved can acquire formal child care credentials;
- the encouragement of family-friendly work practices across industry;
- extension services for improved management of child care services;
- the provision of better information for parents and potential providers about existing child care services; and
- a thorough research base to guide future policy decisions.

Further implications

What are the implications of this future system for families, providers and government?

In broad terms, those likely to gain from the Task Force’s recommendations include large numbers of families with children using quality, non-parental, home-based care; families of children with special needs; lower income families using centre-based care and outside school hours care; families using care for children aged under three; and families in which one parent is at home caring for children.

But, beyond these direct impacts, all families will benefit from a simpler, more responsive, efficient and flexible child care system.

Our recommendation to pay child care benefits to parents through a stored-value card is intended to simplify the administration of the government’s child care budget. The need for a plethora of program structures for paying money to providers and accounting for those payments will be replaced by a payment system to parents which is capable of being integrated with a range of other family payment systems.

The extension of support to all forms of quality accredited home-based care will provide some financial incentive for families to switch away from centre-based and existing family day care provision. Within the centre-based sector, the abolition of capita and operating subsidies for community-based providers may result in some shifts in demand towards private centres.

Those impacts are an inevitable outcome of dispensing with subsidies which are only available for care provided in particular settings and replacing them with assistance which does not differentiate between forms of quality accredited care. In our view, government subsidies should be used to help families purchase whatever form of accredited child care best meets their needs.

The Task Force's recommendations should be seen as a package of measures to be implemented together rather than in a partial or piecemeal fashion. The Task Force recognises that implementation of the package in the short term would pose considerable problems, particularly as the success of the package hinges on the development of a strong quality assurance process for the entire child care sector. This will inevitably take time to achieve, but is an essential prerequisite for the introduction of the new Child Care Benefit. Thus, the Task Force's recommendations envisage that, in the extended interim period, existing forms of government support for child care would continue.

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Photo - David Karavidis

Ann Sherry

Ann Sherry is Westpac's General Manager, Human Resources. In 1995 she was influential in Westpac's decision to grant its female employees six weeks paid maternity leave - an acknowledgment that lost employees are lost investment. Ann Sherry continued the debate over women and workplace culture when she addressed The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 20 November 1996.

BEAUTY AND THE

BEAST: WOMEN AND WORKPLACE CULTURE IN THE FINANCE INDUSTRY

Ann Sherry

Workplace culture is not simple in any dimension. It shapes most of the interactions between people who work for the same organisation – positive and negative.

It follows that managing workplace culture is not a matter of spelling out a set of rigid guidelines and imposing them on the workplace. What works in a policy and legislative framework provides a useful model for the banking and finance sector, but it is not a template that can be superimposed in any reasonable expectation that it will quickly or effectively oust the prevailing workplace culture.

This is not a pessimistic assessment of the potential for reform. It is a pragmatic recognition that change moves at different paces and in different steps from one institution to another, and from one historically-determined workplace environment to another.

It is also a recognition that expectations change faster than attitudes, partly because expectations tend to be individual, while attitudes are defined by the collective consciousness. Expectations are the weather, and attitudes are the climate in the workplace environment. How all of these general observations fit into the patterns of change and reform in the relationship between women and the workplace culture of the finance industry – and how they are illuminated by the familiar myth of beauty and the beast – is the territory I have mapped out for exploration tonight.

But there is another complexity that has to be factored in to the issue of workplace culture before any confident predictions can be made about the future.

The question we have to ask is about the relationship between workplace culture and society generally, and, more fundamentally, between behaviour and attitudes. Workplaces are not mirrors of the world people live in: we choose our friends and associates, but our colleagues are chosen for us.

The rules and values of the workplace are more rigid and more codified than the rules and values we live by, and our behaviours at

work are subject to more immediate and more forceful sanctions than our social lives. Basically, people can lose their jobs if they transgress workplace codes; so the thorny issue at the centre of workplace culture, and workplace reform, is whether changes in behaviour mirror or generate real changes in attitudes, or whether there is a growing disjunction between the attitudes people bring with them to work, and the rules they have to obey when they are there.

This question is particularly pointed at present, as some of the veneer of tolerance, inclusiveness and diversity seems to be wearing off the social compact in Australia, and a new form of righteousness seems to be emerging in its place: one which legitimises our right to blame the victim. And, once again, the myth of beauty and the beast has the power to suggest some answers – however uncomfortable we may be with them.

But back to the coal-face first, and the history of the banking and finance industry which – to a large degree – defines the culture and sets the challenges women face there. Women have traditionally found employment in banks. They have been “the girls”, and they have been tellers, they have processed a trillion pieces of paper at the back of the banking chamber. They’ve made tea, and they’ve left to get married and have children, often to come back part-time when the demands of the family had abated a bit.

In the same culture, men started off in much the same way as the women – with the exception of the tea-making, and in the expectation of promotion through the ranks to branch manager, trader, or relationship manager.

Bank managers have traditionally been respected in their communities, but never really part of them: they lived above the shop, and they moved on every few years, from small towns to larger ones if they were competent and sociable, and provided their wives – who played a key role as envoys of the bank, entertaining the wives of the local business and professional people at card parties and afternoon teas – displayed the right ability to make friends and create a home in a new town apparently almost at will. In the city, there was head office, which was a branch with a superstructure of investment bankers, the top end of the food chain, who looked after the bank’s important clients and each other, in a clubby atmosphere of old school ties, golf, port and cigars.

The investment bankers could be mobile too: in a different way from the branch managers, because they could move from one bank to another under certain circumstances, without jeopardising the kinship system from which they benefited and which they perpetuated.

This is not a picture from a misty world of legend. It is what banking in Australia was like 20 years ago – well within the experience and living memory of a substantial group of bankers (and their

customers). The fact that it sounds so quaint and so archaic illustrates the extent and the rate of change which has overtaken a sector which seemed, for so long, to define stability: when "money in the bank" was as safe as death and taxes were inevitable.

Leaving aside the effects of deregulation, the proliferation of products and services offered by the banks, the emergence of ATMs and EFTPOS, the explosion and increasing volatility of financial markets and financial instruments, globalisation, new forms of non-bank competition, and the high fixed cost of retail banking networks and the resulting (and continuing) rationalisations they entail – leaving all those catalysts for change aside, there has been a concurrent revolution in the expectations of people who have joined the finance and banking industry workforce in recent times.

Women don't come into the workforce to make tea, or to sit behind the counter until they marry. They expect to work for much of their adult lives, with or without a break to have children.

They arrive with the expectation that they are prepared for a career: they complete school at a higher participation rate and with better marks than their male colleagues, and go on to tertiary education in higher numbers.

They enter a workplace which explicitly spells out their right to equal opportunities, and their right to object to behaviour they find offensive and unacceptable. They come expecting to be treated with respect, and prepared to use the instruments available to them to enforce that respect.

Management perceives employees as human resources, with the potential to create and sustain competitive advantage for the organisation. They want maximum impact from the labour dollar, they want to attract and retain the best brains and the most positive attitudes, and they will go a long way to ensure that the workplace is a site of harmony and co-operation, where people can confidently expect the respect and consideration of their colleagues.

Our industry rhetoric defines banking and finance as a "people industry". It is – even though the banks themselves are seeking efficiencies through process standardisation, and using various forms of Information Technology (such as ATMs and computerised loan assessment software) to achieve quick turn-around times and drive down the cost of service provision. The use of technology does not alter the primary purpose and function of the industry: to serve customers.

Customers, too, are changing. The number of women taking responsibility for managing their own money – and the number of women with money – is growing, and many of them demand products and services customised to their needs, which can vary widely. They are, in effect, a new market sector for the industry.

All customers expect consideration, genuinely responsive service, and the respect of the people they encounter – even if their most frequent contact is with a voice on the phone rather than a teller behind the counter. Overall, customers are demanding, more sophisticated, and very much aware that the balance of power has changed in a fiercely competitive environment: women sidling nervously in to wheedle a loan from Mr Bank Manager is a fading (bad) memory.

At the same time, the range of choice of investment products has spawned an entire new industry of financial planners and advisors. Compulsory saving through superannuation means that every worker – rich and not so rich, men and (increasingly) women – has a personal stake in the investment system, and a direct interest in the rate of return their money generates.

Under this tidal wave of fundamental change, it is hardly surprising that the historical culture I described has had some difficulty coping and adapting. One of the signs of that mal-adaptation was the “excesses” of the 1980s, when the proverbially sober and cautious banking industry discovered the joys of entrepreneurialism, including the exciting and unprecedented fact that bankers could become celebrities, by association – only to become scapegoats when the auditors moved in.

The certainty and the predictability on which the whole culture and perception of the industry – expressed so confidently in the combined fortresses and palaces which the banks erected as monuments to themselves, especially late last century – was thrown into chaos in a few short years, and the industry is still in the process of reinventing itself and establishing a new idiom to take it forward in the future.

From the perspective of someone who is actively involved in redefining the workplace and its culture, what is most disturbing to the banking industry is the most interesting and challenging thing about it.

The combination of massive inertia (the tenacity of the old idea of banking as a symbol of steadfastness and reliability) and revolutionary changes wrought by deregulation and competition (expressed in the current, equally inaccurate, myth of the banks as the last and the worst of the corporate robber-barons) makes the culture of the workplace unusually suggestible, and capable of forging a new identity which can more accurately and fully describe the nature of the industry, and, in doing so, regenerate a more positive relationship between the industry and its customers.

I – and many of my colleagues – have very clear ideas on the imperatives we need to develop to fill what is almost a vacuum in workplace culture created by the tension between the old and new identities and values of the banking sector. We are moving away from the clubby behaviours of the past, from the days when staff were

selected because they "fitted in". Homogeneity is giving way to a merit-based team ethic. We are making an explicit commitment to workplace diversity: creating a labour force which accurately reflects the marketplace we serve, in all its manifold forms.

We are beginning to understand that diversity is not limited to ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation – though each of those is critical, and urgent – but to age, experience and very different sets of expectation. We cannot tell a white, male, middle-aged ex-country town bank manager (or charcoal-suited investment banker) that his experience is worthless because it reflects a different world and a different time. His contribution to the workplace and its culture has value too: but he needs to be reminded that his values are no longer dominant in the way they were.

Value judgements have to be made. A highly-educated, high achieving young woman entering the bank with an expectation that she has the potential to reach senior management must have her expectations reinforced, against those whose habits of mind predispose them to belittle and undermine her. Blokes who bring Saturday night's buck's party and its behaviours into work on Monday have to be forcibly reminded that their women colleagues are not there as objects for their juvenile fantasies.

People from ethnic groups with a historical bias against one another have to learn to park their hostilities at the door. Everyone has to learn that the human tendency to assume likemindedness can be very misleading. The workplace must, in many ways, be a hard culture: one that rewards performance and outcomes, without special consideration for circumstances.

At the same time, high performance cannot excuse unacceptable behaviour: no woman who has been harassed or offended should have her legitimate complaint fobbed off with the excuse that the offender is a top performer in his job – and this, I think is a hard lesson for some men (especially those whose characters have been partly formed in the no-holds-barred, no hard-feelings-afterwards world of contact sport) to accept.

Equality of opportunity is the highest form of equality we can offer, and to seek to redress pre-existing disadvantage can easily turn to partiality and the perception of favouritism. To some extent, of course, we need to recognise that we are imposing our own values in the way we seek to redefine and recreate workplace culture. The values that my generation learnt – which can be summarised as meritocratic – are new values, historically: systems based on nepotism, for example, have existed in many cultures for a far longer time than the principle of merit has held sway anywhere.

But in a world characterised by competition, by globalisation and by the imperative to produce – and by the recognition that productive

and satisfying employment is a privilege to be earned – the principle of merit is the only logical basis for advancement through the organisation. It forms the only yardstick of fairness which we can consistently and confidently apply to a diverse and various group of people.

So where, in all the shifting sands and boggy mudflats of an industry in transition, is beauty? And who, or what, is the beast?

At the most obvious level, beauty is what we are building; an open, inclusive, tolerant, diverse and genuinely meritocratic workplace, characterised by relationships based on communication at every level, and by a sense of legitimate collective pride in the service we provide to our customers.

The beast, clearly, is the cultural overhangs which compromise and threaten that achievement. But the point of beauty and the beast is that the beast does not have to remain repulsive, horrible and locked away. The beast has the capacity for renewal, regeneration and transformation – given sympathetic understanding, and the opportunity to express its better self. What the myth tells us is not to judge by appearances, but to give the beast a reason to change; it tells us that there is a false opposition between beauty and the beast which can be annihilated under conditions of acceptance and tolerance.

The workplace culture we must create has no room for beasts; their existence is a sign of intolerance, and a reversion to traditional stereotypes of them and us. That is the positive interpretation of the myth. But there is another possible reading.

Let me quote from last Saturday's Herald, from an article by Bruce Elder that quotes Joanna Kalowski, "a management consultant, mediator and a member of the Federal Administrative Appeals Tribunal".

Good gender relations are good for business. Sensible equal relations between equals, between peers, between members of a team whose focus should be on outputs, not on each other, makes sense. I think the changes have taken place. The etiquette of the workplace is now clearer than it is in the social realm.

I agree with her completely, though perhaps the changes she refers to are still in the process of taking place in the banking and finance sector, given the number of complaints staff in the industry lodge with the various formal tribunals, and the even greater number we resolve internally.

What worries me, however, is the use of that word "etiquette". It seems to me to trivialise the issue, by placing exemplary workplace behaviour at the same level of value as the ability to use the correct fork and to pass the port in the right direction. If all we are achieving through improved workplace culture is the enforcement of appropriate behaviour – totally independent of the values and attitudes which should make that behaviour consciously preferable to the alternatives – then we are, indeed, teaching etiquette. We are treating the symptoms

without scratching the surface of the causes, and we are creating a very fragile basis for optimism in the future.

In this sense, beauty is the ideal, the code of behaviour which management is mandating in the workplace; and the beast is the attitudes which linger at an ever greater distance from the behaviours they are meant to underpin. And recent stirrings in the political arena suggest that this beast is alive and well, and inclined to stand up and demand to be loved for, not in spite of, his ugliness.

If there is a growing disjunction between attitudes in society generally and the kind of tolerance and respect we are attempting to build into the culture of the workplace, then we're creating a fiction. If the values of tolerance and diversity enforced at work did not carry over into people's voluntary behaviour and habits, then we could not expect the work of the last twenty years to be sustainable, much less to come to replace the hierarchies and rigidities of the old culture. We would be creating new forms of resentment – and there is some, unwelcome, evidence of this in the research we have done.

One survey shows that most of the women we employ believe they are not treated fairly by the organisation; most men, however, believe that their women colleagues are given special treatment.

It seems to me that this disjunction forms the core of the challenge we must address, as workplace cultural reformists. And there is no doubt in my mind that the key to narrowing and removing that gap is an attitudinal issue – not a matter of correct etiquette, however strongly enforced.

To that end, we have been dealing – on the investment and institutional banking side of Westpac – not only with training our staff on the legal issues surrounding workplace harassment, but redefining and reassessing the psychological aspects of their behaviour. We have established a new contract with our staff, a contract for the 1990s and the century beyond. This contract outlines the bank's obligations to each employee, each employee's obligations to the bank, and the obligations of employees towards each other – obligations which touch on the psychology of mutual respect, not just on the code of conduct which everyone must follow.

Further to that, we are deliberately and carefully recruiting a new generation of managers, with a wider portfolio of experiences and a greater first-hand knowledge of the imperative to enact a culture of diversity – not just to mouth it.

Our most powerful tool is example: if success consistently attends those who are committed, in their behaviour and in their attitudes, to managing diversity well, then the culture of the organisation will shift – not only at the surface level, but down there where the beast sleeps with one eye still open.



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Photo - David Karonidis

Martin Lee

In late November 1996, Martin Lee, Chairman of the Hong Kong Democratic Party, made a final visit to Australia before Hong Kong's transfer of sovereignty to China. In the transfer, China will replace the elected Hong Kong Legislative Council with a Beijing appointed chamber. Martin Lee addressed The Sydney Institute on Thursday 28 November 1996 and challenged any complacency towards a non democratic Hong Kong.

THE FUTURE OF

HONG KONG

Martin Lee

Hong Kong is a unique place going through an equally unique and difficult time. At the end of the 20th Century – when the world trend is toward free and democratic societies – Hong Kong's six and a half million people will be returned to China, a repressive communist regime. Hong Kong has been voted three years in a row by the Heritage Foundation as the freest economy in the world. People wonder whether Hong Kong's success story can last. Hong Kong is so successful because of many things. But the rule of law is certainly one of the most fundamental pillars of Hong Kong's success. And that is the important area I am most concerned and worried about.

When I look ahead – with 200 days only until the handover – what does the future hold for Hong Kong. In Hong Kong many major developments will happen soon. First, on 11 December 1996 our future Chief Executive will be selected by China through a Beijing-controlled body of 400 people. We needn't wonder who will be the winner. Tung Chee-hwa, a shipping magnate, has already been effectively selected by Beijing. Ten days later, on 21 December, (when people are preparing for Christmas), a so-called "provisional legislature" will be appointed by the same group of Beijing-controlled people. It's called a provisional legislature, but it will last at least a year and a half. Why is Beijing appointing a rubberstamp legislative? To replace the present elected Legislative Council of which my colleague Andrew Cheng and I are members. We were elected by the people of Hong Kong in September 1995 – for a four year term. But by midnight on 30 June 1997, we will be thrown out of the legislature, and replaced by an appointed legislature, containing many members defeated by us in the 1995 elections.

Despite China's promises to allow Hong Kong to remain free, Beijing's policy towards Hong Kong can be summarised in one word – control. China will control the legislature by making sure that it is an appointed one. This will happen even though we were promised in the 1984 Sino-British Joint Declaration, that we would have an elected

legislature. The Joint Declaration itself, of course, was registered with the United Nations and applauded around the world. So China is breaking the Joint Declaration in no uncertain terms.

What laws will China's sham legislature pass? There is no need to guess. The Beijing leaders have already made it known to the people of Hong Kong what laws we can expect. First they have stated the Bill of Rights Ordinance will be emasculated. The Bill of Rights Ordinance is the most important law we have ever passed in Hong Kong because it enshrines all the basic human rights contained in the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights: freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of demonstration and the freedom of religion. It also contains a very important clause, giving power to all our courts to strike down any law which is not consistent with the Bill of Rights. So even if the legislature were to pass repressive laws, our judges would be able to strike them down. The Beijing leaders have now said *that* provision of the Bill of Rights must be repealed. Once repealed, the rest of the ordinance will remain on the books – but as an empty shell.

We are also told that a number of our laws will be amended to give more control to the government. There are no prizes for guessing what sort of laws China wants amended. They all have to do with the freedom of expression – freedom of the press, freedom of assembly and demonstration.

Despite these overt threats to Hong Kong's freedom and autonomy, the reaction from the British government has been muted. Britain claims that China's plans are only hypothetical. This is analogous to somebody coming to your house with a lighted torch vowing that he's going to burn your house down. Do you say to you wife, "Darling don't worry, it is hypothetical"? So when the laws change – and more laws no doubt will be changed – what can we expect about the preservation of the rule of law?

The rule of law depends on two things – an independent judiciary of course, but, more importantly, *good laws* which will protect human rights, and not bad laws which suppress those rights. What can even the best judge do if the law gives draconian power to the state? Any judge or magistrate must apply the law as he finds it. In Hong Kong our courts will be powerless to protect human rights because the law will be changed in such a way that human rights will not be protected – but rather suppressed – by the law.

Many business people will say that there are no worries for the future: "look at all these tall buildings being constructed". The British will tell you that Hong Kong has the largest British Consulate in the world. (I wish human rights were proportionate to the size of the British Consulate office in Hong Kong.) And we are spending millions and millions of dollars for the celebrations at the change over of sovereignty. Instead of the "hand-over", I call that the "washing of the

hands ceremony". From Hong Kong's perspective, what is there to celebrate? There should be plenty for the Hong Kong Chinese people to celebrate on that day when we will be returned to our motherland. It should be a glorious day of unification. So why are people so fearful for their future?

Many of the Hong Kong tycoons, who publicly describe nothing but the rosy picture ahead of us, already have foreign passports in their pockets. It is also important to know that 60 per cent of the publicly listed companies on our stock exchange already have moved their legal domiciles out of Hong Kong. So when tycoons maintain there are no concerns for the future, I suggest that actions speak louder than words. Other people will tell you that Hong Kong has never had genuine democracy, and yet Hong Kong has had, by and large, the rule of law with human rights protected. So what is there to worry about in the future? Well it is true that Hong Kong never had real democracy as you in Australia know it. But the Hong Kong government, remember, is only the extension of the British administration to its colony Hong Kong. And Britain is a democracy. So if things were to go violently wrong in Hong Kong – if people are thrown into prison without trial as in China – questions are bound to be asked in the British parliament. So, in fact, Hong Kong's human rights are protected 8000 miles away by the democratically constituted British Parliament. If the Chinese government was also democratically elected, I wouldn't be here talking about this matter. But the Chinese government is *not* democratically elected. Can we really trust the preservation of human rights in Hong Kong to the National People's Congress? Look at China – have questions ever been raised about people imprisoned in China.

