



***AUSTRALASIAN STUDY OF  
PARLIAMENT GROUP  
(Queensland Chapter)***

**AUSTRALASIAN STUDY OF PARLIAMENT GROUP  
2018 ANNUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**THURSDAY, 19 JULY 2018**

**Brisbane**

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### **The conference met at 8.52 am.**

**Mr FRASER:** Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Brisbane. My name is David Fraser. I am the chair of the Queensland group. It is a position I have held for nearly 12 months. I have come to the conclusion that I hold this position because I was incapable of running fast!

Today we will have a small opening session and then we will move into the first formal business session. I, however, have a few announcements to make. The first is: if you have a mobile phone, turn it off, turn it down or put it outside somewhere. In the event of an emergency, there will be a great commotion and you will be instructed via some strange system of speakers as to where to go and what to do. I have never heard it before. I do not know if it ever goes off except when it is tested, but I do not think it will be a major problem. Just follow the instructions. Toilets are out the back door, down the corridor and to the left. Feel free to go whenever you need to. We will be having a short coffee break at 10.45. It will be for only 15 minutes because we have a fairly packed program. Just bear that in mind. If you feel you need to have a small break you can go outside and wander in the corridor, but do not wander too far.

At this stage I would like to extend our thanks to the School of Political Science and International Studies at UQ, particularly the Graduate Centre in Governance and International Affairs. They have a small display up the back. They have been very helpful to us. They have given us some assistance in putting this program together and in bringing some delegates here. We hope to maintain a close relationship with them. They are keen to maintain a relationship. This is the first year it has occurred. We are very thankful for the efforts and contribution they have made.

I will first introduce Brett Nutley, who is the Indigenous liaison officer for the Queensland parliament. We will then hear from the Clerk of the Queensland Parliament, Neil Laurie, who is standing in for the Speaker, who is unable to be with us today. Then Colleen Lewis will conclude this part of the program and then we will start the first business session.

**Mr NUTLEY:** Thank you.

*Mr Nutley then gave a traditional welcome.*

That means 'good morning to many' in the Yugambeh, Jagera and Turrbal languages. It is an honour to formally introduce myself today to conduct the Indigenous greetings. My name is Brett Nutley, the Indigenous liaison officer of the Queensland Parliamentary Service. I am a direct descendant of the traditional people for these surrounding areas, who are called the Jagera people. On behalf of my parliamentary colleagues I would like to acknowledge all elders past and present of all the peoples here today.

My great-great-grandfather was known as 'King Sandy' by the Europeans but also known by our people as Bungaree. He walked these lands and cared for mother earth. In 1828 he was commonly known as the leader of the Jagera people. There are tribes and clans that come under nations, and each clan has a totem. My people's totem for this area is the brown snake. For those of our guests who are not from Australia, Indigenous peoples in this country come from different tribes and clan groups that have different languages. For example, on the Gold Coast you have the Kombumerri people; in Beaudesert the Mununjali; on the Sunshine Coast the Gubbi Gubbi; and in Bundaberg the Gooreng Gooreng. All the names change around the state. Different languages accompany that also.

While I am up here, I would like to quickly blow the Queensland parliament's trumpet regarding our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement. To progress reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Queenslanders, in May 2007 former Speaker Reynolds introduced two historic and significant initiatives, which included acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which parliament meets and flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags daily outside of Parliament House in Brisbane. Inside the Legislative Assembly chamber, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags are also on display on a permanent basis with the Queensland and Australian flags. These initiatives of the Queensland

parliament occurred during a celebration of the 40th anniversary of the 1967 referendum regarding Indigenous Australians' rights, and this all occurred during Reconciliation Week 2007. In 2008 the first Indigenous liaison officer was appointed to an Australian parliament—me.