Lots of people say that the rule of law can continue in spite of the absence of democracy. But we in Hong Kong do not really see how, when the laws will be changed. When the British were governing Hong Kong, they introduced reasonably balanced and effective laws. That is why Hong Kong was so successful. The British government has been fair by and large, balancing the interests of the very rich people, the not so rich and the poor people of Hong Kong. That is why Hong Kong has been so successful. That is why Hong Kong laws were good enough to protect our freedom. But that is no longer going to be the case, when we have an appointed legislature which passes repressive laws.

It is the long term benefit for Hong Kong that I'm concerned with. Many tycoons look principally at the short term. And they may tell you, "Why worry – if we are happy enough to invest in China today, why should we be deterred from investing in Hong Kong tomorrow?" But let me explain why Hong Kong is so important to international investors. If you invest in Shanghai, presumably you've got to make commercial decisions from time to time. Where do you get reliable economic information from in Shanghai? Hong Kong of

course. A lot of the newsagencies and a large number of national newspapers from USA, even Europe, actually use Hong Kong as their regional headquarters. We have the physical and technological infrastructure which is lacking with many of our regional competitors. So if Hong Kong loses our freedom including press freedom – and becomes like Shanghai, investors will no longer get the necessary economic information to make commercial decisions. Investment in China and Hong Kong will be a much riskier proposition because when investors need that information they need it quickly.

Hong Kong is irreplaceable in the region. Which country can replace Hong Kong? Certainly not Singapore. When the de facto leader Lee Kwan Yew is libelled – when people write the truth about him which he doesn't like – he sues. Of course in a Singaporean court. It is just coincidental, of course, that he has never lost a case and that nobody in Singapore has actually sued the government and won.

So Hong Kong is irreplaceable. And when the light of the freedom in Hong Kong is turned off, darkness just doesn't fall on Hong Kong. Darkness doesn't just fall on China. It falls on the entire region.

But is Hong Kong doomed? I don't believe so. Because there are many people in Hong Kong who will continue to fight for democracy, freedom and the rule of law. I, along with all my party members who will be thrown out of the Legislative Council in 200 days time, will certainly stay and fight to keep our society free. We will continue our work because we believe in democracy, we believe in freedom and we believe in the rule of law. However, we shall need the help of all our friends throughout the world. We can never do it alone, although we will do our very best.

Now what are we in Hong Kong going to do to face the future? My party will continue to exist, unless the Chinese government changes the law to make us illegal. And we intend to remain in Hong Kong. We still have many members on the municipal council and on the district boards. In fact, we are the largest party at all three levels of the government. We will continue to give press conferences to defend Hong Kong's freedom, whenever necessary, but of course there is, I have to say, already quite a bit of self-censorship. But in this day and age, I don't think it's possible to suppress the truth for long – if at all. There are bound to be people knowing and writing about these things – at least I hope there will be. There will be local and international press in Hong Kong and they can help. But I have to say things *will* be much more difficult after the handover. What good does it do to speak out if the press chooses not to report us and the television chooses not to televise what we say?

However I'm optimistic for the long term. I don't believe in fighting lost causes – despite of the label of “martyr”, occasionally put on me. After all, why should people go to jail for simply upholding the

Joint Declaration? That's what we are doing. We are holding China and Britain to the solemn promises made to us in 1994 that there will be "one country and two systems", and that "Hong Kong people will rule Hong Kong with a high degree of autonomy". This means, (apart from defence and foreign affairs) that we will be masters of our own house. We are holding both governments to that pledge. So we will be in Hong Kong fighting and we hope that the rest of the world will be with us.

So far I've received a very positive reception from the Australian media, from the Australian people and from Australian parliamentarians. It is the same all over the world – my only problem seems to be *with* governments. As I see it, today too many governments are trying to second-guess China.

Why should it embarrass China if any world leader were to see me when what we in Hong Kong are asking is for China simply to deliver what was promised to Hong Kong? We are not asking for the independence of Hong Kong. So why should a meeting with me pose so many problems? I am not an expert on China, but I have many friends who keep me informed.

The important thing about China and its view on Hong Kong is this: the Chinese leaders, I am sure, would like, as the cliché goes, for Hong Kong's goose to continue to "lay golden eggs" (platinum eggs in fact, if that were possible). I'm also sure the leaders would like to see Taiwan reunited with China. So yes, these are important factors. But we must remember that these factors, though important, are only of *secondary* importance to the leaders of China. What is of primary importance to Beijing's leaders is their ability to survive in power. And if China's rulers believe their position is jeopardised by anything, they will stop at nothing. Look at Tiananman Square in 1989. Things were going well for China economically. And everybody thought they wouldn't shoot and kill their own people. All the experts on China said so. But they were proved to be wrong because when it comes to any conflict in China – when the choice is between a political decision and a free market decision – the political option always prevails.

If, on the 1 July 1997, the Chinese leaders feel very secure about their position, they will be more relaxed and they will allow the people of the whole of China to enjoy more freedom, including the people of Hong Kong. But if they believe their position is challenged or jeopardised, the golden rule in China has always been to take the hardest possible line. Therefore, at present, the Beijing leaders are adopting a very hardline policy towards Hong Kong in every respect on political development, on public demonstration and press freedom.

On press freedom, we are aware of Beijing's antipathy towards free press. Chinese leaders have said Hong Kong journalists "must not criticise" Chinese leaders or distort the "truth". But in a country like China, what is the truth? What is a lie? What is a lie when the truth is

carefully suppressed? Even now, a lot of Hong Kong journalists are being very careful. We have been told the laws will be changed to make sure that the government can control the press. Self-censorship is already prevalent. And you can expect editors to be extremely careful and proprietors of newspapers to be even more careful.

In sum, Hong Kong unfortunately will be very closely linked with that pendulum in China which swings to the right, but also swings to the left. It shouldn't happen like that because the foundation of the Joint Declaration was to separate Hong Kong from political upheaval in China. Hong Kong's people were promised a high degree of autonomy in ruling themselves. Hong Kong has been doing so well over the last 30-40 years because we had a buffer in the form of a British administration, even though there were so many political crises in China. Deng Xiaoping saw that the only way was to give the Hong Kong people a high degree of autonomy. The struggle for power is eternal in China. That's what the leaders were brought up with and that's how they got to the top, by bringing the other guy down. So, in other words the only way for Hong Kong to survive, and not be subject to the many frequent political changes in Beijing, is to ensure that Hong Kong's system is separate from China's. It is frequently said that China won't deliberately harm Hong Kong, because "China won't kill the goose which lays the golden eggs". But when Beijing wants to control Hong Kong by putting a noose around its neck, can Hong Kong's "goose" realistically continue to lay golden eggs?

Former British ambassador, Sir Robin McClaren, after his retirement came to Hong Kong and he spoke on the radio, to say that the Hong Kong people must now learn to realise that it is in their interest to give up willingly three per cent of their freedom in order to preserve the other 97 per cent. I was quite angry when I heard that, because if you apply that logic, Hong Kong people should also be prepared to give up 50 per cent of their freedom in order to preserve the other 50 per cent. But will Hong Kong continue as such a successful city if people's freedoms are to be constrained? Freedom is a whole. You cannot split it up and say economic freedom is permitted, but political freedom will be restricted.

One interesting observation is that the Chinese people always do extremely well once they are out of China. Because the Chinese people are hardworking, by and large, but within Communist China they were taught not to work hard. This is the essence of communism. If you work hard you earn so much. If you don't work hard you get just as much. But once the Chinese people leave China and they suddenly see the advantage of working hard because by the fruits of their labour they earn more. To restrict political freedom, to ask the Hong Kong people to restrain themselves, I think, is really to ask the Hong Kong people to slowly extinguish that fire to achieve. This is not what we were given in

the Joint Declaration which promised us that all our freedoms would continue to be preserved by law, by the rules of equity, the common law and all existing laws. It is also promised in the Basic Law of Hong Kong that our way of life would be unchanged from the 1 July 1997.

Hong Kong is a shining example of the rule of law. We have very little corruption. China has massive corruption. And since we have the rule of law everybody is equal in the eyes of the law. Only when China introduces the rule of law, can China join the world community of nations. My vision is that my country, China – which is today a big country – will one day be a great country. A country, where the rights of all citizens are respected and protected by law.

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Photo - David Karonidis

Robin Hughes

In an address to The Sydney Institute on Monday 2 December 1996, filmmaker Robin Hughes took her audience on a journey through the lives of seven Australians - Nugget Coombs, Nancy Bird Walton, Neville Bonner, Mark Oliphant, Donald Horne, Joan Hammond and war veteran Jack Hazlitt. The occasion marked the launch of the collection *Australian Lives* (HarperCollins), designed to tell Australians about their history through interviews with significant older Australians, recorded on film and in print. This is the transcript of Robin Hughes' unscripted talk which was accompanied by excerpts from the television series *Australian Biography*.

THE HISTORY IN

AUSTRALIAN LIVES

Robin Hughes

The book *Australian Lives* is part of a major project initiated by Film Australia in its National Interest Program. A series of on-screen interviews called Australian Biography was begun for the very good reason that the lives of many significant 20th Century Australians were not being recorded on either video or film. Filmmakers, especially documentary filmmakers, need these records for filmmaking and there seems to be good evidence that in the next century we will rely increasingly on the screen as a way of communicating to the general public. It turned into quite a big project.

The purpose was primarily archival and involved interviewing selected people at length about their lives. That archival project has now run over five series. We've interviewed 36 people so far, recording between seven and eight hours of material with each of them. Once the full interview was complete a half hour program was cut from it for screening on SBS and for use in schools and colleges. As you can imagine it was an extraordinarily difficult task to edit each one down to half an hour and so when Helen Littleton from HarperCollins saw those programs on SBS and decided that it would be good to have a book based on them I saw it as a wonderful opportunity to go back to the original material.

The book allowed me to use some of the fascinating elements that couldn't be included in the television series because there just wasn't room. Part of the motivation that Helen had was that these are really strong stories. This is the surprising thing that happens with non-fiction material. It's often strong on plot – there's a good yarn there. So from HarperCollins' point of view it's good entertainment and makes good Christmas presents and so on. But there was another level to it. In the telling of these stories, and the recording of these lives, we've actually been recording eyewitness accounts of Australian history. Biography is of course a basic ingredient of history. Hence the title of the talk tonight.

Australian Lives seems a very simple title, but in the light of the current debate in Australia over what it means to be Australian, it perhaps has a hidden depth. The idea of what a life is has always had a certain existential resonance to it. But to make it even more complex, the question of what is an *Australian* life and who should be allowed to live that life has suddenly taken on a new meaning in 1996.

In fact, in the past, we've discussed this question a great deal – to such an extent, that our search for national identity has actually become the subject of satire and a certain amount of hilarious self-mockery around the fact that as a nation we seem to have been ridiculously obsessed with seeking this elusive identity. But we sobered up a little recently when we started hearing questions being asked, that give a new twist to the meaning of free speech. At times they seemed like quite old questions but requiring a new answer. One of the questions tonight is, what would these seven Australians in this book have to contribute to our current debate on who has the right to be called a true Australian and to participate fully in Australian society? What would Nugget Coombs, Nancy Bird Walton, Neville Bonner, Mark Oliphant, Donald Horne, Joan Hammond or war veteran Jack Hazlitt say about what it actually means to be an Australian now and what kind of a country we want to have?

One of the things that made me want to talk about this tonight, was reading in this morning's newspaper that Tom Keneally, at the Republican rally in Sydney last night, had talked about an Australia that was unadventurous and narrow in its outlook. Keneally was referring to his generation of Australians and those a little older – the same generation I've been interviewing. And we know that John Howard has talked with a certain amount of nostalgia about a comfortable Australia that existed in the past. But this Australia described so approvingly by Howard and disparagingly by Keneally is an Australia which I suspect is completely unrecognisable either in fact or in aspiration to the seven people in this book. Their lives were on the whole far from comfortable, profoundly challenging and between them they certainly had some adventures. They make most of us look like a bunch of wimps. I've also heard it said that Pauline Hanson, the Independent from the Queensland seat of Oxley, has expressed a view that belongs to an older generation. But I have to say Pauline Hanson doesn't express the view of the people that I've interviewed, anymore than she expresses the view of most contemporary Australians.

What Pauline Hanson is expressing are values quite different from those my interviewees worked for and in many ways the opposite of what they felt strongly about. No, their values were certainly not those of Pauline Hanson. How can I be so sure? And why would I presume to talk in this way about a group of diverse people as if they had some kind of collective value system? Normally if you ask people what their

values are, they'll give you a response in terms of their political beliefs or their religious beliefs. On that sort of measure, if you look at my group, you certainly couldn't imagine a more diverse one. At one end of the spectrum you have Nugget Coombs or Donald Horne, at the other Nancy Bird Walton and Neville Bonner both active members of the Liberal Party. The filmed interviews have included Malcolm Fraser, Flo Bjelke Petersen, Frank Hardy and Tom Uren.

Likewise with their religious beliefs. Over the course of the series whether you're talking about their looks, their accents, or their countries of origin we have a wide range of Australians. On these obvious dimensions there are really no clues as to what kind of values were held in common. And yet, to use a film analogy, if instead of going into close up where you see their great individuality and striking differences from each other, you pull out into wide shot and see them all in a broader context, a distinctive pattern emerges. And it's not to do with those obvious things of politics or religion. It's to do with their behaviour. Somehow or other it's the unspoken spirit that underpins their activities and their attitudes. These unspoken matters are what you might call our cultural assumptions. And when you look at these cultural assumptions, the ones that underlie the life stories both in this book, and in the television series, you get a kind of cultural cohesion that is really quite striking. The difficulty is of course to try to express exactly what these implicit things are. That is why we end up laughing at ourselves about our struggle with the idea of a national identity. Because although we can get a very strong impression of the Australian ethos from these stories, it's a cumulative effect arising from the meaning in the stories themselves and much, much harder to articulate in a general way.

The characteristics that you can quite confidently recognise in all the people in this group were also recognised by a group of Asian Australian students I just happened to bump into while I was waiting for a plane in Melbourne last week. They know what it is to be an Australian. They know because they're it. But it's very hard to put into words. Nevertheless there is something that people pick up from their culture by a sort of osmosis. Take Donald Horne, who, as he explains in the book, sat down over one Christmas break and wrote *A Lucky Country*. He wasn't making up something out of his head. He was expressing something that he had taken in from the entire culture around him, a sort of amalgam of things that he'd experienced as an Australian, much of which he'd drawn from other Australians.

It's something that was present when Nugget Coombs coined the phrase "fair shares" to try to sell the idea of rationing in the middle of post-war reconstruction. He wasn't just laying down a whole new way of looking at things, he was reinforcing something that was implicit in the Australian culture. He was making explicit what Australians all felt

to be implicit. It didn't stop opportunists breaking the system and running black markets. It didn't stop greedy people stampeding the shops when it was first announced. But it meant that the overwhelming majority collectively knew, because it has been articulated by their leaders, what they in their hearts came to believe was the right Australian way to go about building up Australia post-war. The people who were the greedy ones and the ones that were opportunistic at the expense of their neighbours were marginalised, because a leader had articulated very clearly and strongly what the nation as a whole felt was the right thing to do at the time.

Somebody recently asked me this question: if I were doing the series in 30 years time, when the current generation had got older, would I find that people were markedly different? Would the generation of 30-40 somethings now offer different perspectives on Australia when being interviewed about their lives, about their values and about the events that they had lived through and what they'd made of them? Obviously, superficially you would expect a massive difference. But when I thought more about it I began to wonder. I remembered that a few years ago, when I was doing another television series on gender differences, it struck me that in the old "Is it nature or is it nurture?" debate we always talk of cultural influences as the bits we can change. We see them as being much more superficial than our genetic inheritance. In fact in these days of genetic engineering it might be easier to change genes than to change culture. In fact, I do think that at this profound, probably unconscious, level our most fundamental cultural assumptions may be very hard to change indeed. We can take up new stances, we can take up new poses, but the habits and beliefs that arise from the shared experiences myths and stories of a whole society go very deep and are not changed overnight.

So I expect that today's 30-40 somethings wouldn't be as different as we might at first suppose. Many people hope that at least some of the things which are very strongly implicit in our culture would have by then been made more explicit. And yet when it comes to talking about culture, one is faced with a bit of a dilemma. As Australians we feel very uncomfortable when we come to do this. When we try to make these lists of Australian character essentials and we talk about "a fair go" and "not wanting to whinge", and try to put into proud words the typically Aussie qualities displayed by people such as those in *Australian Lives*, we feel a bit embarrassed. And when we look at a very explicit culture like the American culture, which very strongly states exactly what it's about and has all kinds of symbols to reinforce that, we feel uncomfortable with it. It seems a bit corny. Why do we feel this way? . . . Because we're Australians. And so we come round full circle.

Social theorists tell us that when we look for a group identity, or even when we look for own identity, this is often done by identifying

the way in which we, either as groups or individuals, differ from others. We define who we are as much by saying who we are not as by saying who we are. There is real danger in that. Because as a group, as Australians, we would be best advised to emphasise what is strong and good in what we are, in a positive way. It's an easy short cut to make ourselves feel good about ourselves by denigrating others and to find our identity by making, as it were, odious comparisons between ourselves and other groups.

So what does a nation need in a time like the present when voices of blame and division are heard in the land? It needs an overarching, embracing, absolutely inclusive vision and at the centre some kind of symbol that says this is a community to which all groups, whoever they are, can truly belong.

One of the arguments that has been advanced in favour of an Australian Republic (the people in this book were in fact divided on whether or not they believe in a Republic) is that there isn't a strong Australian identity and that a Republic would help us develop one. In my view we need a Republic precisely because our identity is in fact very strong, highly distinctive and almost entirely implicit. A Republic would give us a powerful symbol. We wouldn't then need to list all those characteristics that identify a true Australian. We would obviate the need for that, with such a strong and powerful symbol.

People are saying that our present leaders aren't good at articulating for us what it is that we are looking for. But all of these adventurous, imaginative, very broad thinking people that I've been talking to over the last few years for this project, have been working towards a notion of how we should be, by living it in their lives. They have lived out the Australian identity. They have expressed it in the true stories they have made and passed on to us. The concept of a Republic seems to me to be an extremely good way of providing us with a focus, with something that wordlessly embraces our common values, experiences and purpose.

In the *Australian Biography* project the people on the screen and in the book capitalise on this very strong, implicit culture in Australia, the thing that makes us recognise them as Australian. We can feel it when Mark Oliphant thumbs his nose at pomposity. It makes us feel Australian when Donald Horne says that if he could offer only one good piece of advice to others it would be "For God's sake, don't whinge". When we see that Nancy Bird Walton was being told, as a young woman, that young women don't fly and then she simply went off and did it, we feel that that is very Australian. We feel it's very Australian that Jack Hazlett hung in there in the most appalling conditions at Gallipoli and France in World War I. His reaction to it and the laconic way he describes it is also very Australian.

Nugget Coombs tells the story of how he went with Ben Chifley to London after the war. Chifley had to go along to the Palace to meet the king. Chifley, as you know, always wore a blue shirt, a sign of solidarity with the workers. He was in a bit of a dilemma. Should he dress up in a white shirt as a mark of respect to the king? He asked Nugget for advice but Nugget wasn't much help. In his Australian way Ben finally decided where his priorities lay: "I would feel I was letting the boys back home down if I wore the white one." So he wore the blue shirt to the palace to visit the king.

It is clear to me that one value clearly demonstrated in the lives of the generation we have interviewed, was that if you didn't agree with what your leaders were doing, then it was up to you to act independently. So, in relation to this whole business of understanding what an Australian life is, and who should be allowed to live it, and how we should go about it – one way to deal with that is by acting for ourselves. It is all very well for us to criticise our political leaders. Our immediate leaders have not always shown a level of comprehension of their duty. But I think all of us must share responsibility for the way things are. And right across the board, too, our national institutions like the ABC, the university sector and all the other public cultural activities which serve a concept of Australian life, need our support and encouragement. So it is my great hope that when we come to older Australians for interviews in 30 years time, they may very well, at their heart, at their core, resemble very much the group that we've interviewed for this project. And I hope that they will be this way in the context of a much more resolved bunch of Australians with a much clearer, much more confident understanding of all the subtle nuances and the range of possibilities that an Australian life can offer.

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Photo - David Karonidis

Jeffrey Simpson

Jeffrey Simpson is National Affairs columnist for the *Globe and Mail* newspapers and has won all three of Canada's leading literary prizes. During a recent visit to Australia, Jeffrey Simpson addressed The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 4 December 1996 to present his perspectives on the Canadian separatist movement, and give some evaluation of how this affects the Canadian economy.

THE CANADIAN

ECONOMY AND THE SEPARATIST MOVEMENT

Jeffrey Simpson

Canada, periodically beset by internal unity challenges for a quarter of a century, narrowly escaped dismemberment in 1995 and remains plagued by a threat to its continued unity.

On 30 October, 1995, the people of Quebec were asked in a referendum organised by the Parti Quebecois government, a secessionist government, whether they wished Quebec to become a sovereign country while offering some kind of economic association to the rest of Canada. The vote was 50.6 per cent No; 49.4 per cent Yes. Federalism won; secession lost – but by the narrowest of margins. Had 25,000 votes out of more than 4 million cast been reversed, the result would have been a victory for secession and Canada would have been plunged into the political unknown.

Canada's many foreign friends – indeed many Canadians themselves – are mystified why a country such as Canada should face the possibility of dismemberment. After all, Canada is the world's second-oldest federation (1867) and notwithstanding the country's habitual modesty can boast some impressive accomplishments.

Canada's standard of living is one of the highest in the world on a per capita basis. It is a member of the G-7 group of countries, albeit by far the smallest of the seven. For two of the last three years, the United Nations Human Development Index, a basket of indicators including life expectancy, education and health, has ranked Canada first of all of the member countries.

Respect for human rights is ubiquitous in Canada, with its Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The country is a magnet for immigrants from around the world; it accepts more immigrants relative to its population than the United States, Australia or New Zealand. The country is internationally respected, and is a member of just about every international forum. It has a policy of official bilingualism – French and English – and is blessed by having as its official languages two of the world's principal languages. And Canada is a stout but not uncritical friend of the United States, the world's only remaining superpower.

These attributes can be listed not to boast, because certainly Canada has its problems – whether the treatment of aboriginal Canadians, regional inequalities or growing income inequalities – but rather to suggest that the mystery of Canada's unity challenge has nothing to do with some of the root causes of discontent elsewhere such as extreme poverty, suppression of basic human rights, an unpopular regime in the eyes of the international community or gross injustices perpetrated by a majority against a minority.

Yet the possibility of Quebec seceding from Canada must be taken seriously indeed. A quick scan of some of the factors behind the raw numbers in the referendum – 50.6 per cent to 49.4 per cent – suggests some clues.

The province of Quebec, which contains 24.5 per cent of Canada's population and 23.5 per cent of its gross domestic product, has an internal population that breaks down as follows: French-speaking (francophone) 83 per cent; English-speaking (anglophone) 10 per cent; other 7 per cent. In the referendum, 60 per cent of francophones voted Yes, or roughly three voters in five. The referendum turnout was a staggering 94 per cent, for all intents and purposes a full turnout in a voluntary voting system.

Canada is a country that defies easy description; indeed some analysts have called it the first post-modern society. But central to the country's history has always been an agreement by French-speakers, concentrated in but not exclusive to Quebec, to live together in one country with English-speakers concentrated in but not exclusive to the rest of Canada. When three in five of one group decide, for whatever reasons, that they want out – that they desire a very different relationship – then the underlying situation is unstable.

The older Quebec voter, the more likely he or she is to have voted for federalism. Federalists won in the age category of voters above 50 years of age; secessionists won among younger voters. Clearly, these demographic trends do not bode well for federalists.

It should also be remembered that the 1995 referendum was the second one in recent Quebec history on re-arranging relations with Canada. In 1980, Quebecers voted 60 to 40 per cent in a referendum against "sovereignty-association", a proposal that Quebec should declare its sovereignty in principle, then negotiate an economic association with Canada, followed by another referendum to ratify or reject what had been negotiated. The 1980 referendum presented Quebecers with a much softer, or less directly consequential, question than the one in 1995. The prospect of a second referendum in the 1980 referendum allowed some voters to opt for the Yes knowing that they could later change their minds, whereas the question in 1995 gave them no such second chance.

Anglophones and more recent immigrants to Quebec overwhelmingly oppose secession. They voted more than 90 per cent for the No; indeed, in some anglophone districts of Montreal, voters supported the No side by majorities exceeding 95 per cent. The close vote radicalised many of these anglophones who are largely concentrated in Montreal, Quebec's metropolis, and along the border with Ontario. The referendum meant that they very nearly lost "their country", Canada, and ever since many strident voices have clamoured for declarations from the federal government that secession is illegal and that they can partition the province to keep their corners of Quebec part of Canada.

The anglophones and other immigrants have been joined by the province's major aboriginal groups – the Cree of north-central Quebec and Inuit in the far north. Both these groups held their own referendum on secession that produced No majorities of more than 95. The Cree and Inuit have both declared their own "right of self-determination" and announced that they do not wish to be part of a sovereign Quebec but rather to take the territory that they have occupied "since time immemorial" into Canada should Quebec secede.

French-speaking Quebecers almost unanimously oppose any notion of partitioning their province, whereas that is precisely what the aboriginals and an increasing number of anglophones espouse. The gap between the two positions is huge and incapable of being narrowed through negotiations. The potential for conflict is evident.

Secessionists have had a leg up in political leadership since Lucien Bouchard assumed the leadership of the secessionist movement and became premier of Quebec. Mr Bouchard possesses a rare gift for language and a genius for evoking real and alleged humiliations that French-speakers have felt in Canada. It was his presence in the referendum campaign, more than that of any other political actor, that assisted the secessionists in nearly winning. Half-way through the campaign he was named "chief negotiator" of the economic association with Canada and assumed de facto leadership of the Yes campaign. Soon thereafter, the Yes side rose in the polls from 40 per cent to the 49.4 per cent it received on referendum day. Bouchard subsequently became premier of Quebec which enhances his stature politically and may make him an even more potent force when another referendum occurs.

Federalists are also haunted by their recent past. Although Canadian federalism has greatly changed in recent decades, these changes have largely occurred by non-constitutional means. (One major exception was the introduction into the Canadian constitution in 1981 of a Charter of Rights and Freedoms over the objection of the secessionist government of Quebec). But two attempts to change the constitution in the early 1990s – changes that would have given to Quebec the status of a "distinct society" within Canada – failed, and

failed spectacularly. These failures have become part of the secessionists' arsenal of arguments that Canadian federalism is inflexible and insensitive to the specificity of Quebec, and that only secession will give Quebec the power to develop as it sees fit.

Finally, in surveying the reasons behind the high Yes vote and the instability that still plagues Canadian federalism, it is essential to understand that most of the commanding heights of the francophone intellectual elite is strongly nationalist/secessionist. Media personalities, university professors, artists, writers – the people the author Benedict Anderson says contribute to providing the forums through which people come to believe they are part of an “imagined community” – these are overwhelmingly secessionist. The concept of an “imagined community” is extremely helpful in understanding francophone Quebec, since it is a highly self-absorbed, parochial society, 6.5 million strong, in a sea of English-speakers in North America, whose media daily reinforce the parochialism by providing little if any coverage of developments in the rest of Canada or the world.

Premier Bouchard has announced that there will be another referendum. Just when remains unclear. Quebec law governing the holding of referendums prohibits more than one referendum on the same subject during the term of a government. That would mean an election must be held, and the Parti Quebecois must win it, before another referendum could be called. No election is required in Quebec until 1999, although one could be called before then. For now, Premier Bouchard is making his government's priority an improvement to the province's economy, which has been battered in the post-referendum period.

It is highly likely, if another referendum is held, that even more weight will be given in the question asked to Quebecers and in the campaign by secessionists to the proposed economic association with Canada. Essentially what Quebec secessionists must contend with are the dual identities and loyalties held by many francophone Quebecers. A well-known Quebec comedian once commented that what francophone Quebecers really desire is “an independent Quebec in a strong and united Canada”. Many francophone Quebecers identify primarily with Quebec but to varying degrees with Canada.

In the referendum campaign, for example, the secessionists preached that while Quebec should become sovereign, it could also continue to use the Canadian dollar as legal tender and that Quebecers could continue holding Canadian passports and citizenship. They even suggested a joint parliament with equal members from Quebec and Canada to sort out potential conflicts and to pass laws on matters of common concern. It was only when Mr Bouchard, having been named “chief negotiator”, began to assure Quebecers that they could secede

from Canada but continue to enjoy an economic, monetary and political association that support for secession rose.

Economic reassurance is therefore important for secessionists' political calculations, but the heart of the drive for secession is not economic. Indeed, the vast majority of studies conducted into the economic impact of secession have concluded that Quebec's economy will suffer, at least in the first five years. But the core argument to secession takes the form of a syllogistic argument: that francophone Quebecers form a "people" because of language, culture, institutions and a collective memory and a people can only feel fully comfortable and express themselves at home and abroad if they have a state. Mr Bouchard put this argument backwards when he dismissed Canada as not a "real country" presumably because it contained more than one ethnic group.

This kind of syllogistic argument, of course, bedevils countries around the world, including in Asia. The Philippines and Thailand both have Muslim minorities, China has Tibet, India has a multiplicity of religious and linguistic groups, Sri Lanka has Tamils and Singalese, Myanmar a large number of tribes. African countries are shot through with different tribal and racial groups. Turkey has its Kurds, Russia is minorities, the Baltic states their Russian minorities. Europe has Scots, Catalans, Basques, Hungarians in Slovakia and Romania. Italy confronts its northern secessionists, Belgium its conflict between Flemish and Walloons. France has its Corsicans. Ex-Yugoslavia speaks for itself, as does the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. The syllogistic argument, if carried to its logical conclusion, would re-write the map of much of the world so that, in Mr Bouchard's words, countries would all become "real".

There is in the Quebec-Canada drama, as in other cases, a dialectic at work. At the same time that globalisation extends its financial and economic sway, cultural affirmation or re-affirmation is making itself increasingly present. So much of what is called "globalisation" involves factors over which people have no control – the gnomes of Zurich, wage rates in the developing countries, Japanese bond-traders, international trading rules etc – that they feel the need to reassert control over certain elements of their lives. This reflex to reassert control often is reflected in the cultural and political sphere. In Quebec, secessionists play out this dialectic by insisting they favour free trade, want to join multilateral trading institutions such as the North American Free Trade Agreement and will yield up segments of their sovereignty to supranational institutions, while insisting on a reassertion of control through the political act of making Quebec a sovereign country with control over such issues as social and cultural policy.

The paradox of the Quebec secession is therefore that in becoming sovereign, Quebec would yield up important elements of that

sovereignty immediately to supranational institutions and full control of its monetary policy to Canada by continuing to use the Canadian dollar. But in exchange, secessionists believe that as a "people" they could take their rightful place among the community of nations.

What have been the economic consequences of the referendum vote, and what might be some of the economic implications for Quebec and Canada if secession succeeded?

Ever since the referendum, there has been a noticeable slowdown in economic activity in Quebec. Quebec's unemployment rate has historically been above the national average, but the gap has widened in the last 18 months. Montreal unemployment, for example, has hit a staggering 12.6 per cent. Six of the nine Canadian cities with the highest levels of unemployment are in Quebec. Quebec's share of private capital investment has fallen to 13 per cent. A slow drain of anglophones from Quebec accelerated in the months after the referendum. Quebec is the last Canadian province to tackle its deficit problem, so that in addition to this post-referendum slowdown in economic activity, the province faces at least several years of severe austerity in government finance since Premier Bouchard has announced his intention to balance the budget. He believes that if Quebec can demonstrate a track record of fiscal probity it will reassure Quebecers about the minimal economic consequences of seceding.

Should Quebec secede, the economic uncertainties plaguing it and Canada would be considerable. Quebec would have to negotiate entry as a sovereign country into NAFTA, a process that could take considerable time, during which companies would be in legal limbo. The US, Canada and to a lesser extent Mexico would certainly demand changes in various Quebec government policies since sub-national units within NAFTA (states, provinces and municipalities) are allowed to engage in protectionist activities denied to national states.

There would also be a continuing question about Quebec's use of the Canadian dollar. Having ceded control of monetary policy to Canada, Quebec would find itself forced to adapt to decisions made by the Bank of Canada which would not feel in any way obliged to take into consideration Quebec's economy. Loss of control over monetary and interest-rate policy has an important impact on fiscal policy. On the other hand, if Quebec were to establish its own currency, it would probably find a value relatively lower than that of the Canadian dollar, wiping out some savings by Quebecers. It is indeed to expunge that very spectre that the secessionists have insisted an independent Quebec would continue to use the Canadian dollar.

The huge national debt of about \$675 billion (Can) would have to be divided and a method of repayment agreed upon by Quebec and Canada. Some secessionists have claimed that Quebec's share of the debt is only 18.5 per cent, an amount that represents the share of fixed

federal assets (airports, buildings, laboratories etc) in Quebec. Nothing less than Quebec's share of the national population – 24.5 per cent – would satisfy Canada. While negotiations could be laborious and acrimonious, foreign investors who hold 42 per cent of Canada's debt would be insistent upon a speedy resolution.

In the long term, Quebec would be an economically viable, modern state. It has an adequate post-secondary education system, certain natural resources (hydroelectricity in particular), full developed banking and financial systems and proximity to the larger and wealthier American and Canadian markets. The province would certainly suffer economically in the short-to-medium-term, but it would hardly descend to second-world economic status.

What about attitudes in the rest of Canada? Put simply, the vast majority of Canadians do not want their country to break up. Every public opinion survey demonstrates that desire. There is an element of public opinion that favours a "let them go" approach, but it remains a minority.

However, there is a widespread perception in the rest of Canada that Quebec is the spoiled child of confederation, always bellyaching, demanding and complaining. Quebec annually receives a sizeable sum of money from the rest of Canada through the federal government in the form of equalisation payments. Quebec is also a net recipient of federal funds in many other areas. Prime ministers, with a few brief exceptions, have been from Quebec since 1968. There is also a deep resentment that defeat in a referendum counts for little, since no sooner did the secessionists lose than they declared their intention to hold another – the so-called strategy of the "neverendum".

After failed constitutional changes in the early 1990s, no public appetite exists to open constitutional talks. Indeed, outside Quebec no appetite exists to accommodate Quebec's demands, since these are seen to be shifting and to represent a way-station towards some kind of "special status" within Canada. If anything, there has been a hardening of attitudes towards Quebec in the last few years. Certainly if Quebecers had voted to secede from Canada, the attitude in the rest of Canada would have been at first shock, then a steely determination to strike the hardest possible deal with Quebec.

It is an open question what would happen to the rest of Canada should Quebec secede. Canada would be geographically divided, with the four Atlantic Canadian provinces cut off from the rest of the country. Canada would also be an unbalanced federation without Quebec, since the province of Ontario would contain almost half the population, wealth and seats in the House of Commons. The secession of Quebec would eliminate the "Quebec problem" from Canada; it would fast be replaced by the "Ontario problem". The pull of the United States would intensify, since Canada's east-west structure

would have been weakened. My guess – and it can only be a guess – is that for the first generation of Canadians after a secession by Québec union with the US would be out of the question, but that as the years went on the idea would grow in attractiveness, especially in British Columbia and Alberta which have the economic strength and geographic positions to make petitioning for statehood of interest to the Americans. And, of course, once one or two provinces or one Canadian region decides amalgamation with the US is the best policy, Canada would unravel quickly thereafter.

Not even the wisest experts who have hypothesised about the issues to be negotiated between Canada and a seceding Québec would pretend that they have covered all contingencies. They cannot predict the climate of public opinion in Québec or Canada. They cannot know how aboriginals will try to enforce their claim over territory Québec claims as its own. No one knows whether small-scale incidents of violence or civil disobedience will occur, and if they did whether they might escalate.

How would the international community react. Would the community of nations accept the secessionists' claim that a majority vote in a referendum would be sufficient for international recognition, or would countries heed the argument of Canada that the Canadian constitution must be amended for the secession to become legal, and that any precipitous international recognition would be condoning an illegal act? What signals, if any, would the break-up of Canada send to other countries with more than one ethnic, linguistic or religious group? If Canada, with so much at its command, cannot survive the battle against ethnocentric nationalism, which country can?

Canada is the world's second-oldest federation. It is not a Johnny-Come-Lately state among the nations of the world. It has more than 130 years of history under its belt, and it is therefore idle and deeply misleading to imagine that everything this history has shaped can be ripped up by secession without unforeseen consequences, much unpleasantness and a speedy restoration of anything approximating the status quo ante.

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Photo - David Karonidis

Virginia Trioli

According to *Age* journalist Virginia Trioli, the sexual harassment debate in Australia has gone off the rails. Her book *Generation f* (Minerva 1996) tells why. Women, Trioli believes, should feel confident about using laws created by a generation of feminists but, instead, the debate has confused sex with sexism and mutual affection with uninvited attention. Virginia Trioli spoke for The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 10 December 1996.

SEX, POWER AND

THE YOUNG FEMINIST OR, THE GOOD SOCIETY

Virginia Trioli

Recently I have been reading John Kenneth Galbraith's latest work, *The Good Society*.

It is always a rather humbling experience reading the books of this economist – not only because of the lucidity and precision of his prose (always a tough thing for a stumbling journalist to confront), but because his compassionate vision combines an optimism and a practicality that is rare in our post industrial age.

In defining his vision of a “good society”, Galbraith writes:
Any useful identification of the good society must take into consideration the institutional structure and the human characteristics that are fixed, immutable. They make the difference between the utopian and the achievable, between the agreeably irrelevant and the ultimately possible.

The title of Galbraith's book – which is subtitled *The Humane Agenda* – is one that has been used by other writers and thinkers, most notably, as Galbraith records, in America during the dark days of the depression.

I am daring to borrow the title here for this talk, and add it to my original one, in the hope of bringing with it Galbraith's sage understanding of the difference between the “agreeably irrelevant and the ultimately possible” in feminism and sexual politics today.

I was invited recently to address the end of year dinner of the Monash University Women's Collective.

The scrubby campus was deserted, in that miserably emptied-out way that a university becomes once the students have crammed and examined and then fled. There was just me and a voluble collection of young women all of whom seemed like parts of me from many, many years ago.

Dinner was a spirited, challenging affair held at the Whole Foods Collective in the student union. A hand-painted sign over the doorway read: Don't bring any meat in here. I was assured it wasn't hung up by the collective.

The dinner also consisted of many parts that I recall living on many years ago. There were lentils. And peas. And those vegetarian samosas made of pastry that could have come from a Melbourne casino concrete pour. Over a glass of Riesling I prepared myself for the grilling you can surely expect when young feminist students gather (I got it) with two women who worked in the Women's Studies department at the university. The three of us latched onto the generational issue that has emerged from this year, these two years, of feminist publishing and feminist debate.

Was the issue of age, of generational difference in feminist attitudes, they asked, really one of chronological difference or more importantly philosophical difference?

It was, and continues to be, a good question.

I had initially – and by this I mean about a year and a half ago when I considered writing *Generation f* – been so wary of this neat age division. It was an attitudinal and indeed deeply psychological divide that Helen Garner, in her book, *The First Stone*, clearly found intriguing and meaningful. But at the outset of my work I didn't see it as such a clear divide, and not only because I knew as many older women as I did younger ones who agreed – or disagreed – with Garner's and others' various points of view.

But one thing became increasingly clear to me as the year went on, and as society's shifting patterns of influence and necessity revealed themselves: that like any other discipline that hopes to analyse, make sense of and, dare I say, better the society under question, the points of view shift as each generation of work comes under the scrutiny of the next.

Just as proudly pro-Mao Chinese scholars of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Ross Terrill and Stephen FitzGerald, had their apologetic views called to account by the next wave of less starry-eyed academics – most notably Pierre Ryckmans – so too this generation's feminists call to account the work that has been done before them.

Just as a new generation of art historians and cultural analysts in the 1980s, such as Rosalind Krauss and Donald Kuspit, took on the dogmas and values of the rich intellectual inheritance of Ernst Gombrich and Clement Greenberg – sceptically turning the masters' interpretations this way and that in the analytical light of their time, so too does feminism.

And this is what we are in the middle of right now. A reinvestigation, a close examination of the meaning and usefulness of the feminisms we have inherited. And as one of the greatest social movements, a serious and important discipline, I believe it's time for feminists to stop apologising for the various discussions and arguments that periodically occur within it.

This was where the Monash academics and I found ourselves, after the next generation along had pelted me with the wholemeal bread rolls of their political passion: we were happy to remind ourselves that, like so many other lines of inquiry, we were not yet complacent enough to fail to call ourselves to account.

Yet we were also bewildered that our arguments provoked. Perhaps some less blooded disciplines envy us our vigor. Perhaps some of our intellectual peers have run out of things to say to each other.