The Queensland parliament holds in high importance educating the Indigenous people of Queensland in legislative process. The Queensland parliament holds an annual week-long Eric Deeral Indigenous Youth Parliament. Mr Eric Deeral was a member here between 1974 and 1977, the first Indigenous state member in Australia. In that program we deal with legislative processes, hold a mock committee hearing so people know the process, debate mock bills in the parliament and how to vote. This program has been recognised as a foundation building block in getting our Indigenous youth involved with political processes. Now the Queensland program has been adopted at the national level and is called the National Indigenous Youth Parliament.

Since parliamentary committee reforms in 2011, we have trained approximately 400 participants in legislative processes. The Indigenous youth are from remote, regional and urban areas of Queensland. Prior to 2011, when we engaged with Indigenous Queenslanders we may have had three or four attending a hearing. Now, with the help of former participants explaining the process of youth parliament, our numbers have averaged higher. For example, we went to a small community, Injinoo, in the northern peninsula area. Usually a few people attend. We had a bill about land holdings. Land is very important to our people. From a community of 300 to 400 people at any given time, we had 120 to 140 people turn up to that meeting because of the education processes.

Today I have been asked to traditionally welcome you to the Jagera and Turrbal country on which the parliament sits. There is no specific word of welcome in our language, so I will just say 'Jingerri, jingerri, jingerri', which means 'greetings everyone'. I wish you all well. Please enjoy your conference on behalf of my family's traditional lands.

**Mr LAURIE:** Thank you, Brett, for your welcome to country. I would also like to start by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting. I pay my respects to their elders past and present. We are very fortunate to live in a country with two of the world's oldest continuing cultures in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples whose lands, winds and waters we all share. As a matter of interest, this room is known as the Undumbi Room. In the local language that means 'meeting place' so it is a very good name for a room such as this.

I would like to pass on regrets from the Hon. Curtis Pitt MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, who sends his regrets for being unable to be present today and his best wishes for the conference. I would like to acknowledge the President of the ASPG National Executive, Adjunct Professor Colleen Lewis, and members of the ASPG National Executive; the chairs and office holders of the ASPG's nine chapters; and the Rt Hon. Trevor Mallard, Speaker of the New Zealand House of Representatives. The members of the Queensland parliament who are here today and will be over the course of this conference are Mr Aaron Harper, member for Thuringowa; Mr Steve Minnikin, member for Chatsworth; Mr Peter Russo, member for Sunnybank; Dr Christian Rowan, member for Moggill, Ms Sandy Bolton, member for Noosa; and Mr Mark McArdle, member for Caloundra. I would also like to acknowledge current and former members from other Australian parliaments including New Zealand, Samoa and Papua New Guinea who are here today.

Conference presenters and panellists, Australian Study of Parliament Group members, ladies and gentlemen: I welcome you all here to the Queensland parliament to the Australian Study of Parliament Group's annual national conference. The weather today is pretty well near perfect. We are forecast to have a maximum of 23 degrees and an overnight minimum of 10. To answer some obvious questions for our visitors, for my colleagues from PNG and Pacific islands: no, it is not going to snow; it just feels like it. For our southern and trans-Tasman visitors, I suppose you can go for a swim—there is a pool next door at QUT—but we will not be joining you.

It is wonderful to see so many people from so many places here today and, for myself, to meet with colleagues whom I have known from the past. Here we are for the next two days to discuss the operation of parliament. The ASPG is a very broad church whose membership consists of parliamentarians, former parliamentarians, parliamentary officers, academics, teachers, students, journalists and other interested individuals—so those who do the governing; those who support them doing it; those who research, teach and learn about it; those who write about it and; last but definitely not least, those who determine who will do it. It is not uncommon to hear someone say they are actively avoiding anything to do with government

or politics and to claim this is a virtue. However, there is a strong argument to be made that in a democracy this is not a virtue but, rather, a dereliction of duty. The Australian Study of Parliament Group has definitely been meeting its democratic obligations.