In a little country of 18 million people, where four major books critiquing contemporary feminist thought and action can be published to genuine interest and attention within two years (*The First Stone*, *Generation f*, Kathy Bail's *DIY Feminism* and Catherine Lumby's forthcoming *Bad Girls*), we could almost be said to have taken the ball all the way down the ground to our goal, and be now having a pleasant game of kick-to-kick amongst ourselves.

I mention this Monash story as a way of introducing a few of the issues that I would like to discuss here tonight, the issues that have arisen for me from the commentary that has greeted the publication of my book, and the broader discussion around the relevance and meaning of feminism today. For what has come under scrutiny this past year is the kind of feminism within which women still want to organise and the kind of society that we still believe our political action has a shot at creating.

To set the record straight, Helen Garner's book was not the inspiration for that self-reflection. It may have been the lifted elbow that propelled me into the debate, and it may have been the cry that rallied other voices to her call, but feminism's analyses and self analysis has a much longer history than one very personal and unhelpfully idiosyncratic response to a moment of alleged sexual assault at a Melbourne college.

But we do tend to beat ourselves up about the dissent, and we also allow others to get away with a great amount of feminism bashing. When Germaine Greer – the Mother Mary MacKillop of feminism – visited Australia late last year, the media reports of her one press conference quoted her as attacking the “next generation of publishing feminists” in Australia as taking themselves too seriously, being a bit convinced of their own wonderfulness and needing to be spun on their axis a bit.

She was quoted as saying that these feminists were trying to kill off their feminist mothers, and it was important not to want to attack them in return, for fear of falling into their trap. She did indeed say all this.

But in typical Germaine style – which is to hurl a grenade at the same time that you offer a bouquet – she said a lot more, too. None of it made it into the press reports. She said:

I know what they are up to, I think, and it's okay with me. They are just kicking ass, taking names, talking loud and drawing a crowd and I think it's a good strategy . . . that's really how most of us ancient feminists feel about them: good on them, go for it. We can dodge the flack our end, no problem.

Now, I do not tell this story as a way of feeling good about myself. I would not wish a rebuke from Greer on anyone. (Well almost anyone). But the dissent that Greer herself knows has long existed between feminists clearly excites something in the male mind of the press – and I think Eva Cox got closest to understanding what this might be when she said the spectacle seemed to appeal to the media because it was a kind of “purple jelly wrestling”. Perhaps, like the socialist left of the ALP in Victoria and the ALP NSW right, we should get used to our wranglings being seen as a kind of spectator sport.

But it is hard to accept. Karen Green, the Melbourne author of the meticulously researched book, *The Woman of Reason; Feminism, Humanism, and Political Thought*, suggests that it is axiomatic that the nature of feminist debates bear the same pathology as mother/daughter fights. Either the two sides shrink from any kind of disharmony for fear of this disagreement being seen as betrayal or a lack of love, or the fight is so bitter, personal and complete that the two sides never speak again.

Carmel O'Loughlin, the South Australian director for the Office of the Status of Women, put this point to me a little less bleakly. Like sisters, feminists tend to really fight when they have something to fight about. But also like sisters, they will fight to the death for each other when they need to.

My view is that like other political, social and economic doctrines – even ideologies – feminism has to keep wrestling with itself: to keep its strategies focussed, its goals the correct ones, its methods relevant. To realise, as Galbraith says, that socially desirable change is regularly denied out of well-recognised self interest, and to work against this complacency.

In this past year, I have seen that the points of such dissent and dissection have roamed from the intellectually arcane to the depressingly urgent. In an article published in September in the *Good Weekend* magazine, Dr Anne Summers canvassed the issues raised in my book, and in Kathy Bail's edited *DIY Feminism*. She said she was heartened to see women moving into print to reinvest feminism with another wave of thought and analysis. She was cheered by the political sophistication espoused by the women Bail and I interviewed. But she failed to understand one thing: how could a generation of young women who dressed sexily and insisted on being able to dress sexily, believe that uninvited attention was an outrageous – and totally unexpected – imposition on their freedom?

To raise this question, Summers insisted, was not the same as trotting out the patently sexist belief that women who dressed sexily

were asking for it: it was to raise the issue of prudence in a clearly dangerous world.

A part of me resents even having to deal with this issue: the reason being that there are far more pressing issues for feminism to deal with right now. The other is that I thought one hundred years of feminism had proven that appearance was one of the greatest road blocks some blokes could throw in the paths of our painstakingly well-turned arguments.

But I will make two points. One is that there is a world of difference between inviting attention and suffering assault. The entire criminal system of this country is predicated on that difference. And I do not mean male sexual assault against women – the law is not gender specific here.

A woman in a slashed skirt and string top and push-up bra clearly wants to be seen. To then argue that she is crying false if she finds a roving hand too great an imposition is to wilfully blur the boundaries between play and something more serious. It also trivialises the clear and unambiguous distinction that the law makes in this regard.

Most women do expect things can get out of hand if they put themselves in risky situations. Some would argue that a young woman in an evening gown at her school's celebratory dinner would not fit this category.

The other point is that the only way one can bear out Summer's argument is to find that most – if not all – reported cases of assault (ranging from minor to major) have been perpetrated against women who were dressed up to the nines.

They are not. They are, in ninety per cent of cases, perpetrated in the home by someone known to the victim or at their place of work, by someone known to the victim.

The most recent, widely reported sexual assaults in Victoria were against an 80-year-old woman in her own flat; a woman in her 30s in her own flat; and a woman in her forties in a supermarket car park. She was wearing an old tracksuit. In this rather drab, considerably less exciting context, the supposedly linked issue of sexy dressing and sexual assault becomes, I would suggest, meaningless.

One other issue that has been raised in discussions following the publication of these books is one that troubles me clearly as much as it does my interrogators.

In interviews with the dozens of women I spoke to for *Generation f*, the concept of "feminisms" rather than "feminism" was raised again and again. My feminism is not the same as yours, women would tell me. The philosophy has become a plurality of views and strategies. You must not talk about feminism as one, homogenous movement.

Their words, of course, spoke as loudly as their actions. There are indeed myriad kinds of feminism extant now. Some can barely tolerate

each other, yet all of them, when you get down to it, still share the same defining, first principles that the movement has always stood by.

But the question is asked, and I falter when I'm required to give an answer to it. If feminism is now pretty much anything a young woman who calls herself a feminist wants it to be, then whither the movement? And how can a disparate collection of political or cultural aspirations ever expect to come together to work for political change? It is a good question, and it has raised what should probably become the subject of serious thought for feminists in Australia.

What has emerged in the aftermath of this debate about harassment and feminism is an individualist line of thinking that for me has worrying parallels with the prevailing economic climate in this country. In a sense, this tendency only mirrors society's broader fragmentation into more private, more individualistic notions of citizenry. The definition of what makes a good citizen, or at the very least a mere member of a society, is less defined now by membership of an organisation, as the main political parties, as trade unions and as social organisations such as country associations and lions clubs will tell you from their declining numbers.

But in broader, macro-economic terms the shift mirrors the free-market thinking that now clearly pervades even our philosophies. For example, in Victoria now if university students want a women's office or to run a student newspaper, the Victorian State Government says, as it introduces its anti-student unionism legislation, they will have to pay for it. The government will no longer allow a collective support of such activities through the student amenities fee paid by each student. If these issues are important to students, they will find the money. If they are not that important then they won't pay for them. Let the market forces prevail.

One of Garner's views on harassment and the response to it is similarly anti-collective.

It suits the interests of many people to see a particular incident of harassment not in terms of power and its abuse but as a moment of misunderstanding between two people: one male, one female. One is possession of one kind of power, but the other is possession of another youthful, female power.

When harassment is re-figured like this in terms of a level-playing field of generically equal human desire, and when personal power is self-satisfyingly defined as every bit as significant as institutional power then we are again in the realm of the free-market forces. Let the strongest prevail, this argument insists, with the last person left standing.

This sort of thinking is what feminism as a fragmented philosophy will have to counter, even as its very fragmentation mirrors the ills that it will have to contend. I worry that without a clear sense of contiguous

missions, as it were, we feminists could – not do but could – run the risk of diluting our authority and power, eventually disintegrating into self-absorbed sub-sets of each other. We could also run the risk of mistaking popular culture for politics: seeing the transitory features of various subcultures as the defining features of a political worldview, which is not only debilitating, it is somewhat trivial.

But in the end, what gives me comfort is that our intermittent, internecine discussions about the definition of us are only ever that: intermittent, and they in no way detract from the work being done by the women that I admire, their clearly defined political and social purposes, from whose examples I draw great strength.

Many of the women to whom I spoke for my book were indeed scrutinising the politics and the positions of their feminist forebears. They were, in Victoria for example, reassessing the usefulness of a highly bureaucratic style of feminist activism in a time when bureaucracies are being slashed and burned and government ministers took advice only from their Premier. What's the point of infiltrating the bureaucracies in a time of completely centralised power?

In a place where political dissent is regarded as impotent entertainment, the time-honoured tradition of street marches and striking is also being reassessed.

As the Victorian Crimes Compensation fund is unwound and its benefits diminished, lawyers working with victims of violent assault (who can usually only obtain financial compensation from this fund) are re-assessing the faith that a highly successful generation of feminist activism previously had in this avenue. These women not only have, I believe, the right to judge this work, the work done before them and that which they inherit (as theirs surely will be judges in time) but they have the duty to do so.

The social conditions in which feminism finds itself today – in a cynical time that can coin a phrase like “political correctness” to silence those who have a problem with racism, sexism or discrimination, or attacks on the independence of the judiciary or attacks on the freedom of the press – means that feminism has to find for itself even smarter ways to go about getting its job done. It is always a little disheartening to learn that this job still includes:

- funding refuge centres for abused women
- providing health services for women of non-English speaking backgrounds
- ensuring that abortion is not removed from the Medicare schedule on the basis of one independent MP's moral view of the world

All these things make up what we still call the frontline of feminist activism, and they are the building blocks of that good, humane feminist society towards which so many of us still aspire. The aims are

not utopian, they are not predicated upon the oppression of one group in order to achieve the liberation of another.

And they are not always agreeable, at least not to those whose self-interest is dependent upon a view of the world that studiously regards society through the most comfortable and relaxing, apolitical and institutionally simplistic viewfinder they can lay their hands on.

With that kind of prevailing view the risk we run is that concepts like equity and justice become ideals available only to those tough enough and privileged enough to reach out and grab them.

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Photo - David Karonidis

Gillian Helfgott

The movie *Shine* is the Australian film industry's 1997 hit. It's musical hero, David Helfgott, has rocketed to prominence as a result. The story of David Helfgott's success has also revealed that his wife Gillian is one of the most important figures in his rehabilitation. David Helfgott, musically brilliant but fragmented socially and mentally, is the subject of Gillian Helfgott's book *Love You To Bits and Pieces* (Penguin 1996). In it, Gillian Helfgott has charted the struggles and joys of her life with David. On Tuesday 28 January 1997, Gillian Helfgott gave a glimpse of that life in an address to The Sydney Institute.

MY LIFE WITH

DAVID HELFGOTT

Gillian Helfgott

It gives me great pleasure to talk about my life with David and my book *Love You to Bits and Pieces*. I sat down and wrote it and many people have asked me why. I'm not an author; I'm an astrologer.

A few of you may have heard of a film called *Shine*. It was inspired by David's life and we had a very close association with Scott Hicks, the director, during the making of the film. When it premiered in January last year in Utah, David was giving a recital in Coff's Harbour which was rather a long way from Robert Redford's Sundance Festival in Utah. Scott rang me after the screening and his voice was in awe. He couldn't believe the response. He said it was so wonderful – the clapping, the tears, the rejoicing. In fact the head of one of the largest studios in Hollywood was crying so much he had to go and sit in his limousine for a while.

Difficult relationships with fathers have sparked many memories. We have a very fine psychologist and author who lives just a couple of kilometres from us in Bellingen called Steve Biddulph. He wrote a wonderful book called *Manhood*. He says that about 95 per cent of men have problems in relationships with their fathers, and since *Shine* has been released, so many people have spoken to us of these problems I tend to think his figure is accurate.

When Scott rang he was so excited. He said the reception of *Shine* was beyond his wildest expectations, and after the screening when he went up to answer questions every one wanted to know what David was doing now? What was he like? Was it true that he asked Gillian to marry him so quickly? Scott warned me to be prepared to answer a whole lot of questions. So I said, I did that with David all the time. He's always asking questions.

A few months later when the publicity grew and grew, Scott rang me and said, "Why don't you write a book?" And I thought about it. *Shine* had ended in 1984, which was the year David and I had married and he had made his comeback. So much has happened in the twelve years since. I thought, well, why not have a go at it. I sat down and

started to write. I wrote and wrote and wrote. After I had done about 10,000 words I said many prayers of thanks to whoever invented the computer and particularly the man who invented the spell check! To be able to let things flow on the computer and know it's going to flash up all these alternatives when you run through the spell check, allowed my imagination free-rein but it was of course mainly my memories.

So, after eight weeks we had about 80,000 words. Then my wonderful daughter-in-law, Alissa Tanskaya, edited and reshaped it. We collaborated and she did a lot of the interviewing with David and we spent two weeks just talking to him. It was wonderful how we got his theory on the world and so many of his personal thoughts. Since then he just wants to talk to everybody. It's so lovely to see him flowering.

Life with David? Well it is explained fairly fully in the book. I met David in Perth and I guess I fell in love with him at first sight. He waited till the second time after he saw me to ask me to marry him. But then he is Taurus and a little bit slow on some things, and I was tempted to say yes. However, I thought that was ridiculous. So I went back to Sydney, but within weeks I realised just how much I loved him and so back to Perth and we began our journey together.

People ask me what David is like? Well there's not enough adjectives to describe him. He's mercurial, he's very loving, highly intelligent. Don't ever play trivial pursuit with him; he keeps telling the opposition the answers. His general knowledge is rather extraordinary. Of course, he has an extraordinary musical talent and a wonderful simplistic view of life and he has a child-like quality. To see David with young children is very beautiful. One day we had a group of school children come to our house and David played for them. When he had a break, he wandered down the long paddock in front of the house and the children followed him. It reminded me of the Pied Piper. It was so beautiful to see the children's trust in him, and their ease. I remember a four year old asking her mother, "Is David a kid or a grown up?" I think he's Peter Pan in the disguise of a concert pianist.

He is a man who is obsessed by his music. It is his enormous love. He says he was born on this earth to play the piano. How lucky in some ways David is, that he knows what his journey should be and that he is on it. He's had many years in the wilderness, but even in those years, David had a strength from the love of his music within him nourishing him and holding on to that tenuous thread. The music fills his whole life, and it is so beautiful to be with him.

David's exhausting. He fills your life so completely. I always thought I was one of the biggest chatterboxes. My school reports have always said "Gillian is a disturbing element". I have two Piscean children and when I think of the noise I created around these quiet, reflective people – vacuuming under their legs, disturbing them, when

all they wanted to do was quietly read and meditate or listen to music, I cringe! When I married David I thought, well there's justice in the world after all. He makes me seem quiet. Yet a lot of his talking is his verbal visualisation. And visualisation is so important to David.

When *Shine* was released, people asked me if it had changed my life. I can only describe the experience as being tied to a Saturn rocket and going completely into orbit. We really have hardly touched base for months. In February we go overseas and we don't come back till November. But so many wonderful things have happened because of *Shine*. David's career has been accelerated; four sell-out concerts at the Sydney Opera House hasn't been achieved by a classical musician before. There is the wonderful sense of joy that he is bringing to so many people with his music. He's drawing a whole new audience to classical music. People in the record shops now are quite prepared for somebody coming in and saying, "I want a copy of *Rak III*." It's wonderful. So many of the people who have attended David's concerts around Australia are there for the first time, and a lot of them are young people. David is taking them on a new musical journey. There is a tremendous amount of healing coming out of David's performances and from the film. I'd like to share a couple of experiences with you.

After the last recital in the Opera House, when everybody had left, a woman came up to me at the end and said, "Could I speak to you privately?" I said, yes. She told me she had had a breakdown some months earlier and been in a psychiatric hospital. She and other patients had gone as a group to see *Shine*. At the end of the film when she came out of the cinema they stood there and looked at each other and said, "Now that we've seen David and now that we've seen this film it has given us hope that someone can love us." What Scott Hicks has achieved in that film was a very sensitive portrait of a vulnerable person, and he made the film with an integrity that is touching people in this way.

David gave a recital in Nambour, Queensland, and a woman came to me again at the end of the performance saying she was a musician. She had had a breakdown a couple of years earlier. She was a professional bassoonist. When she had her breakdown she couldn't go near her bassoon. She was fractured. Her music wasn't with her. And I thought of David's words, of how his music had sustained him through the dark period; even though he didn't have a piano in the first years eventually he had an old piano – at least it had black and white keys on it. But this woman was completely shut off from her music. She'd sat there and listened to David play. Then she said to me, "I now have the courage to go home and pick up my bassoon again." And I hope she's playing daily now.

We don't know at times the influence events can have on people. David and I have been inundated with letters. People open their hearts

in such a trusting way to us about their pain and about their joy. I take this as an enormous compliment that they feel they can trust us to share these experiences with us. The whole subject of mental health is a very difficult one. People say to me that David should never have been in hospital. It's very easy to pass judgment and criticise. It's very easy to criticise governments. In my experience with David what he needed was love and 24-hour companionship. No government can possibly provide that. It's up to us to give our love and caring to those that are fractured, that are so vulnerable.

Our community needs a far greater sense of understanding and tolerance towards people who have different mannerisms. David is a very unusual person. A lot of people are mystified by him. He hugs everybody in sight. If he were here with me now, the front row would be completely kissed out! He really gave Bob Carr a lot of kisses the other night. Kim Beazley accepted the kisses more readily, but it was so beautiful to see David (as Scott Hicks would say) "work the room". Certainly not intentionally but with a great love of everybody. David went through so many periods of rejection that he will never miss saying hello to people in a group. He will always speak equally to everybody and always call them by name. He doesn't forget their names. He's got a memory like an elephant.

Our life is extraordinarily full. We have just done a concert tour around Australia. I have to say in the twelve and a half years of being with David I've never had a boring day. And I would love to have a boring day. I can't see one coming up this side of Christmas but we're certainly going to have a lot of excitement.

When *Shine* was being made, we went to Adelaide. We saw just one section of the filming. It is very awkward for actors to have the living person standing by, but during the filming of the scene of David's comeback concert – one of the most important days of my life – I asked if I could go. There was going to be 200 extras there and I thought I could just get lost in the crowd. The producer said yes. I arrived there with David's two sisters, Susie and Louise, and I was standing in the foyer and David was back at the hotel. A figure ran by and I thought, how did David get here? I started to run after him. Then I thought, wait a minute, this can't be true. Of course then Geoffrey Rush turned around. It was so lifelike.

At the last shot of that particular scene where Geoffrey Rush is standing with his hands over his face – David had made his comeback and the tears are running down his face – I was sitting up in the balcony with Louise and Susie. I was crying "David David". They said, "Gillian, that's Geoffrey, sit down." Since then I have almost felt I have two husbands. After the filming I wrote a fax to Geoffrey expressing my deepest gratitude for the sensitivity and the wonderful portrayal of David. He captured all David's lovely eccentric quirkiness, but didn't

rob him of his dignity. Of course Geoffrey's exceedingly brilliant portrayal of David has been acclaimed around the world. He's won the Golden Globe Award for Best Actor, the New York Critics Award and the Los Angeles Critics Award. There's an Oscar nomination, at least, looming for him.

When we virtually handed over our lives to Scott Hicks ten years ago, it was a big decision. Scott Hicks spent ten years on and off working on *Shine* – a wonderful example of never letting go of a dream.

Our journey this year is going to be a huge one. We are going to America and those of you who have read *Love You to Bits and Pieces* or seen *Shine* will know that when David was 14, Isaac Stern invited him to go and study in America. When his father wouldn't let him go, he never really explained why to David properly – why he wouldn't let him go. David went through many years of turmoil, haunted by the fact that perhaps if he'd gone to America he wouldn't have gone into a mental wilderness. If David had gone to America he would have been a 15 year old student on a very limited budget and he would have been seeking to find his way.

On the 18 March David will be playing at the Lincoln Centre in New York. He will be going in there holding his head high. One of the things that my book, but to a far greater extent *Shine*, has done for David, is to give him a far greater sense of his own self worth. We thank people on the phone, but we don't always put it in writing. It's so important that we do record our deepest gratitudes, our deepest emotions. So I wrote to Scott and I thanked him. I said, "You've given David something beyond price, you've given him a far greater sense of his own self worth."