Since 1978 the ASPG has been encouraging and stimulating research, writing, teaching and discussion about parliamentary institutions, particularly those of Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific. From my perspective as a parliamentary officer, the ASPG fills a very important niche. Clerks have the Australian and New Zealand society of Clerks and its international counterpart the Society of Clerks-at-the-Table that regularly conduct seminars, education programs and publication of papers about the intricacies of parliamentary procedure. Stimulating stuff!

Through our parliamentary law and practice course and annual seminars, we aim to not only foster the professionalism of parliamentary officers but also develop our next generation of senior officers. I am very pleased that the ASPG sees fit to publish many of the papers produced by the graduates of our PLP course in its journal. Presiding officers and Clerks in Australia and the Pacific have also been meeting regularly for 49 years to discuss administrative and procedural issues affecting their parliaments.

The ASPG fills another wider space and context. The ASPG tends to look at the big picture issues. This is a very important niche. The seminars and conferences conducted by local chapters of the ASPG, this national conference and the publication of the *Australian Parliamentary Review* all play, in my view, a very vital role in stimulating thought, discussion and debate about our systems of government.

The strength of the ASPG is in its diversity. I said earlier that the ASPG is a broad church and it is fair to say that bringing together this collection of individuals and occupations is not without its challenges. There are some longstanding rivalries, a few differences of opinion and the occupational habits of a lifetime to overcome. That this somewhat disparate collection of individuals and occupations has been the stimulus for significant improvements to the operation and delivery of governments across Australia is testament to the sense of purpose and commitment to the collective. I do not want to steal any of Colin James' session, which is on next, but the incredibly effective operation of the ASPG might just be an example of crowd wisdom.

The theme for this conference is 'Trust in parliament in a post-truth world'. This year's program will challenge our understandings of trust in our parliaments and explore the relationships, the tensions and the possibilities of transformation for parliamentarians and politicians alike. At tomorrow's debate on the virtues of democracy you will no doubt hear Winston Churchill's famous quote that democracy is the worst form of government except all the others that have been tried. I have been recently reminded of another of Churchill's famous quotes, that is—

The truth is incontrovertible. Malice may attack it, ignorance may deride it, but in the end, there it is.

We are living in a world where every day the truth is under attack, a world where there is fierce debate and ongoing controversy about what is the truth. The indisputable is disputed and alternatives to the truth are proposed, published and propagated as fact in the blink of an eye. While Churchill may still be right that in the end the truth is still there, the issue we face now is that between when the malicious attacks and the ignorant derisions on truth begin and when the truth finally outs good governments fall, good policies are abandoned, careers are destroyed and reputations are tarnished before the truth sometimes emerges. It would be interesting to hear a debate on this quote of Churchill's. I expect that that might be part of what we get over the next two days.

The program for the next two days is a great mix of interesting topics from distinguished presenters. I would like to thank all of those involved in putting together this terrific program. My parting words to you are: enjoy the conference and the opportunities it will provide to discuss issues with colleagues from different jurisdictions and different professions. Collectively, you can solve the problems that vex our parliaments and develop the solutions that will improve our democracy. For those people visiting Brisbane, enjoy your stay. I hope some of you have the opportunity to extend your visit and see some of the great wonders our state has to offer. Please take the time to visit our old Parliament House, which is this year celebrating its 150th anniversary. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak this morning. I wish you the best and would like to welcome to the podium Adjunct Professor Colleen Lewis, President of the ASPG National Executive.

**Prof. LEWIS:** Before I begin today I would like to acknowledge the Jagera and the Turrbal peoples of the land upon which we are meeting. As I approached the podium I thought to myself that most people get nervous when they are public speaking but they do not have the added worry that I have, which is: how

big is the lectern? Can you see me? On behalf of all ASPG members, I wish to thank the Speaker of the Queensland Parliament, the Hon. Curtis Pitt, for hosting the ASPG conference this year. We all greatly appreciate the hospitality and we extend to him our very best wishes for a speedy recovery. Our thanks also go to the Queensland parliament and to the Clerk of the Parliament, Mr Neil Laurie.

The parliament has generously allowed the conference organiser, Ms Lynda Pretty, to work full-time for the past month and have relieved her of her other duties so that she could do so. The parliament is also funding seven staff as paid delegates to the conference. Lynda let me know that special thanks goes to Mr Laurie for that generosity. I have exchanged many emails with Lynda, particularly over the last few months, and I have been so impressed by her excellent organisational skills. I felt very confident when I was coming up from Melbourne thinking everything is going to run smoothly because Lynda really has been outstanding. She has been ably assisted by Ciara Furlong and James Gilchrist. I will say a few more thanks at the end of the conference in my closing address.

The Queensland chapter of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association generously provided the funds to allow two people from their twin Pacific parliaments to attend today. The ASPG offers a very warm welcome to those delegates and we look forward to meeting and talking to you over the next few days.

The University of Queensland's Graduate Centre in Governance and International Affairs has also been extremely generous. They have sponsored eight PhD students to attend the conference. I would like to extend a very warm welcome to those PhD students. We are certainly very glad to have you here. I hope, too, that we hear from you in the discussions in question time because I have always found that PhD students ask really interesting questions.

We have two days to spend together to enjoy, to be informed, to debate, to do all the things that the ASPG does so well. I look forward to hopefully meeting you all during that period of time. Please enjoy these two days.

**Mr FRASER:** I have just a few technical things about the conduct of the sessions. In this first session each speaker will have 20 minutes to speak. We will then have a period at the end where you can ask any questions of the participants or discuss whatever you like. That is probably preferable to taking each speaker individually. We have a timing device in the middle of the room which counts down, so there will be no excuse for anyone going over their time because I can see when 20 minutes is up as well. During the discussion period we will have roving microphones. I will nominate the person who is waving the most prolifically or stands out the most and there will be a roving microphone brought to you.

These whole proceedings are being recorded by Hansard. That is what the wee black thing there on the front desk is for. If you do ask a question or make a comment could you please introduce yourself so it can be recorded in the Hansard record.

Today's session is also being streamed on Facebook. Later on we will give everyone the Facebook link. You will all get that so you can all look at yourselves. That is all the mechanics of the day. We will kick off the formal program. The first speaker is Nicholas Gruen.

**Mr GRUEN:** Here we are in the age of populism in the English-speaking world and many other places. We think of Brexit and Donald Trump as marking this starting in 2016, but in this area, as in so many other areas in democracy, Australia led the world. This slide is not working the way it was supposed so. I am not quite sure what has happened. Tony Abbott was about to walk on and the reason I have him in the slide—I know why it is not working. It is my fault, I think. The distinction I want to make here is that the explanations we are typically given for what is happening to us are materialist explanations. The first is the recession, the second is austerity and the third is inequality. In America—this is inequality that is measured by the Gini coefficient, a technical thing that goes from zero for perfect equality to 1 for perfect inequality—that is all the money in the world that is in the hands of Jeff Bezos. We are not in either world, but as you can see, America has gone from 0.36, quite a high Gini coefficient, to 0.44. Correspondingly, polarisation in America, polarisation in America's parliament, has risen.

Mixed marriages in the United States—people used to think of that as marriages across lines of race, gender identity, gender orientation or sexual orientation. It is now a more horrifying prospect in America for a self-identifying Republican to marry a Democrat than it is for white-black, black-white, gay, straight. That is a fact. Is that not a remarkable state of affairs in a democracy?

Trust has gone from about 75 per cent in Congress, in that case, down to about 20 per cent. The question was 'that this institution will mostly do the right thing'. It went from 75 per cent to 20 per cent. That is a pretty serious state of affairs. In Australia we have not had the kinds of things that have been happening

to the economies of the UK or the US, yet precisely the same phenomena are present. This is polarisation and, again, polarisation amid what I would call policy blandness in Australia. Essentially we have two centrist parties, however much they like to pretend that they are not, we have voters moving away from major parties and disappearing moderate politicians.