Photo - David Karamidis

Ian Macfarlane

Ian Macfarlane took up his post as Governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia on 18 September 1996. Combining history, economics and politics, Ian Macfarlane addressed The Sydney Institute on Tuesday 11 February 1997. In his talk he argued that those who say the economics of the 1950s and 1960s are the answer for the 1990s, should first have a very good understanding of what those policies were.

THE ECONOMICS

OF NOSTALGIA

Ian Macfarlane

It is a great pleasure to be speaking at The Sydney Institute, which has done so much over recent years to keep alive informed discussion of public affairs and the arts. In keeping with this tradition, I have chosen to speak on a subject with a historical, economic and political theme. I would like to look back at the 1950s and 1960s, and evaluate some of the lessons that people take from this period. The further my professional life proceeds, the more value I see in a good knowledge of economic history, even if it is so recent that most of us have lived and worked through it. As you will gather, my views on history are much closer to George Santayana's than to Henry Ford's.

There can be no quibble with the proposition that macro-economic performance in the immediate post-war period, which for present purposes I will refer to as the 1950s and 1960s, was far superior to any period before or after. This has led a lot of people to use it as a basis for proposing economic policies for today. They look back at how things were done in the 1950s and 1960s, and say, "if only we did it the same way today, our macro-economic performance would be as good as it was then". This approach has some merit but, if we are to use it, it is very important that we get our facts straight about what the policies actually were in the 1950s and 1960s.

There are two propositions of policy relevance that are frequently made about this period. The first one is that the macro-economic success at that time was due to the use of activist and expansionary fiscal and monetary policies. The second is that the world economy was moving along very smoothly in the post-war period, with everything under control, until hit by the external shock of the OPEC-induced oil price rise in late 1973 (and again in 1979). I would like to analyse these two propositions with particular reference to Australia, but in doing so it will be necessary to bring in a lot of international economic and political events, particularly those occurring in the United States.

Macro-economic performance in the 1950s and 1960s

It is not necessary to spend much time demonstrating how successful this period was in terms of macro-economic performance because no-one disputes it. Table 1 shows that the real growth rate for the world economy was more than twice as high in the 1950-1973 period than in the previous 80 years. In Australia there was also a major improvement, although less than a doubling. Inflation, which had been negligible on average until the Second World War, rose to about 4 per cent in the 1950-1973 period, with the average being pushed up by the Korean War period and the early 1970s. At other times it was a good deal lower, and even with these periods included, it was moderate enough to permit economic expansion for most of the period. Unemployment remained low throughout the period, although there was some cyclical movement at times. Overall, macro-economic performance was considerably better in this period than in any time before or since, which has prompted economic historians such as Maddison (1991) to refer to this period as the "Golden Age".

Table 1:
Indicators of World^(a) and Australian^(b) Macro Economic Performance
(average annual increase)

	GDP	CPI
1870-1950	2.3 (2.9)	0.1 ^(c) (1.3)
1950-1973	4.9 (4.7)	4.1 (4.6)
1973-1980	2.6 (3.1)	7.3 (9.7)

(a) Sixteen largest OECD countries; (b) Australian figures in brackets; (c) Peacetime years.
Source: Maddison (1991).

There were a number of factors behind this impressive economic performance, but time and space limit me to mentioning only the main ones. The four most important, I believe, are as follows:

- (i) There was a big gap to be made up following the Depression and the Second World War. The 1950s and 1960s was a period of post-war reconstruction or "catch-up" for most countries. The largest growth pick-up occurred in the countries most devastated by the war, such as Germany, Italy, Japan and Austria, and the least pronounced (although still significant) were in the United States, Canada, Switzerland, Sweden and Australia.

- (ii) Although populations and governments were eager for economic growth, there was widespread restraint in economic behaviour. The privations endured during the Depression and the War meant that as incomes rose, a high proportion was saved. Inflationary expectations too had been conditioned by decades of nearly zero inflation, which showed up in modest pricing and wage setting behaviour for much of the period. Some commentators also stress the political cohesion among western countries as a result of the ever-present influence of the Cold War.
- (iii) International trade was liberalised and exports and imports grew rapidly. This was a sharp contrast with the inter-war period. Maddison says "perhaps the least controversial assertion one can make about the Golden Age is that it involved a remarkable revival of liberalism in international transactions. Trade and payment barriers erected in the 1930s and during the War were removed. The new-style liberalism was buttressed by effective arrangements for regular consultation between Western Countries and for mutual financial assistance" (IMF, OECD and GATT [now WTO]).
- (iv) Governments conducted good macro-economic policies with a greater emphasis on economic growth than in previous decades. In a number of countries the new-found commitment to growth and low unemployment was enshrined in legislation. In others it was less formal, but in nearly every country the first decades after the Second World War were characterised by well-balanced and successful macro-economic policies. A more detailed examination of these macro-economic policies, particularly in Australia, is the subject of my next section.

The role of macro-economic policies

There is no doubt that the dominant principle behind macro-economic policy changed after the Second World War in line with Keynesian teaching, but the change occurred more quickly in some countries than others.

The main change was that fiscal policy was to be used actively to promote economic growth by deliberately incurring budget deficits at times of weak economic activity. Fiscal policy and monetary policy together were termed demand management policy, and they were to be adjusted to smooth the business cycle, to increase growth and to achieve full employment. In Australia's case, this approach was enshrined in a document – the 1945 White Paper, "Full Employment in Australia".

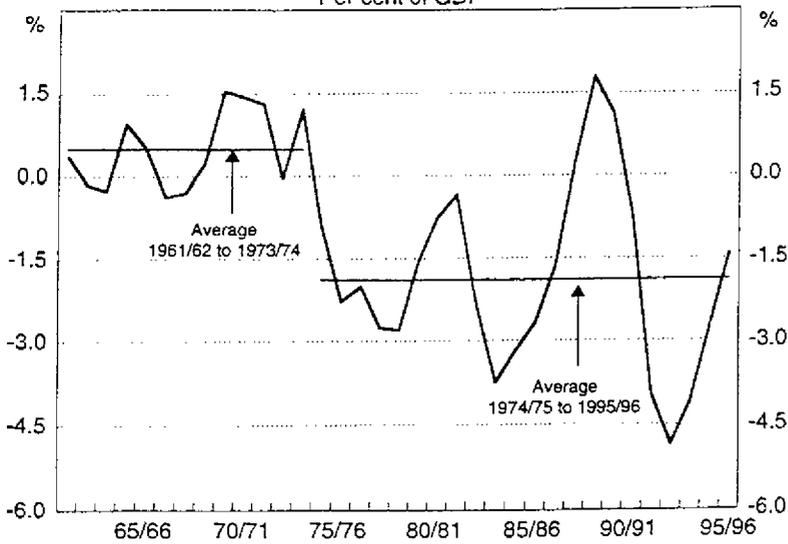
This approach to policy was very successful in that it achieved its aims of high growth rates and low unemployment for several decades, and it did so with generally low rates of inflation.¹ The achievement was all the greater, given that the 1950s contained a major shock in the form of the Korean War commodity price boom. This high level of success has led many people to assume that policy must have been operated with a high degree of activism, i.e. by choosing very expansionary settings of policy. But this was not the case. For most of the period we are considering, demand management policy was quite restrained and, where necessary, restrictive. Certainly its guiding principle was Keynesian, but it was operated in a very balanced way and was, in any case, subject to an important constraint, which I will come to later.

That this was the case should not be a surprise to people who remember the period. For example, the Fadden "Horror Budget" of 1951/52 and the "Credit Squeeze" of 1961, which nearly cost the Menzies Government office, have gone into folklore. Of course, there were also periods where policy was expansionary, but on average the result was relatively balanced. While growth was high, on average, there was also a business cycle operating during this period, with a couple of reasonably clearly defined recessions and booms.

The fact that policy was well balanced can be shown for fiscal policy by a couple of graphs. Unfortunately, comparable data do not go back earlier than 1961/62, so we will have to lose the 1950s from our comparisons. Diagram 1 shows the best general measure of the underlying budget deficit. In the twelve years from 1961/62 to 1973/74 the budget was, on average, in surplus to the extent of half a per cent of GDP, and the fluctuations around the average were not very large. In the period since then, the budget has nearly always been in deficit, with an average deficit of nearly 2 per cent of GDP. You can see the three attempts made to bring it back towards surplus – the first one when Mr Howard was Treasurer, the second one under Mr Keating as Treasurer, and the third one which is being continued at the moment by Mr Costello. In summary, it is the more recent period that could be characterised as activist and expansionary in that there are bigger swings in the budgetary position and, on average, it tends to show a much bigger deficit.

Another measure of fiscal activism is the size of government expenditure relative to the economy. It will come as no surprise to see that general government outlays relative to GDP were much lower in the 1960s than they are now (Diagram 2); in the earlier period they accounted for about 25 per cent of GDP, but over the last two decades they have averaged 34 per cent of GDP.

Budget Balance* Per cent of GDP



* General government on an underlying basis.

Diagram 1

General Government Outlays Per cent of GDP

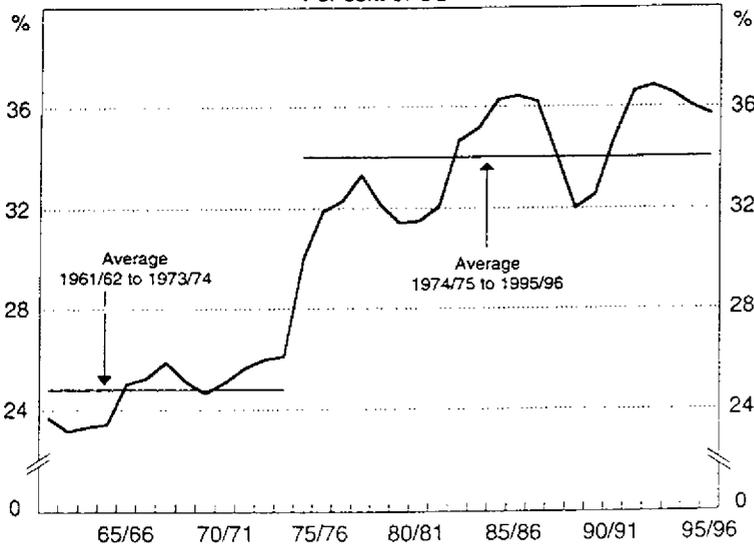


Diagram 2

The stance of monetary policy is more difficult to analyse because interest rates cannot be used as the measure of comparison. This is because before the early 1980s the financial system was heavily regulated, with the government imposing interest rate ceilings on most forms of lending. Tightenings and easings in monetary policy showed up largely through credit rationing – the ease or difficulty in obtaining a loan at a given interest rate. This would be familiar to people who can remember the difficulty of obtaining a housing mortgage at that time. The best way of judging whether monetary policy was tight or loose in such a system was to see how fast it allowed money and credit to grow. The growth of the money supply is shown in Diagram 3, and again we see relatively low and stable expansion during the 1950s and 1960s (except for the Korean War boom), before the turmoil starts in the 1970s (in this case, the very early 1970s).

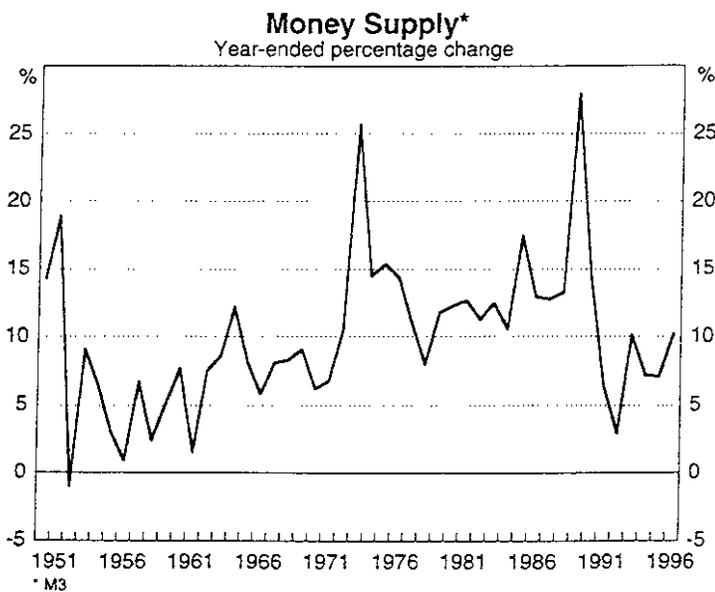


Diagram 3

I referred earlier to the fact that monetary and fiscal policy had to operate under an important constraint during the 1950s and 1960s. The constraint to which I am referring is the gold exchange standard, whereby virtually all OECD countries fixed their exchange rate to the US dollar, which in turn fixed to gold. In Australia's case, our exchange rate to the US dollar did not change between 1949 and 1971. This was in a way the centrepiece of our economic policy. Monetary policy and fiscal policy could not get too expansionary without either inflation or the balance of payments threatening the exchange rate. This mechanism effectively meant that our macro-economic policies (and those of

most OECD economies) could not get too far out of line with the policies pursued by the US government. A recognition of this link means that if we wish to fully understand what happened in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, we have to look more closely at the trends in US economic policy. This also means that we will have to stop looking at the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s as a whole, and instead divide it into two quite different sub-periods.

The end of the Golden Age

The role of the United States is crucial here. Despite its having enacted the Employment Act of 1946, the United States continued to run reasonably conservative demand management policies through the Truman and Eisenhower years and even in the early part of the Kennedy presidency. In this period US economic policy came in for a fair bit of criticism from economists, particularly outside the United States, for being too cautious. There was some basis to this criticism in that US policy makers did seem to be less keen to expand than their counterparts in other countries, particularly in Europe.

American attitudes changed in the early 1960s, but nothing concrete occurred until the Johnson years. The turning point was the tax cuts introduced in 1964 and 1965 which were described by one of their architects – Arthur Okun – as “the largest stimulative fiscal action ever undertaken by the federal government in peacetime . . . the first major stimulative measure adopted in the post-war era at a time when the economy was neither in, nor threatened imminently by, recession. And, unlike earlier tax reductions, they were taken in a budgetary situation marked by the twin facts that the federal budget was in deficit and federal expenditures were rising”. This certainly got the United States moving and was soon followed by increased defence expenditure occasioned by the Vietnam War, and other government expenditure associated with the Great Society programs. Some of the proponents of the original tax cuts then argued for tax increases but, not surprisingly, they found these were harder to put into place than were the earlier tax cuts.

In the second half of the 1960s and early 1970s the US economy grew very quickly and inflation began to rise. For a time it was held in check by the Fed’s willingness to run tight monetary policy, but with the appointment of Arthur Burns as Fed Chairman, monetary policy became more accommodating. President Nixon found that expansionary policies were popular, and continued in the same vein as his predecessor.² By 1971, with the United States running a large current account deficit, it could no longer hold its commitment to gold and the US dollar was effectively devalued against gold and against other major currencies. There was now no longer an anchor to the international financial system. Thus, the post-war period, should really be divided into two sub-periods, with the US tax cuts of 1965 marking a

convenient dividing line. Thereafter, US policy became expansionary, and it ceased to provide a constraint on the actions of other countries.³

Table 2:
Unemployment Rates in G10 Countries and Australia

	1965*	1973*
USA	4.5	4.9
Japan	1.3	1.4
Germany	0.7	1.2
France	1.3	2.7
Italy	5.4	6.7
UK	1.4	2.1
Canada	3.9	5.6
Sweden	1.2	2.5
Belguim	2.5	3.7
Netherlands	1.0	3.9
Average of above	2.1	3.1
Australia	1.6	2.3

*For 1965, figures are the average for the year, for 1973, they are the average for the first three quarters (i.e. pre-OPEC I).

It is instructive to see what happened in a range of countries during this second period, that is between the turning point in US policy in 1965 and the OPEC shock at the end of 1973. The story is very similar for all OECD countries. Their economies continued to grow strongly, but they were not able to get their unemployment any lower than the already low starting point (see Table 2). The main effect of these expansionary policies was to push inflation to levels that were not consistent with sustainable economic growth. As a general rule, most countries' unemployment rates rose slightly, but their inflation rates doubled (see Table 3). By 1972 and 1973 the world economy was in an inflationary boom. How did Australia fare in this period?

Table 3:
Unemployment Rates in G10 Countries and Australia
Year-ended percentage change*

	1965	1973
USA	1.7	6.9
Japan	5.9	12.6
Germany	3.8	6.9
France	2.3	7.4
Italy	3.3	11.8
UK	4.4	9.2
Canada	2.8	8.2
Sweden	6.7	9.1
Belguim	4.0	8.8
Netherlands	6.8	8.4
Average of above	3.2	8.4
Australia	4.1	10.4

*Year to December 1965 and to September 1973 (i.e. pre-OPEC I).

Our story was very similar to the general pattern, although the deterioration in inflation was more marked here. Our inflation rate, which had been about 4 per cent in the mid-1960s, reached 10.4 per cent in the year to the September quarter of 1973. That means that we had already got our inflation rate into double digits before OPEC came along to deliver a further inflationary impulse (see Diagram 4). Our problems were compounded by the inflationary boom that the world found itself in in 1972 and 1973. Commodity prices were rising rapidly, as were our export receipts. With the monetary policy instruments then available, and with the fixed exchange rate, it was not possible to quarantine the monetary effects, and the money supply was soon growing at more than 20 per cent per annum. We did not help ourselves very much either with the way we set wages. The National Wage Case of December 1970 resulted in a 6 per cent increase in awards, and the metals industry award of July 1971 added 9 per cent to award wages through that year (when inflation was 5.1 per cent).

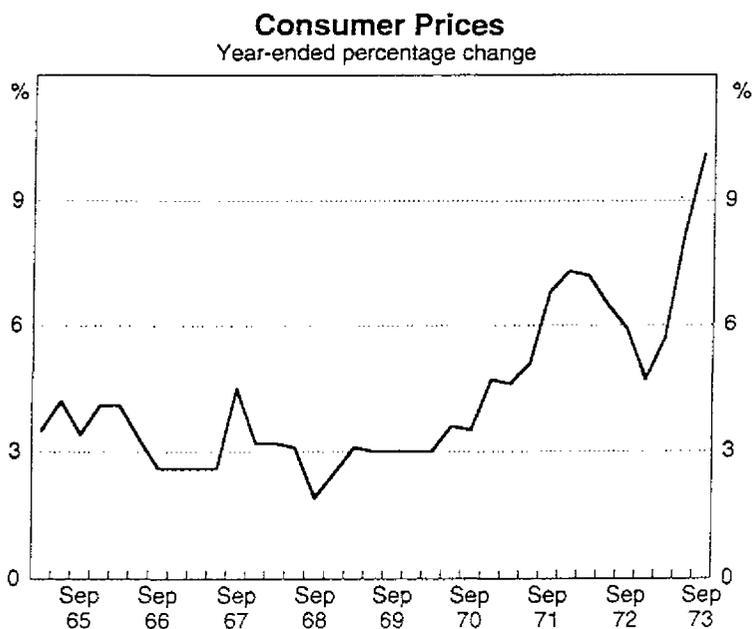


Diagram 4

The point of all this analysis is to answer the second proposition that was presented in the introduction. Was the world achieving good macro-economic performance until hit by the OPEC shocks? The answer is clearly no. In the period after 1965, policies became too ambitious and too expansionary. In colloquial terms, we all lost the plot. Of course, it is easy for me to say these things now because I have

the benefit of hindsight – it was much harder at the time to see that we were overstretching ourselves.

By 1973, the world economy already had an entrenched inflationary problem, not just a temporary one as in the Korean War period. Whether OPEC had come along or not, it would still have been necessary to re-examine demand management policies and do something about restoring the sort of conditions that existed in the 1945-65 period. History shows that what we got instead was an oil price shock to add to our already considerable self-imposed troubles, and so spent the next decade-and-a-half trying to return to some sort of reasonable equilibrium. I do not want to say anything about that period because that is another story.

Conclusion

The period that is loosely described as the 1950s and 1960s really covers the nearly three decades between the end of the Second World War and the first oil price shock known as OPEC I. Macro-economic policies were successful for most of this time in that they avoided the deflation that had characterised the 1930s, and yet did not move too far in the inflationary direction.

However, a closer examination of the whole period suggests that there were two quite distinct sub-periods. The first, from 1945 to 1965 or thereabouts, was the true Golden Age in that sustainable growth with low inflation was achieved against a background of macro-economic policies that did not try to be too ambitious in the short run. The second period, from 1965 to 1973, looked promising for a time, but was ultimately a period of policy failure. Macro-economic policy tried to achieve too much and forgot about the need for sustainability. It ended up with the world economy in an inflationary boom, which set the scene for oil prices to rise sharply, as had all other commodity prices during the boom. A policy reversal aimed at restoring the more balanced approach of the 1945-65 period would have been needed even without the shock of OPEC.