Distrust is doing precisely what it has done in the United States and yet Australia has had very different government. If you ask yourself the question, 'What about policy in Australia?' it has been reasonably steady as she goes. When I said that something had happened to the slides, I had mixed up the fact that I was showing you this twice. Here is Tony Abbott. Why AM I showing you Tony Abbott? It is because we led the world in this phenomenon. The greatest achievement of the 2013 parliament was to abolish carbon pricing. Why is that significant? I happen to think it is extremely bad policy, but that is not my point. My point is that—and I don't know; what do you think?—80 per cent of the parliamentarians who brought about the abolition of carbon pricing knew it was bad policy. Ninety per cent, 75 per cent or maybe 65 per cent, if you want to be conservative.

It is an extraordinary state of affairs that we elect a political elite that then, for reasons of political combat, starts vandalising the public policy of our country. I like that cartoon, only because it is funny and not because I have a particular thing about Tony Abbott. That ended and yet the policies that were put in place for political combat remain. It is pretty much the same state of affairs that we have in Brexit, which was that a thing happened—the public voted 52-48—and that was it; the entire political class has no idea what to do. I would not know what to do either. Their respect for the people is suddenly very strongly illustrated by something and they do not know what to do about it.

Let me show you quickly these three lines that show the per adult national income. As you can see, there was a big recession in living standards in the United States and in Great Britain which they took a great deal of time to recover from. That was not the case in Australia. It is a factoid in Australian politics that inequality has risen. Certainly as measured by the Gini coefficient it has risen a little bit over time but has headed down in the past two years. Probably the most important measure is the incomes of the bottom 50 per cent, which has again done a great deal better than in the other two countries. The one area where inequality is getting worse in Australia is incomes of the people at the top, the very top 0.1 per cent. Other than that, inequality has not been growing in Australia. Here we are, and our materialist explanation of what is going on just does not work for Australia. I think we need a much more general explanation of what is going on, although I am not suggesting that recessions, inequality and so on do not have any effect.

I think we need another explanation, and the explanation I have is fast food. The idea is that the way fast food comes about is that mechanisms in our makeup that helped protect us and made us thrive on the African savannah—a bit of salt, a bit of sugar, a bit of fat—tell us that food is good, but after a few centuries of optimisation that is what we get: we get something that turns toxic on us. It is something that we want but not something that we need; it is something that is bad for us.

In democracy, what is happening is that essentially we have optimised our whole culture, I would argue. Those are some examples of areas of our culture that have been optimised by endless competition and endless attempts to give us exactly what we want as quickly and as cost effectively as possible. You will have heard that when people talk about the post-truth world they talk about the internet. There is no doubt that the internet has sped up some of these things. I have included some of the things that have been most influenced by the internet, although as you will see in the case of porn they were not invented by the internet but they are certainly turbocharged by the internet.

A great deal of this stuff has been continuous with our political culture for a long, long period. Tristan Harris, who used to be the design ethicist at Google, has started an organisation called the Institute for Humane Technology, which is trying to push against this kind of optimisation that gets us checking our emails about 120 times a day. He calls it the race to the bottom of the brain stem. This slide shows a fact about politics that is pre-internet but is huge, in my opinion. That is for the United States, but we know that it applies everywhere where mass media applies. This culture has optimised that the way to get clicks is to hack into our emotions and to hack into our tribal sense so that we identify with a group and we identify a group of people who disagree with us and then we simply yell at each other. Sound familiar? The great climax of this is that, in this fast-foodised culture, it has now come fully to politics.

Another way of thinking about this is that what we are dealing with is a balance of emotions in politics. Martha Nussbaum writes a pretty interesting book called *Political Emotions*. She distinguishes between two kinds of emotions. I am characterising them as essentially a feminine emotion of love and care and a masculine emotion, which is hacking into the fight or flight reflex, the fight or flight emotion. The thing is that

masculinity can turn toxic. Here are the feminine emotions as exemplified by Abraham Lincoln. We were told that Winston Churchill would be quoted and here he is. Again, that is a healthy kind of masculinity. Here is another fellow about whom no more need be said.

I am interested in the way in which these emotions are balanced in our politics. In Austria, before the last election there was a survey taken by a political party but it was done with a representative sample of Austrians. They gave them descriptions of all the different portfolios in the Austrian government. They said, 'Of these 26 areas, what do you think is most important for your parliamentarians to focus on over the next four years, the next term of the chamber?' What do you think came first? What do you think was the top of the ladder? Are there any thoughts? Education. That purple line should go at the top. It does on my computer and it does not on lots of other people's computers; I am sorry about that.

However, what do you think the election was fought on? It was fought on immigration. The reason it was fought on immigration is that you cannot get onto the front page if you want to talk about education. I suppose you could in a kind of freak-show way, in the way that Donald Trump has made famous, but you cannot do it. Our politics is suffering from its location within the entertainment industry, which is roughly where it is now. Those are a whole range of areas in which our politics is stuck, and our politics is stuck because it is so easy for somebody who wants to take advantage of a politician doing what we know is likely to be the right thing to get themselves some zinger lines and to run a successful campaign, as Tony Abbott did against doing what was the most efficient way to meet our commitments, which was to introduce carbon pricing.

The reason I am interested in this is not that I have seen a problem and it needs to be fixed. There are lots of really difficult problems and this is a really difficult problem that needs to be fixed and I have no idea how to fix them. The reason I am standing before you is that I think there is a very powerful thing we can do to have a very powerfully curative effect. What I like about this is that it is extremely simple. There are some very simple, logical ideas behind it. The first is that when we talk about democracy we assume that that is synonymous with elections. I think we do need to have some subset of the public to delegate to a subset of the public some political power, but there are two ways to do that. One is using elections and the other is using sortition or selection by lot. If that sounds crazy to you, we consign the fate of the accused people in our court system to a bunch of randos, as my daughter would say. Twelve people are chosen at random from the community. The evidence is that this has powerfully curative effects.

Very quickly on that slide: Aristotle, Montesquieu—when the founding fathers were quoting those people, what did the founding fathers of America want to avoid at all costs? Democracy. Democracy was a dirty word. Their hope was that with elections you would get yourself an elite that had aristocratic characteristics that were the best that the people could vote for.

The other thing about democratic elections—there you are, I did it myself—is that they are inherently competitive, which I have coded there as red, as masculine. They are inherently competitive. You do not get to be a politician without beating other politicians and when you have done that you join a team which is trying to beat another team. That is how electoral democracy works and that is not how democracy by lot works. Democracy by lot works with a bunch of people in a room who have to solve a problem. Some may agree, some may disagree and they may compete, but at the end of the day they need to cooperate to get a job done.

The Greek word at the bottom of the slide, isegoria, we have no translation for, but I think you will recognise the need for the concept in our democracy, because we are sorely lacking in it. In addition, the Greek word parrhesia means 'freedom of speech' as we translate it. In some senses, it means speaking truth to power. The word isegoria means 'equality of speech'. We do not have equality of speech. Ninety-something per cent of our parliamentarians have university degrees; less than 50 per cent of our population have university degrees. Most of our parliamentarians are in prime career age; it massively under-represents younger people and massively under-represents much older people. We do have a kind of hyped up, toxified form of isegoria in our system for less educated people and that is One Nation. I do not think they are doing a very good job of bringing out the basic decency of their constituents.