Endnotes

¹ Most economists would object to an approach which sought to attribute successful economic growth over a couple of decades to demand management policies. They would point out that demand management policies, insofar as they impact on economic activity, are meant to offset cyclical movements rather than lift the long-run growth rate. The latter is much more a function of labour force growth, productivity, and the various incentives that operate to encourage the expansion of physical and human capital. The economists' point is correct as a general principle, but the effects of demand management policies can at times be long-lasting. No-one would deny that in the 1930s, for example, deflationary demand management policies had a long-lasting effect. Be that as it may, the point of this talk is to argue *against* the proposition that a particular type of demand management policy was responsible for growth achieved over a couple of decades.

² During this period there was also a belief that the business cycle was a thing of the past, and there should be no future recessions (i.e. periods of falling GDP). It was also held that the aim of macro-economic policy was to keep output growth continuously at potential, and any shortfall was viewed as a policy failure. (See Okun [1970] for both of these views). Finally, it was argued that economists should not have a view on the size of the budget deficit; it should be as large as necessary to continuously maintain full employment. All three of these propositions were the conventional wisdom of the OECD when I joined it in 1972, but are now rarely heard.

³ For good descriptions of US economic policy during this period, see Okun (1970), Samuelson (1996) and De Long (1996).

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Photo - David Karamidis

Paul Keating

On 18 February 1997, the Hon Paul Keating launched Anne Henderson's *Mary MacKillop's Sisters: A Life Unveiled* (HarperCollins 1997). In his address Paul Keating reflected on his own education in his early years with Mary MacKillop's Sisters of St Joseph. The sisters, he said, had made a significant impact on Australia and were a fundamental part of the whole ethos of "a fair go or our sense of social justice and social inclusion". Paul Keating was introduced by Sister Mary Cresp RSJ, Executive Director of the Australian Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes. Publisher Angelo Loukakis responded on behalf of HarperCollins.

MARY MACKILLOP'S

SISTERS - BOOK LAUNCH

Paul Keating

Introductory comments – Mary Cresp RSJ

It is my privilege to introduce to you Paul Keating. However, I have a problem. How does one go about introducing someone whom everyone already knows! The whole of Australia knows this boy from Bankstown who became Prime Minister and, in the words of Laurie Oakes, “dominated the political stage for a decade and a half”. Through biographies written of him we have been introduced to his family – his brother and sisters and his parents – people of faith, courage and hard work who passed on to Paul the moral and ethical values which have stood by him throughout his career. Over the years we have come to know his wife, Anita – whose determination and belief have held his own family together during pressures that would test any couple. Paul’s children have been of prime importance to him, and I, like many others, have witnessed how much he values a close relationship with them, making room for them in his life, even when it meant that they had to be brought over to Parliament House for him to say “Good-night”.

However, while most people have been introduced to Paul Keating under one aspect or another, there may be a side of Paul that is yet to be explored, namely his brief, but influential interactions with the Sisters of St Joseph.

Paul, as we know, was born at St Margaret’s Hospital, run by the Josephites, on 18 January 1944. I spoke with Sister Anne Byrne who for many years was Matron of St Margaret’s and is now living in our St Joseph’s Hostel in Hunters Hill. Sister Anne says that when you were born, Paul, she didn’t know you were going to be Prime Minister and so does not remember you as a baby! We rely on the accounts of your mother, then, for what you looked like as you were introduced to our world for the first time.

John Edwards remarks in his book that the sisters who taught you first at St Jerome’s, Punchbowl, and then at St Brendan’s, South Bankstown, recall that at school you were a “docile little chap”. Sister

Inez, the first principal at St Brendan's, died two years ago. But last week I rang her companion, Sister Eileen O'Sullivan, who now lives in New Zealand. Eileen was a sixteen year old postulant fresh out from Ireland when you were at St Brendan's. She taught the second class, and Sister Inez taught Kinders and First Class. But, Paul, Eileen didn't know you were going to be Prime Minister either, and she doesn't remember you!

What she does remember is that she wondered whatever she had come to as, with the students they taught, she and Sister Inez lugged the desks each Friday afternoon to change the schoolroom into a church for the weekend, and then, on Monday morning, shifted everything back again to transform it once more into a classroom. Perhaps you were one of the "little chaps" who helped out during these furniture-moving sessions.

While she does not remember names and faces, Eileen does remember that many of the children were migrants, in the first throes of adjusting to a new life in Australia. She remembers a particular young mother from Poland who one day ran screaming into her classroom. A line of planes from the Bankstown airport were on a fly-past exercise, and the woman in terror thought that Australia was being invaded by the enemy, just as Poland had been during the war.

These were the people most in need at the time, and therefore they were the concern of the sisters. For evidence that Paul understood these values embodied by his early teachers, I need go no further than his most recent encounter with the sisters, namely, the visit of Pope John Paul II to beatify our co-foundress, Mary MacKillop.

The Josephites will ever be grateful to you, Paul, not only for the government's hosting, on that occasion, of the visit of the Pope as an international visitor to Australia, but for the insight you showed in your speeches of welcome and farewell, of the purpose and work of the sisters.

From their beginnings Sisters of St Joseph have continually changed the way they serve to suit the needs of the time. And whether they wear the dress style (or "habit") of the peasants and widows of former times and cultures, or have, instead, adopted the signs of commitment of present Western culture – the emblem and/or ring – they do, as you said, continue in the tradition of Mary MacKillop to "bring hope to those on the margins of society".

The vowed life of religious will always be a conundrum and a challenge to church and to society. But Paul Keating, in his birth, youth and maturity has recognised in this life a sign of "greatness" – that greatness which he described in his speech as being one of "openness and generosity to others" and of "unconquerable courage... in seeing justice done".

Ladies and gentlemen, I introduce to you, Paul Keating.

MARY MACKILLOP'S

SISTERS – BOOK LAUNCH

Paul Keating

I'm very flattered and honoured to be asked to launch this book on the Sisters of St Joseph. It is a fairly dubious distinction to be invited as the only prime minister to be educated by the Josephites. It could have been someone much closer to the sisters and the order, or even from it. But I'm flattered to have been asked and that's why I accepted.

My association with the Sisters of St Joseph was longer than simply my time at St Brendan's school in Bankstown. The parish hall of St Brendan's was converted from a school to a church each weekend and back again for the following Monday. My family was part of the founding congregation of that church. So we were always over there. I can still see exactly the way those benches and pews were. And occasionally we would get into them with sugar soap and Persil and scrub all the marks from them and hose them down in the yard and bring them back in. I remember all those things.

I started with the Josephites at St Jerome's in Punchbowl with a Sister Bertram. She was quite elderly then but very bossy. Sister Inez was in charge there. She remembered me. Even two or three years ago, she would come up and grab me by the arm and tell me what to do. I remember quite a few of the sisters. Sister Inez lived in a congregation at St Felix's school and came down every day to St Brendan's in a Morris Oxford driven by one of the women of the parish who drove them up and down for about fifteen years. She was quite a figure herself.

What's very nice about *Mary MacKillop's Sisters* is that while the Pope's visit and beatification has taught us much about Mary MacKillop, all the people who shared her vision and her dedication and her commitment have in a sense been seen only in the reflected glory of herself. What Anne has sought to do here, is to write some of the history of those who shared Mary MacKillop's vision. This book is an important addition to the knowledge of Australian religious history and the role of the sisters, too often overlooked in other contemporary writings about the church. Anne has caught the congregation of sisters

at this point. A lot of important interviews have been done and a lot of important experiences recorded. It gives us some very great insights into the motivation of these women, particularly at a time when the order was growing in numbers and reaching its peak in the 1960s and early 1970s. The breadth of the mission was so great. It included running hospitals as well as convents, and giving birth to prime ministers and all sorts of things.

This book captures a snap-shot of Australian Catholicism and its rise in important years. In one of the stories, an Irish girl who came out to Australia to become a sister, visits Raheen and is shown around by Daniel Mannix (who became Archbishop of Melbourne in 1917) at a time when he would have been in his prime. But I was touched by the fact that he showed her a sod of soil he'd brought from Ireland. A bit like Lafayette who took a cartload of American soil back to France to be buried in. It had that sort of feel about it.

From 1917 onwards you get a very colourful history of Australian Catholicism, the commitments of people and why they did so much. Nevertheless, none of what has been written, so conscientiously and diligently, can ever record the depth of the commitment that the Sisters of St Joseph made to the order and to the broader congregation. The effort made for one child can't be written in a book, can never be completely recorded – the little nuances, the daily interests, the nurturing spread over more than a century for tens of thousands of children, and at the order's prime, some 100,000 children. That love, devotion and commitment will never really be adequately written into a text. Not that anyone is trying to write it. As an author, Anne would concede this point. But her book gives us an insight into those sorts of commitments. What's important about the book, is that it does exist and it reminds any of us who've known about these commitments how profound they've been and what an impact they've had.

From my point of view, what is important is why these women came together, why the vision and the commitment of Mary MacKillop, why all of her difficulties with the bishops of the day, and so on. Why was that vision so significantly important? It gets back to a simple fundamental, about belief and doing what was seen at the time as God's will, this question of belief in God. One of the Irish sisters, Sister Kathleen Clifford, who left home at seventeen to become a Sister of St Joseph said, "So many religious left Ireland. There was that complete trust in God." They left Ireland and came to Australia without any doubts about where they were going and what we were doing, even though the order was not established in Ireland. This faith would be true of the Australian girls as well. It was an age of certainty and absolutes, whereas today there seem to be no certainties or absolutes.

There were cultural motivations, too. In the book, Anne says that it was for Catholic children that the sisters made their investment in the belief that Catholics owed it to themselves to get educated upwards and to raise themselves from the lower ranks of the Anglophile social order. That's true. But there's more than a cultural explanation in this sort of a commitment. When the commitment goes to the vows of poverty and celibacy and obedience, it goes beyond any cultural settings about the upward mobility of Catholic children or their opportunities. Though no doubt this mattered. In the story of Judith Geddes she says, "The sisters were in touch with the lives of ordinary people." Not necessarily Catholic children, but ordinary people, which brings us back to this point about poverty, the ordinariness of so many lives.

Because the stories are so profound, what's important, in all of them, is motivation. There is a quotation from St John of the Cross in the section "Obedience" where it says:

What does it profit you to give God one thing if he asks of you another.

Consider what it is God wants and then do it. You will as a result satisfy your heart better than with something toward which you yourself are inclined.

Now, that is quite an important reminder of the fact that many commitments to religious orders, including the Sisters of St Joseph, have involved very deep reflection about what individuals believed were the obligations of their faith, and a belief in what God wanted of them. They've searched in their hearts to find out what that is. There is also the poignancy of the religious nature of the order, of its devout commitments, all seen as an expression of their lives. That this expression is focused on poorer children in the main, and children from the lower socio-economic levels of our society, is probably one of the things which has made those decisions for them. Threaded through the interviews one can find that resonance.

One important quote came from Sister Nano Lyons. On the question of obedience, Sister Nano said,

When I entered we went to very difficult places and we got through the difficulties because of obedience. We were told it was God's will. The superior's will was God's will. Now I look back and wonder exactly whose will it was. We are more enlightened now. Today I find it very hard to define obedience. Who are we to be obedient to?

I'm quite sure that the words of St John of the Cross are still as valid today as ever – consider what God wants and then do it. Not necessarily something to which you yourself are inclined. So there is this searching and this obedience, or the notion of it. In that age of certainty, that time of absolutes, one was presented with the tablets which were either accepted or rejected. And if accepted enthusiastically, one's life's task was set and one's life's direction was set. It was a time when a decision like this might have been made easier, but

certainly the life was no easier. And whether such a decision is made at a time of absolutes or not, the commitment is no less profound.

Mary MacKillop's Sisters explores the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. Mary MacKillop's own words, which Anne quotes on poverty, are so moving and telling:

Our vow of poverty obliges us to be poor indeed. Poor house, poor garments, etc are all exterior show if there be not a true spirit of poverty in our hearts. It is not always the poorest dressed and poorest housed who are the poorest before the searching eyes of God. If the interior be poor and void of self seeking and self will, then the exterior matters not much. But the Rule insists on houses, furniture, everything being poor, and in keeping with what poor people use.

So the fidelity to the poor, and the belief in God's interest in them, Christ's interest in them, and their intrinsic importance as his children is clearly expressed in those words. Sister Irene McCormack in a further quote says, "I have come to accept the stance that effective action is a way of loving . . . and I think it is a Mary MacKillop saying, 'The poor deserve the best we can offer.'" This goes beyond simply service to the poor. It is about a clarity of mind and heart that does not have distractions in earthly things and in comforts, so a broader commitment can be made to those who need it most, like poorer children. Being close to the lives of ordinary people was not simply an association with children but an association with the families and the whole social milieu of that class of person and of Australians. To deal with that vow of poverty is an important reference in the commitments and the foundations of the order.

The other vow is celibacy. Now, this is the most complex subject that people have attempted to deal with. Anne writes that the vow of celibacy "professes to release the celibate one from all personal attachments so that he or she can love freely for God's work". That's a very nice and succinct description. And she goes on to say, "The vow of celibacy has been a fundamental of religious life." And it has been so because of that commitment to other people, free of personal attachments, to make the loving as broad as it can possibly be.

In 1983 Sister Mary Cresp wrote a poem, quoted in the book, which I found particularly moving, about the strength of the commitment. She wrote:

My life too will be swept away leaving no trace.
 No child of mine will ever bear my features
 or hold the memory of my face a treasured legacy.
 My capacity for motherhood will remain forever barren.
 I will touch the lives of others but never be there source.

When I first read that, I was struck by the sadness of the words, moved by them. But upon further reflection I could see the strength of the words. The commitment was freely entered into and freely given. That is the importance of a life of commitment and love given to others

– a life undistracted or untouched by a devotion to a particular other person or one other group of people. It is those vows of poverty, to live without worldly goods and assets and to live outside of the loving bond of marriage or the circle of the family, and to do so in the context of a communal view or decision about how one's life is to be led in the furtherance of the interests of other people in the reflection of Christ. That is the fundamental building point of a religious life. Obviously so with the Sisters of St Joseph.

It is important to say this. These are important things for Anne to write about. And important to record such a life in this history. There are so many aspects which are important, like the dress and the veil. I remember the big celluloid shield the sisters used to wear. They used to tuck things behind it, take things off you and put them in there. And the celluloid canopy, the one under the veil, where I would often see a perspiration bead running down. In *Mary MacKillop's Sisters*, Sr Antonene comments on the veil saying, "It's a sign of my consecration. It's a very good reminder of how I should act and behave." But she acknowledges she has the option of secular dress.

There are just so many stories here. Sister Judith Geddes says, "Somewhere between Mary MacKillop's time and when I entered, the spirit of the order got bogged down. You know, she went off to Rome, she didn't wear any habit." I can understand that. In a sense, once a community starts growing and has such an impact, as the religious orders did, the style and the protocol tend to become larger than life.

The Irish commitments again are so moving. By 1976, 2000 Irish girls had come to Australia over a century to join religious orders. This does not in any way diminish the commitment of Australian girls. But the Irish girls came across the seas and left families behind. What they did is so telling.

There are a couple of stories here worth mentioning. Sister Una O'Connell's mother says of her leaving, "You know this is like a second death." Sister Una recalls having five minutes with her father on the ship while the rest of the family had to remain on the quay. Then he left and when she turned around the tug had taken the boat away from the wharf. Six years later, Sister Una's father died suddenly. She was never to see him again. Sister Elizabeth McGoldrick recalled that, "My father was trying to get me to change my mind." After she convinced him she could leave for Australia, she went home from the convent to pack. She can remember her father stoking the fire to put the kettle on. He was crying so much, he was nearly putting out the fire.

These stories tell of the commitment that was made, and the impact on families. But the greater impact is what happened. The way that commitment changed Australia and Australian society. The way it changed the Catholic church and gave it an earthiness which it would not always otherwise have had. Let me illustrate what I mean. At St

Brendan's in Bankstown we had Father Wilf Payne who was a footballer. There was no messing around with Father Wilf. It was either black or white. There were no greys. He could deliver a sermon that had strength to it. And I remember saying to one of his curates, in my naivety, at one point, "Is there a pick of the topics or do you just get the second best one?" Of course, that was simply a commentary on how powerfully the parish priest delivered his message.

The sisters lived with that and they lived with plenty of priests like Father Wilf Payne. We had Father Phil O'Donnell. We used to call him Farmer O'Donnell because he was always growing vegetables in paddocks and ripping out trees and all sorts of things. He had the life of a local sort of squire. He had religious duties no doubt. But he took no nonsense from the sisters so to speak. There was always a tension between them. The same with the De La Salle brothers. The principal of the De La Salle secondary school I went to, who has since died of cancer, was always locking horns with Father Phil O'Donnell, or P.O.D. to his friends.

If Australian Catholic teaching and experience was left exclusively to priests, the Catholic community wouldn't be the way it is today. We know that. This is not to in any way diminish the great and profound commitment made by those men. But a good and just thing has been done here by recording the experiences of these Sisters of St Joseph. In the glow of Mary MacKillop's commitment, in the reflected light of her vision, so many Australian girls and other girls from other countries, made a commitment to the ideals of the order and that has been carried through. Now, in a different age, or different epoch, where the beliefs can be just as strong but the age more uncertain, the so-called vocations are not being made. But it doesn't for one milli-second, or in one degree, invalidate the strength, value and work of vocations past or vocations given. We could just as easily say, sitting here in this building, well here we are at the top enjoying the view but the foundations are not important. Of course they are. That foundation work is still in the Catholic community, in the broader community of Australia.

The social values which have been transmitted, that have come off those vows of poverty and interest in the poor and associating with the lives of ordinary people, and which have passed through into the political system and into the culture that makes us Australians, are what makes us different. It is the whole ethos of a fair go or our sense of justice and social inclusion. This comes from, in some important way, those teachings and this work. And my own life, my political life, was influenced by the commitment of these people. There are other influences but the founding influences are very important.

So a whole community of people, a whole nation was influenced in this way, in the belief that what God wanted these women to do, they did. To return to the words of St John of the Cross – don't

necessarily do the thing you're inclined to yourself. We all search ourselves at this point. Are we doing the things which only we want to do or are there greater things to be done? Not everyone gets it right, but the decision to try and get it right has been so obvious in these wonderful women who've made this wonderful commitment.

I launch *Mary MacKillop's Sisters* with much pleasure.

Response – Anne Henderson

As one old Josephite scholar to another could I just say thank you Paul Keating.

People have asked me many times in the last few weeks, why I wrote *Mary MacKillop's Sisters*. A simple question; a thousand answers. A gap in the market I say.

Now that's not as glib as it sounds. And it wasn't until I went to see the movie *Celluloid Closet* recently at the Walker Street cinema – a few blocks from North Sydney's Mary MacKillop Museum – that I found the words to explain what I was doing.

Celluloid Closet traces Hollywood's attempts, over more than half a century, to present images of homosexuality on film – against a background of mass prejudice, censorship and widespread misunderstanding. At times the results are very funny; for the most part what we see is a distortion.

On the surface, *Celluloid Closet* doesn't have anything to do with nuns or religious sisters. But look a little closer and it does.

As a society, whenever we talk about minority lifestyles, whether gays, or ethnics, or indigenous people, our mainstream media often takes one of two approaches. We either make caricatures of them by mocking them or turning them into monsters; or we put them into a category that is so sacred they can't be properly discussed. And we do this I believe because we can't understand them; because they're different.

Religious life is very much a minority lifestyle. Even though, as a young Catholic student it was put before me as a mainstream career option. From the outside, religious life is not easily explained and, for the most part, images of those in religious orders in popular culture have distorted and caricatured the lifestyle – perhaps summed up by quips like "Sister Sadistica" or movies like *Sister Act*.

In 1994 I felt a need to track down the women I had known who had entered the Josephites, and to record their experiences in *Mary MacKillop's Sisters*. What I was in fact trying to do was to break down the stereotypes; to find the people, the real human beings, that we call nuns or religious sisters. In my view there was a gap in the market.

To my knowledge, this is the first time a group of religious in Australia and New Zealand, has talked openly about their life experiences, and given their names. That was my first hurdle. To get

them to agree to do it. That the sisters have spoken so frankly is perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the book. I would like to thank them all for their courage.

The experiences clocked up by the religious sisters I interviewed are a vast panorama. They have taught classes of anything between 80 and 170 pupils in one room; they have travelled the outback, alone and in pairs, in overworked cars; they have left their families, as teenagers, half a world away in Ireland to help educate Australian children; they've worked for years to record their history in poorly resourced archives; they have fallen in love, had doubts every other day and yet they remain happily with the challenges of their religious vocations.

Getting this book finished was, as always, a team effort. Among the many who helped, I'd like to thank Mark Tredinnick, formerly of HarperCollins, for signing me up.

And of course my ever faithful family who kindly obliged with many reads of the manuscript, helpful suggestions and much patience. Along with Lalita Mathias, Astrid Campbell and Linda Tellis who worked long hours on the transcripts.

I'd especially like to thank HarperCollins.

Holding my hand along the way were publisher Helen Littleton and editor Nicole O'Shea. It was encouraging to have such youthful endeavour on my side. I reckoned, if I could catch their interest the book would work. I can't thank them enough for their enthusiasm and their creative energy. Also thanks to Judi Rowe when it came to design and layout, and Sarah Gentie for outstanding efforts publicising the book.

And then there was Devon Mills, the unseen reader editor, who had edited another of my books but whom I had never met nor spoken to. On this occasion, Devon rang me a couple of times to discuss changes, and then when he finished it he rang again. We tidied up a few more changes and he said, "Good luck with the book, Anne. It's a lovely book."

I wasn't expecting that from the unseen, reader editor. And I have to say, he seemed genuinely taken. So I guessed that he was a Catholic or just curious about nuns. "No," he said adamantly. "I'm not a Catholic. And it's not that I'm curious about nuns. It's just the goodness of those women." And by the sound of him he'd been bowled over.

So, taking my cue from Devon, to whom I am most grateful for the work he put into *Mary MacKillop's Sisters*, I would like to do one last thing. As a Catholic student in the 1950s and 1960s I never got round to it.

The religious orders of Australia saved the Australian taxpayer (in today's money) tens of billions of dollars from their labour alone. That's just a rough estimate. They took no salaries and they ran and

staffed schools all over Australia and New Zealand. They ran hospitals, and orphanages and refuges. And they gave hundreds of thousands of Australian and New Zealand children a first rate education.

On behalf of those children, and those taxpayers, I would simply like to say to the Josephite Sisters and all the religious sisters (and brothers) like them who staffed those schools and those institutions --

Thank you.

Response – Angelo Loukakis

This is an occasion for celebration of the work of a group of fine women as well as the celebration of an author's achievement. In that context, I will shortly of course add our praise.

With your indulgence, however, I would also like to make some remarks about where a work like this sits in the world of publishing and in the world of books. Books are certainly objects to be sold and bought. Their commercial character aside, they also occupy a unique place in this and indeed in most other societies. They are the great repository of memory. The single most powerful means, historically, for recording and remembering the acts, thoughts, feelings, beliefs – the physical achievements and the value systems – of human beings and societies.

I remember my late father, a long ago immigrant from Greece, once saying that memory was short in Australia. As I've thought about that remark from time to time it has occurred to me that if memory is indeed short, is that necessarily a bad thing? Do we really want to be burdened by things past – aren't we or shouldn't we, as a society, have our eyes firmly fixed on the future, our role in the world, our political and constitutional arrangements, or perhaps something more circumscribed and manageable, supposedly, as the getting and spending? After all, as Marx once said, the traditions of the dead generations weigh like a nightmare on the brains of the living.

But dead tradition is one thing. Practical acts of kindness and support, of contributions to the welfare and education of real, living people are something else. These things have to be set down, it seems to me, for all our sakes, so that we don't forget what others have done, or the terms of our common humanity and what it means to be a civil as opposed to an uncivil society.

The tendency to barbarism, or at least to the seriously uncivil, is always there in each society. It exists in this society now. Against that dark undercurrent comes into play the work of the religious, the nuns, the *women* whose story is told in this book. Against that forgetting which can lead to disaster, but also to show that the work goes on, is also ranged the generous impulses and efforts of the author, Anne Henderson. That is why books truly matter. That is why authors truly matter.

On behalf of HarperCollins publishers, I would like to express our appreciation to Anne Henderson, for agreeing to publish *Mary MacKillop's Sisters* through our company. She is a recording angel, par excellence, and her work we are sure will gather the accolades and tributes it so clearly deserves. We, as a company, are proud to be associated with it and wish Anne every success.

Our thanks must also go to the people who have been involved in the making of *Mary MacKillop's Sisters*, especially the members of the Josephite order who gave of themselves and their time to this book. And to our launcher today, the Honourable Paul Keating. I have to say, personally, that it is a mark of the man that he has chosen to support an effort of this kind. Finally, thank you to The Sydney Institute, and to Gerard Henderson especially for coordinating such a splendid event.

Conclusion – John O’Neill

I’d now like to close today’s proceedings. As I said at the outset, we have a capacity audience and we have the pleasure of having a magnificent venue. We would like to thank Mallesons and John King for providing this conference room to The Sydney Institute. We couldn’t think of a better place to launch the book. To Anne, thank you for writing a magnificent book. You are an excellent author, not just because you are involved with The Sydney Institute, not just because you’re married to Gerard. Like the Josephites she can stand on her own two feet. To Paul Keating – Paul as we all know makes very rare public appearances these days. When he does they are well chosen and today he has chosen well. We thank you for launching the book in such a sincere, insightful and thoughtful fashion. And lastly, I’d like to thank the Josephites. They continue to go where others fear or are unwilling to tread. Long may you be around, we’d be lost without you. Thank you.

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Photo - David Karonidis

Jackie Kelly

In October 1996 Jackie Kelly recontested the seat of Lindsay in outer Sydney. She won an outstanding victory and was returned to Canberra. So what does the Lindsay result say about the Australian political climate? To answer that question, Jackie Kelly addressed The Sydney Institute on Wednesday 19 February 1997.

THE IMPLICATIONS

OF THE LINDSAY BY-ELECTION FOR AUSTRALIAN POLITICS

Jackie Kelly

I am surprised to be here tonight, and I bet you are all surprised to see me as the Member for Lindsay. If you are not, you should be.

Prior to 2 March 1996, Lindsay was held by 10.3 per cent of the two party preferred vote by a 53 year old man of fifteen years standing in the House of Representatives, who held the Ministerial Portfolio of Science, Education and Youth Affairs. By comparison, I was a young female Squadron Leader in the RAAF who had joined the Liberal Party in 1994, stood for preselection in 1995 and started campaigning in January 1996. All political reporters, commentators, historians and bookmakers, from both sides of politics, reckoned that I could not win the seat of Lindsay at the 2 March general election.

On 2 March, Lindsay proved that there is no such thing as a safe seat. If Lindsay can fall then 90 of the 148 seats in the Federal Parliament can change sides. This includes safe strongholds such as Kingsford-Smith and Bennelong. If the results from the subsequent by-election are added to these results, there was an overall 17 per cent swing. With a swing of these proportions, the seats of North Sydney and Chifley start to look vulnerable. There could be as few as 22 safe seats left.

So what happened in Western Sydney prior to 2 March which led to such a massive swing in Labor's heartland? I bet some of you hope it was the Keating factor, and now that it has gone, you hope things will be as they were. Well I've got news for you, Keating was in the top ten issues in Lindsay, but not in the top five. The top five issues were things such as health care in western Sydney, a broken promise on the removal of the M4 tolls, increased tobacco and alcohol taxes, the introduction of fees for school bus passes and high handed treatment of the state governor by the state Labor government. You may say, "these are not federal issues", but I ask you is it a different party that puts up a local, state or federal candidate?

I believe the electors are becoming more demanding of their electoral representatives. The candidates of the 21st Century need to

be across all issues, at all levels, especially within the party they represent. Whoever said all politics is local has never been more correct. In this age of instant mass media coverage and distribution, voters have the chance to microscopically examine their politicians actions (and they do!). Simply turning up in Canberra and doing something which is seen as irrelevant to the suburbs of your electorate will see you "kicked in the tolls". The 21st Century wants politicians who are real, politicians with integrity, they want politicians who are accessible and they want politicians who are responsive to their demands. I have said it before and I will say it again, a federal seat is not a meal ticket to a life in Canberra politics; it is all about serving your electorate and getting the results to prove it.

Voters want someone who is doing something about the pressures of their everyday existence. When they are concerned about job security, paying a mortgage and raising children they give little weight to the recreational politics of a republic and changing the flag.

It is interesting to note that the demographics of Lindsay are:

- a much higher than the national average number of people under 40
- over 60 per cent of the households are raising children
- over 30 per cent of the homes are owned and nearly 45 per cent of the homes are mortgaged
- a significant number are self-employed in small business and trades, and
- few are tertiary educated, and those that are, are frequently the first in their family to gain a degree.

The overall federal campaign, based on small businesses and families, could have been purpose built to win western Sydney. And in Lindsay there I was, a new, young female face selling the Coalition's message. No disrespect to middle-aged male Caucasian politicians in suits, but you look like the stereotypical politician, the politician people love to hate. The lying, smarmy, untrustworthy, staid, boring, non-visionary, non-enthusiastic, non-energetic people who waste public money in pursuit of power (Francis Urquart). On the status rating scales, the average politician is seen as somewhere below a used car salesman or lawyer! I believe we will see a trend in the future towards candidates who break that mould. The election on 2 March 1996 saw a record 20 per cent of females elected to the House of Representatives, up from 8 per cent.

The voters are willing to vote for candidates who are young and lack experience. I predict the modern voter will, in young electorates, find experience to be less important than being untainted by political baggage. Hence my very able and well-known opponent had three strikes against him entering the 2 March campaign. He fitted with the perception of the federal Labor government being a government that

had run its race, run out of ideas and energy and, most importantly, had run out of vision.

It may have been the case of "it's time", and no doubt those of you in the left of politics may like to think the same will happen to the current government but, more likely, it is the consequence of the modern voter who is prepared to give someone different a go, who is looking for youth and vision in the age of high speed data transmissions and the globalisation of trade and knowledge.

Speaking of technology, did you know that you can buy CDs from overseas via the "Net", have them sent to Australia and still pay less than in a CD store here in Sydney? You can import five without paying duty. In the future you will be able to download the music straight off the "Net" and write it on to your own CD for playing later. I found out the other day that you can study for a Stamford University degree via the Internet without ever setting foot in the United States. In future any "service" will be available via the "Net".

Legal, architectural, travel, business, accounting, financial, books, videos, music, anything that can be reduced to data will be available in a competitive global market easily accessed from your living room. Where does that leave the "services" in the goods and services tax? Where does it leave the tax base of the next generation? People in the suburbs are aware of this and they want their politicians to be concerned too.

The juxtaposition of a campaign poster with a very down-to-earth photo of a young female candidate, next to the tired blue and white poster from many past election campaigns, of an older style politician, was of significance in the first campaign and vital in the "give the girl a fair go" message of the second campaign. It came to be referred to in some circles as Elle McFeast against Elmer Fud. I think that is the danger middle-aged men in politics face today – unless they are charismatic or have some outstanding or appealing leadership styles, the 21st Century voter is not necessarily going to vote for them in preference to females or youth or those born in other countries. In today's politics, energy and vision are important factors in the leadership race. Young candidates in young electorates can put across vision better than anyone else. Youth is no longer a bar to politics, in some areas it is a distinct advantage and it was a factor in the 17 per cent swing in a young electorate like Lindsay.

In New South Wales, we had a number of broken promises that the Coalition was quick to exploit, both at state and federal level. The recession that we hadn't recovered from and was really hurting the people in western Sydney.

It is really "mortgage belt city" out there, mainstream Australia raising kids, buying homes, worried about the security of their job, working a solid week, PAYE wage earners or self employed sub-contractors, schools, minor ailments – that is what is concerning these

people. Their weekends they like to have free, it is very much a club orientated lifestyle. There are many in the electorate, for example, who spend a large proportion of their income, outside the family home on meals and on club activities, significantly on alcohol and gambling – that is their entertainment. These are things that had been heavily taxed between 1993 and 1996, and it had not gone unnoticed by these people, which added to their anger.

There is no better example of this than the stereotypical blue collar worker coming up to the polling booths, snatching the blue “how to vote” card, finding out it was Labor and not Liberal, crumbling it up in disgust and waving it under the Labor polling booth workers nose and saying “Never again, I have voted for you for 20 years, never again”.

Total disillusionment with the party, very bitter, very betrayed, very angry and if the current Labor Party thinks it’s gone away, they should think again. Whilst they played recreational politics with the republic, the flag, Indonesia and the diplomatic stage, western Sydney was hurting. It was basically saying, “I will give my vote to anybody but you, I don’t really care. The one time I have to really kick you is here at this polling booth and boy am I going to enjoy it”, and they did.

Labor was definitely on the nose and it was mortally wounded, it had done a lot of damage to its mainstream supporter. So I found myself in parliament and under fire.

Within a week it became apparent that Labor had read Section 44 of the Constitution and was going to use it to challenge the seat as I was born in New Zealand and my resignation from the RAAF had come through six days after my nomination had been lodged. Now, in recreational politics, that was a good option. Labor’s instincts would have told them this is a brand newcomer, out of nowhere, clearly a “oncer” in federal parliament, who had taken a safe Labor seat of 10.3 per cent, from a sitting Minister, who was well liked and well known throughout the electorate, and she held the seat by 1.6 per cent. Any by-election could be expected to be a “sure-thing” for the Labor Party, after what was expected to be a particularly nasty budget (given the Coalition’s promise to get out of the red without raising taxes).

By May, when the legal proceedings were under way in the High Court, it was still a politically astute thing to do in recreational politics. These are the actions of a politician or a political party vying for power and the electorate saw through it. The electorate is a lot more informed. Remember what CNN has done to the “front-line” in warfare, well, it has happened in politics.

Certainly from our point of view we positioned ourselves on the basis that we had done nothing wrong, that the challenge was Labor playing recreational politics as the outcome wasn’t going to make a difference to parliament anyway. I think this had a cutting point with the electorate in the by-election.

I had nothing to win. With a 40 seat majority, the Liberal Party had nothing to lose. Faced with a 40 seat majority against them in the parliament, the Labor Party had nothing to win. The only person who stood to gain out of the Lindsay by-election was Ross Free. That perhaps was his undoing, trying to ride on the might and right of Section 44 of the Constitution (which many think is outdated and inappropriate for today's technology, lifestyle and migration movements). Labor stepped outside the electorate's concerns for job security, home buying, raising the kids and improving their lifestyle. Labor sought to send John Howard a message, it wasn't going to be forthcoming from the voters. As far as the electorate could see, for once the government in Canberra, while tough, were getting it right. The budget was well-received in western Sydney, even in the *Daily Telegraph*, and it dealt with Beazley's "black hole".

So Ross Free is left with Section 44 of the Constitution on his side.

Let me read that offending section: "Any person who holds an office of profit under the Crown... shall be incapable of being chosen... as a Member of the House of Representatives", but this section does not apply ". . . to any of the Queen's Ministers of State for the Commonwealth, or any of the Queen's for a State, or to the receipt of pay, half-pay or a pension, by any person as an officer, or member, of the Queen's navy or army. . .". Does that mean that if I had been in the British army or navy that I would have been right? Clearly the Constitution needs cleaning up.

I cannot let the opportunity go by without making some reference to the upcoming debate on the Republic. At the moment the voters think it is simply a "yes" or "no" vote about an Australian Head of State. It is not so simple and politicians misinform the public about this at their peril. The words Queen, Governor or Governor-General appear over 70 times in the 128 articles of our Constitution, each one of those appearances confers a power or privilege, or dictates a procedure. The Constitution sets up the separation of the judiciary, executive and legislative arms of government and the Governor-General plays a role in appointing and discharging each.

If we are going to change every reference to a foreign head of state or their representative in our Constitution then I suggest it is a major re-write of the document and the public should be so informed. This becomes an exciting prospect for the younger generations. We potentially have the opportunity of contributing to a document that is uniquely Australian for Australian conditions in the 21st Century. We are in the position that Sir Henry Parkes and our founding fathers were in, in the 1880s. We have the opportunity to produce a readable document in today's language. We can delete references to telegrams and replace them with optic fibres and satellites. The air force will be

included in any discussion of the defence of Australia and Section 44 of the Constitution can be reworded to reflect the migrant composition of Australia and the true nature of jobs in the public service – hospitals, schools and defence.

This is a very exciting opportunity. It took the fathers of Federation over a decade to come up with an acceptable Constitution. It may take us just as long, but one thing is for sure, the public needs to have a full and frank discussion to let them know the issues, the concerns and the consequences of any such change. It may be that if Section 51 is changed, it takes powers from the states. There are many who think we are over governed. It may be that one level of government will disappear; it is up to the people to decide. It is pretty exciting stuff, but if we are simply changing a few words around in the constitution then why bother, “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”. The people of western Sydney will not appreciate huge expense if it’s only recreational politics. Let’s be very clear with the public about the consequences and stop discussing the republic as if it’s just a few words that we are looking at changing. If that is so, then it ain’t worth the hassle.

I was very amused to see throughout the by-election, the estimated costs of the actual by-election escalate from \$50,000 to \$500,000, as it suited either side to exploit the western suburbs electors’ distaste of useless government spending. I think we saw that recently with the Speaker’s Chair issue. I think it is something which will play a major role in any referendum on the Constitution, in relation to a proposed republic.

When your country is broke, and you are paying tax you cannot afford to pay, and you see your government squandering money, then you get very angry and an angry electorate does what it did to Labor on 2 March and again on 19 October. It kicks them while they are down.

The electors of today, and those of tomorrow, are heartily sick of political shenanigans. The electorate will not tolerate gamesmanship. Politics has moved to a very serious sphere where people want value for money and are scrutinising their elected representatives very closely. They don’t want outlandish promises, they watch what politicians say and do very closely. They are not asking for superhuman leadership, in fact, they are more than pleased with someone who is one of them.

I think my job at the Samarkland Restaurant during the by-election campaign, was a very illustrative case in point. I believe that it was very damaging to Labor’s campaign as it portrayed me as a worker, continuing to work, even if in adverse circumstances. Meanwhile, Mr Free had been able to sustain himself on a parliamentary pension. Not a good move in a blue collar area that is working damn hard to meet their basic living requirements and trying to get their kids a head start in life. It is becoming less likely that politicians will be able to “pull the

wool" over the eyes of the electorate in the future. It really is a matter of delivering to the people. Seriously, no amount of gamesmanship, spin doctoring and media profiling will overcome the electors' inherent distrust of politicians.

Our goose is well and truly cooked. We are basically reviled by most of the electorate, which is something that someone, who is used to considerable status and respect, as a senior officer in the airforce, has had to learn to live with. As soon as you are seen to be moving your lips you are presumed to be lying. That is a very hard handicap to overcome when dealing with people. Politicians must genuinely like people and enjoy the art of interaction with people from all walks of life.

How do you as a politician cope with the extreme, and perhaps excessive, demands of an electorate, which wants a local member who is up with all local issues across all three levels of government, almost demands your presence at every opening in the electorate and wants to have access to you 24 hours a day.

So what are politicians doing to be responsive to the 21st Century elector? In future, it will be incredibly hard to capture and consistently hold that younger vote.

Heaven help anybody who wants to take on a ministry. I think it is quite evident, in the electorate of Lindsay, that anyone who aspires to Ministerial levels of office, which place huge demands on your time, taking you away from your electorate, will now face real danger of being voted out, because you are perceived as not being accessible to your electorate. Many competent Ministers, based in western Sydney, have lost their seats. Are we left with a situation where the Ministerial positions are to be filled by Members from the very safe seats – all 22? Being a local member is a major challenge, in this era of electronic media, for politicians to meet. Those who do not meet that demand will find their day in parliament a short one.

The implications of the Lindsay by-election for Australian politics can be summarised as follows. The Lindsay electorate, is a young electorate, and can be seen to be reflective of a 21st Century Australian electorate, which is more politically astute and more attuned to the issues than ever before. The impact of higher levels of education, and technological advancements, especially in the electronic media can account for much of this. As I mentioned earlier this does, and will continue to, place our elected representatives under increasing scrutiny.

The Lindsay experience also reaffirmed the importance of local issues in the minds of the electors. More and more the electorate is demanding that their representatives not only know and understand what the local issues are, but that they actively deal with those issues. The electorate wants their local representative to remain local and accessible, regardless of whether they hold a Ministerial position.

Finally, as has been mentioned throughout the media, in its various forms, since 2 March, the Lindsay by-election is a reaffirmation of the coming of a new era in Australian politics, with the stereotypical mould of "old men in grey suits" being broken by people of the X-Generation demonstrating a fresh approach.



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Photo - David Keronidis

Bob Mansfield

One of the Howard Government's first undertakings after coming to power, was to conduct a Review of the ABC. Bob Mansfield, former Fairfax Chief Executive, accepted the job of heading that Review, a task he undertook with enthusiasm. On 24 January 1997 Bob Mansfield handed his Report to the Federal Government. On Tuesday 25 February 1997, Bob Mansfield addressed The Sydney Institute and gave a comprehensive overview of the work undertaken in that ABC Review.

REVIEWING THE

ABC

Bob Mansfield

The ABC Review started for me in July 1996. I was taking a holiday after unexpectedly leaving Fairfax and I got a phone call from Richard Alston. A day or two before I had read about Donald McDonald's appointment as new chairman of the ABC. When Richard rang to ask me to take up the job of overseeing the ABC Review I was having dinner. I had no idea what he was talking about at that time.

There hadn't been any pre-warning about an ABC Review with Donald having just been appointed. I had never read the ABC's Charter at that point in time. I obviously had a relationship with the ABC based on my own background of listening to radio and watching ABC television. That involved certain segments of the ABC but not all of them. I told Richard Alston that I would think about his proposal. Then I asked for a copy of the Charter. The proposal I interpreted as an opportunity to put something back into the community and I treated it that way. I was honoured to be asked and, after reflection, it was the unanimous response from my family that I had no other commitments so why couldn't I do it? I rang Richard back the next day to ask for more details. I said that I would consider it, subject to being able to accept the terms of reference which at that stage hadn't been drafted.

Donald McDonald had just been appointed ABC Chairman and I hadn't had any discussion with him at that point. All this had happened co-incidentally at a time when I didn't have any other corporate commitments. This meant I could do justice to the task. Without that, there was no way I would have undertaken it. I approached the task with tremendous enthusiasm.

I must admit I was surprised by the ABC Charter itself. It was just one page. Then I started looking into it and realised in fact that it was tied to a pile of government legislation. It really was a jigsaw that I had to put together. So I embarked on the task of looking at all the details. I found the Charter fascinating. Around the country when I referred to the Charter many people, from politicians to ordinary

listeners, would tell me what they thought was in the Charter, opposed to what was actually in it. Do you realise that in the Charter there's equal weighting given to domestic and international broadcasting? That there's nothing in the Charter that stops the ABC retracting and become just a capital city broadcaster? When you point out to people what's not in the Charter they are flabbergasted. I spent a lot of time playing the Devil's advocate. To review any organisation after fifteen years makes a lot of sense. The Dix Inquiry into the ABC was in 1981. It was conducted at a time of change in technology and environment, just as this review is being conducted in a similar challenging, changing environment. It was the challenge which appealed to me.

Friends told me I was mad to undertake the job. I guess it was the guaranteed public focus on it and being under the microscope that deterred them. It's funny how one's background can prepare you well for the challenges of life. What I'd been through with Optus, where I'd gone out like a politician and tried to get people to vote for the company, had given me a fair bit of practice.

I knew that you couldn't please everybody anyway. But, still it was a task that was guaranteed to create dissent in certain areas. I decided that the only way through was to go down the middle and at the end present a report that I could stand up and defend, and do so to the utmost. And I guarantee you that that's been the case in preparing this report and submitting it to the government.

The submissions were called for at the end of July 1996. So within two weeks of accepting the task we started calling for submissions. They closed at the end of August, in the announced sense, and I recognise that there was a risk in closing the process too early. But I also recognised that if it was going to be an effective review, for the sake of the ABC it needed to be done in a relatively compact time period. At that stage the ABC had quite a few questions internally. To turn the Review into an eighteen month task would have meant that the ABC would be the loser. On the other hand I made an absolute commitment, to everyone I spoke to, that if I couldn't do justice to the process within the six month time period that had been allocated, I would have asked for an extension of time.

I listened and, as I put it, soaked up submissions like a sponge for the initial four month period. I didn't put any pencil to paper. In the end I heard the same themes time and time again. That was comforting, because it showed we had covered the spectrum of input that the community wanted to make. By the time I sat down to write my response I was very comfortable that the sifting process had been adequately done.

I actually took submissions up to 10 December. So for anyone that sent in late submissions they were accepted up to the 10 December. We had a Canberra secretariat, initially of five people,

headed up by Susan Page who had worked with the department previously. We had our own premises, our own phone lines and the members of the secretariat were 100 per cent dedicated to the directions that I gave them. They worked very, very effectively and efficiently. When we started to get so many more submissions than we originally planned,

We increased the secretariat to twelve. We ended up with 10,615 submissions. I did read the first couple of thousand when they came in, but it became very evident, for two reasons, that I couldn't do justice to the process and read every one. One was the time involved, and secondly it is not efficient to sit in an office surrounded by 12,000 pieces of paper. I had to find a more efficient process to do that.

We then transferred to a data input sheet contents of every submission – whether they supported the ABC or whether they didn't; whether they supported a particular segment of the ABC; or whether they didn't and what their views were. We transposed that across the data entry sheet that had to be checked and then we inputted all of that into a computer data base. I went down to Canberra every week and I was in daily contact with Susan Page. Whenever I went down there I reviewed all the latest submissions. Anything that came in that was different to what I had already read or been subjected to was immediately faxed to me and updated on that new input.

I was very pleased with the reaction of so many submissions. There was a perception initially that there might be some element of intrigue behind my appointment, supposedly a deal done with the government. But I've said repeatedly, the only basis on which I undertook this review was 1) that I could operate the review as I saw fit. In other words I could go where I wanted to at any point of time and cover the input that I believed needed to be done; and 2) that I took no riding instructions from the government. To this day apart from the terms of reference that were submitted to me, and they were made public, that's exactly what happened. Being independent in the process was absolutely fundamental to my involvement in the whole task. I said that from day one and I absolutely reinforced it every time I had a chance to do so.

Some people disagreed with me, but I saw little point in public hearings. Public hearings achieve a lot of emotion but not much new hard opinion or new hard information. Every person in Australia had the chance to write to me and those who wanted to ring me, I made contact with. I think that was a far fairer way for people to express their views. When I look at the range of people who put in submissions, I'm very comfortable about that being the best way to go. We definitely got people that were able to provide questions. This wouldn't have happened with a whole series of hearings.

I also recognise that in the process we were hearing from the most ardent ABC supporters. I say that with respect. It was obvious that if those people were prepared to get off their tails and either write a letter or give input to me, they were the passionate devotees of the ABC. And that had to be taken into account as a fact – not as a positive or negative. The people that provided the input were obviously those that cared most about the ABC.

I travelled a lot. I visited all capital cities. I spoke to anybody in the ABC that wanted to talk to me and I spoke to everyone in the ABC that I wanted to talk to. I had an office. Brian Johns very kindly offered me an office at Ultimo. I was made to feel very welcome at the ABC believe it or not and I went over there regularly. When I toured all the state capitals I visited and spoke to the ABC staff there. I visited Darwin and Cairns. I wanted to get a good first hand view and input into rural and remote areas. I faced the reality that unlike Sydney, with its 20 or 30 spots on the dial of the radio in Darwin or Cairns, if you don't have the ABC you turn to silence, particularly in Darwin where the commercial element is so restricted. It was impressed on me just how important as a life line the ABC is to the more rural and remote areas of Australia.

I visited the United States and spoke extensively to the Georgia Public Broadcasting Organisation to get a feel for public broadcasting in the United States. They were probably an excellent choice in hindsight because they are the first to go totally digital in the United States. They are building a whole new facility and it's a mixture of state government funding, federal government funding and subscriptions. They've got something like 80,000 subscribers ranging from something like a \$10 fee up to \$3,000.

I visited the United Kingdom and had extensive discussions with the BBC who themselves have undergone considerable change and faced considerable challenges in meeting the requirements they're subjected to. I didn't visit but I read extensively on Canada and New Zealand. My conclusion from these reference points was that we shouldn't copy any of them. We should come up with what suits Australia best although obviously it helps to refer to experiences elsewhere in the world.

I met with numerous interests groups that wanted to meet with me – the Friends of the ABC in every capital city and including Cairns and Darwin. The make-up of those groups represents a wide range of input because they are not people from the same background. They all love the ABC. They could be from any walk of life. In Cairns they were farmers. In Cairns a guy came up to me and said "You are not leaving this room until you give me an absolute assurance that the ABC is going to be able to tell me when I've got a fire in the district so I know whether I've got to jump on the bulldozer and knock down shrubs

around the house." He was so emotional. I could see how somebody in Cairns could rely on the ABC in a way Sydney or Melbourne people can't relate to. The ABC wasn't a nicety, it was an absolute necessity to such people. I met widely with representations from rural communities who expressed a very strong view that they relied on the ABC extensively. I met with youth groups, regional groups, political parties. I had two meetings with the Democrats, two meetings with the Labor Party and I had two meetings with the Liberal Party. At each of those meetings I covered exactly the same topics. I also met with vested interest groups such as the Independent Screen Producers Association. Their submission was read like every other. And I can assure you I wasn't snowed by the process as has been claimed by some.

I also had significant input in the submissions by the two unions representing the ABC and I met with the union groups a couple of times. I spoke extensively as I said to the ABC staff. They were open and frank at all times and they were obviously very, very concerned about the challenges that the ABC faced. Anyone who wanted to see me, I made myself available to them.

One experience in Cairns did have an impact on me. It was the day after the tragedy of the O'Shane boy being burnt. I flew in from Darwin and I arrived at the airport at about 8.30 am where I was picked up by a young lady. I guessed she was in her late twenties. She was the morning announcer who was also the station manager in Cairns. She had done her morning show and came out to pick me up. We went into the studios and met everyone in the office. The rural reporter had been with the ABC for 30 years and everyone in that part of the world knew who he was.

I met the receptionist. Then I went on air for a radio interview with whoever was doing a program at that point in time. Later in the day the receptionist went in and she was on air. And I said, "What's the story here?" The answer was that the receptionist did the weather report everyday. She was a general hand in the office. Then I saw that the person who had interviewed me on air was reading the news. I was told that the newsreader was out chasing up the story on the tragedy of the Aboriginal boy who had been burnt. So the radio interviewer was reading the news.

When I left to come back to Sydney I said to the station manager, "I just can't compliment you enough on what I saw. That represented to me what the ABC really is." They were broadcasting not only to the local community, but they were the source for the whole country on that tragedy up there. Their devotion to duty, their spirit, their camaraderie, their attitude, made me feel very, very proud. It made an impact on me and reinforced just how important the ABC is in those rural areas. If the major capital cities didn't get that sort of input from the outlying areas, as a nation we wouldn't be as strong in our character as we are.

I did radio interviews regularly, answered questions on talk-back radio. I was asked pretty extensively up front about government funding cuts. I may be a bit more of a realist than some in the room, I don't know. But I interpret funding constraints as not an option. They were going to happen. Quite early in my review I stated that I felt the ABC could live with a funding of \$500 million and still be effective in the execution of what the Australian public expected. I still feel that way.

I began the task with an open mind. Obviously I had my own history of a relationship with the ABC. It started in New Guinea where I was born and all we had there was the ABC. And it extended down to now, where I am a regular ABC listener of certain segments of radio and also watch ABC television. But I couldn't claim to have been across the whole spectrum of ABC content when I was asked to head the ABC Review. But as soon as I accepted the task, however, I listened to every radio program on every ABC station and watched and listened to the whole spectrum of what the ABC delivers so that I could effectively interpret what people were passing on to me.

I listened like a sponge for four and a half months. I drafted the first draft of the report myself. I sat down with a dictaphone and my own private secretary and I documented the major things that I had come up with. I documented my views on the issues. Then I presented them to the key secretariat members – William Thorne and Susan Page in Canberra. I didn't ask them for their opinion on the topics. Instead I told them it was the meat around which to put the sandwich of the facts and the extensive data that we had. We then spent the remaining three months doing just that – taking the base of the report that I had prepared and referring it back to the input from all the submissions. The task that I was handed was not to present Bob Mansfield's view of the ABC. It was to listen to the Australian public and to the community at large and present a report to the government. I understood that challenge very, very seriously.

Earlier on I decided to allay fears about a closed-door approach and to provide a very transparent view of the submissions themselves. We produced a 53 page report which is really the substance of my own views, and then a report of several hundred pages outlining the result of the submissions and who had made the submissions. So there is a very transparent process evident to everybody. It is being well received as a result of that process.

What did I find? I met a whole range of people, which was a very rewarding experience in my point of view. And they all had individual expectations of the ABC. The ABC means different things to different people and it's simply impossible to please all of them. If the ABC continues to try to please all of them it will tear itself apart. The ABC used to have a phrase that said it was proud of doing more with less. But the ABC has done so much more with less that you can't stretch

the rubber band any more. You've got to come back and say that certain elements are more important than others. It's a fact of life. You can't put your head in the sand. That sense of reality became clear to me on the way through.

There were just under four times as many radio submissions as television submissions. That came, I guess, from people in the rural and remote areas, and also the Radio National audience. Even though Radio National has a relatively small market share of two per cent of the national audience, something close to 30 per cent of all submissions were from Radio National listeners. You obviously need to take cognisance of such a representation. You've also got to recognise the passion of people from different areas, try to sift through it all and come up with proposals that can be implemented.

I was surprised with Triple J. I went into the job not familiar with the station. Most of you have probably read of my fifteen year old son. The night when I was sitting round the family dinner table, after Richard Alston rang, telling them I had been asked to review the ABC my son came to me about an hour later and said, "Gee Dad, my mate: will kill me if you cut Triple J." I can assure you it had no impact on my judgment of Triple J. But Triple J really did have an enormous relationship with the wider community. I got letters from parents grandparents in rural communities saying how beneficial Triple J was to their own children and grandchildren. I looked at the efficiency of Triple J. It's an extraordinarily efficient part of the ABC, one that other parts of the organisation could look at for a reference point.

I reduced my report to nineteen specific recommendations and kept it simple. If I could read and understand it, I hoped that other would. I basically made four recommendations on the Charter. It is very healthy to review the Charter in light of the fact that in my view it is not as complete as it should be. Domestic broadcasting is really the number one priority. That's what the Australian community told me they expected out of the ABC. Secondly, they wanted independent news and current affairs, free of advertising and government influence. This was an absolute fundamental. Thirdly, localism. The submission didn't want the ABC to be so impacted by the budgetary situation that cut it back to being a capital city broadcaster coming out of Sydney Melbourne and Canberra. Personally, I agree with that, but the fact is that it costs more to run a public broadcaster in that form and the needs to be recognised.

I was so impressed by the Cairns story. If my kids are to grow up in an Australia where they don't hear about what's happening in Pilbara and what happens up north, and don't hear about what's happening in other parts of Australia, I don't think they will be anywhere near as complete as Australians as what I've had the privilege to be, or most of us in this room. That really is important. A Canberr

politician told me he hadn't realised the impact of the ABC's *7.30 Report* until the ABC cut it to a national program. It had given the wider spectrum of Australia an involvement of contributing to the centre, which was just as important as the centre telling the outlying areas what was going on. It's the balance of those two that public broadcasting is all about, and that came through loudly and clearly on the way through.

Programming for youth and children is very, very important in the eyes of the Australian community. There is a recognition of the ABC doing a good job with children and an important job with children. Youth was felt to be much better served with Triple J. There was some criticism of Triple J. In my report I have recommended that they be subjected to public standards with regard to language and sexual innuendo, etc. It is up to the management and board to execute that. The ABC should also be an outlet for the Australian creative community which it has served well in the past.

There were some controversial elements. I shall mention these briefly. There were firstly my conclusions about Radio Australia. My terms of reference were to look only at the ABC. I wasn't asked to look at Australia's foreign policy. I recognised very clearly when I made the recommendation to close down Radio Australia that there was another spectrum of consideration. The government has set up a Senate sub-committee to look into that. From the ABC's point of view, it must face the fact of living within the budgetary restraints the government has made. Spending more than \$20 million on Radio Australia could eventually mean cutting reporters in Townsville, Cairns, Rockhampton, Alice Springs and Central Australia. The Australian community was unanimous in telling me it wanted no more cuts to the local ABC services. There was an absolute commitment to domestic broadcasting. And it's in that vein that I made that recommendation for Radio Australia. But I have absolutely no problem with a public debate on the issue and I have no problem standing up for the recommendations I made.

Outsourcing of TV production has received a lot of controversial discussion. Again, I expected that when I put it in. But it is the core of the progress the ABC needs to make. Brian Johns and I disagreed on this which has already been discussed in a very healthy vein. I respect his view on it and he respects mine. At the end of the day it's got to be sorted out by the board and the government.

There is a big area of opportunity in the ABC. The ABC should be able to commission \$50 million out of \$200 million. That's not all of the production as some people have suggested. They should be able to commission that by the external industry that now exists, the \$1.3 billion industry. It's healthy, it's doing good things and it should own film studios. It should own digital cameras. It should bear the cost of

upgrading that needs to be done. Because if the ABC has to upgrade its existing facilities to digital, as it has to, and it does it with its total production capacity right now the difference in cost is unbelievable. And where are you going to get the money from? This is an area of challenge for the ABC. It's one that has a lot of logic. The starting point for value in the creative chain surely is the writer and then it's the actor. Then you involve the director and all the production staff. The ABC doesn't employ one writer and doesn't employ any actors. So it astounds me why all the rest of the value chain has to be employed. That doesn't mean you get rid of all of it. There has to be movement both ways so that the ABC can produce what it wants at the right price, without all the expensive infrastructure. Believe me, land and buildings add up to dollars and they have to be upgraded with the digital challenge. It is an area of opportunity for the ABC rather than an area of threat.

Then there's the bias issue. I made it very clear in my report that the ABC should not be biased as every media organisation should not be biased. They should be fair, they should be balanced, they should be accurate. It is up to the management and the board to be accountable to the Australian public and to deliver that. I stand by that very, very strongly. I also suggested that training would assist in providing the right balance, and ensure fairness and accuracy. Training has been let slide considerably in the ABC in recent years due to budget cuts. That needs to be reinstated as a matter of priority.

Comprehensive or complementary broadcaster? On the whole if there were two issues I was drilled with, it was both of those. Not too many people worried about the complementary, but everybody that was passionate about the ABC worried about comprehensive. Their biggest fear was that the ABC should fit within a content box and not be able to traverse the whole spectrum of public taste and genre such that the ABC can make judgments of particular types of programs to meet particular types of audience at certain times. I certainly didn't spend the time deciding what they should be. There is value in the ABC being able to see an opportunity for a program and make it. It should have the ability to do that but in making those decisions it shouldn't convey to the viewing public that they can be all things to all people, all the time, because they don't have the funds. There are no organisations that have the funds to cover the whole spectrum of audience appeal at once. The ABC may at times traverse that whole spectrum over a period of years, to cover the breadth of coverage that they want to. But it should have the right to do that and not be put in a box which says all you can do is what the commercial broadcaster does not do.

The ABC should however, refer to the commercial broadcasting environment when deciding on programs. Nobody wants the ABC and the commercial programs to end up having the same genre of programming.

Digital strategy is an absolute must. It's big dollars. It's going to cost the ABC around about \$200 million. Brian Johns and his team are still working on finalising those details. There had to be a strategy. It had to be made over a number of years. The ABC should be able to generate the decisions and the actions necessary to be able to convert to digital over a period of time, and these from internal management priorities and decisions. I recommend it. You have to go digital in this world of media in the next five to seven years in my opinion.

What about management? A lot of work is already underway. When I came in, Brian Johns updated me on what had been done and I supported totally the aggressive moves he was making. He subsequently announced on the management changes. The structure needed to be changed. The ABC has been working on a structure that suits today and tomorrow rather than one for yesterday.

The question of the orchestras is not how to cut them, but how to retain them so that they are not a burden on the ABC. The orchestras have had significant funding increases in recent years. If they had stayed within the ABC, they could not have been excluded from the impact of the ABC funding costs which have to be made. Moreover, the orchestras themselves were well advanced on a strategy to corporatise before I got involved in the Review and I encouraged that process.

As for advertising and sponsorship, I hardly had one suggestion in the submissions that sponsorship and advertising should be part of the ABC.

So how do I feel? I'm relieved at completing the task. I was never in doubt that a healthy public broadcaster is important to the fabric of Australian culture. It has been in the past. I believe it will continue to be in the future. I certainly hope that my Report reinforces that fact. I am very pleased about the balanced reaction from so many different vested interests. In undertaking the task and knowing that I would not have universal approval, I was hopeful I could earn respect for what I came up with. It was a pretty daunting task. All I could do was to ensure that the Report was independent and balanced, and for me to be able to stand in front of you and say I've done that knowing that there would not be universal approval from particular vested interests – including the government I would suggest.

History will judge the Report. I hope it doesn't sit on the shelf. An ABC with a future and a vision means that people can be part of an organisation knowing where it's going to be in five to ten years time. It is important to make sure the right people are in the ABC and the right approach is given in the form of direction and management to the staff that are available to execute the tasks it faces.

I'm honoured to have been asked to conduct the Review of the ABC. I gave it everything I could and I now stand to be judged on the

nineteen recommendations I've made. The public debate that's now underway is in my view very good, and is certainly part of the process. It is up to the ABC Board and government to decide what that process will be.

It's been a rewarding and fascinating six months. I was informed the other day we came in significantly under budget on the whole exercise. That pleased me immensely and is something for the Australian taxpayer to note. I feel very satisfied at executing everything I envisaged. Only history will tell whether the Report was of value.