A citizen jury is a group of people chosen at random to represent the people, as in legal juries. The whole way in which politics is transacted is extremely different. Firstly, often about 80 per cent having gone through the experience say how fantastically they thought it went, how much their peers exceeded their expectations in the extent to which they could rise to the occasion and the way the sort of mood in the group is a surprise to everyone. What happens when people get invited to participate in these kinds of things is

that firstly they go, 'Oh, that's fantastic. I'm going to be involved in an important thing that I have been chosen to be involved in.' Then people go, 'Oh, it's politics. There'll be demonstrators. People will be yelling at me' and so on. Of course, that is not the case because they are just with ordinary people.

Here is a simple quote from somebody who realises the other person's point of view. Imagine that being discussed on the radio. This is how to keep Adelaide vibrant and safe. You would have had someone from the hotels association debating some people who take the opportunity to get on the radio and say that things are not fair for women and there is domestic violence and so on. This is a situation in which, immediately, division lines are drawn and people are defending themselves. Here, immediately, people see an issue: 'I don't have that issue but I can see you do; let's do something about it.'

The other thing that happens is that people's respect for their politicians rises very substantially and their respect for the bureaucrats rises substantially, because they can see that they are trying to solve difficult problems. They start to understand what is wrong. What do you think happens to their low opinion of the media? It gets a lot worse, especially when they see themselves quoted because what happens is that the media go through everything that is said and grab a few things that sound exciting and report them as what has been going on in the jury. Their respect for the decision is hugely enhanced. They go, 'Well, whether it's right or wrong, I respect this decision has been made in a way that makes sense.'

I call this unitary democracy, as opposed to competitive democracy. What happens is that when people see it they understand what Aristotle meant when he said that man is a political animal. We were told earlier about our democratic duties. The Greeks also had a word for somebody who cares only for their own business and not for the public, not for the city. They called them idiots, which is where we get our word 'idiot'.

What happens when people come out of citizen juries? With a Melbourne citizen jury of 42 people, two people stood for local council at the very next opportunity. That gives you an idea that this is helping to actually generate something that we want. How do views change? They become more community minded, they become less punitive and they tend to move towards more informed opinion. This slide shows the number of people in Texas who would be prepared to pay a little bit more on their electricity bill to lower emissions and have more renewable energy. It goes from 52 per cent to 84 per cent.

At the very end of this presentation, if you want my preferred constitutional model I will suggest it to you, but it is not much use hearing what I would do with the Constitution. That is long way off. I do want to say that I think citizen juries can be a very powerful form of activism themselves. I am trying to organise a deliberation day in the United Kingdom in which there would be 10 citizen juries around the country and they would deliberate on Brexit. We have good evidence that once people go through this process, the roughly 50-50 split between Brexit and Remain turns into a 60-40 pro-Remain vote. I do not care which way it goes—I happen to think that that is the right answer—but what I really care about is that, whatever happens to Britain now, at least 48 per cent of the people will feel resentful, disenfranchised and so on. This is a way that I think we could get out of that.

I think there is a whole repertoire that we could dip into. Imagine if we had treaties with countries that said in the event of certain events, war being the worst possible one but any kind of rising hostilities between countries, 100 people chosen at random from those countries would meet and deliberate. I call that Operation Christmas 1914. It is the men coming out of the trenches, giving each other gifts, singing hymns and playing soccer with each other before going back into the trenches the next day to try to kill each other.

Imagine if the Greek crisis had been negotiated with, alongside Yanis Varoufakis and Wolfgang Schauble, 100 Greek citizens chosen at random and 100 German citizens chosen at random. Those people have some serious things to talk about, I am telling you now. The Greeks have been ripping off the Germans for the last 30 years—my wife is Greek—and they have good reason to be ripping off the Germans given what happened to them in the 1940s. They need to talk and what does not work is if their representative goes and talks to someone else and comes back and says, 'Yeah, I really told them.' That really does not help anyone. Imagine if we had done this with the Timor gas treaty. I would have thought that we would have sorted that out in short order, but somehow the way we structure things we were not capable of that.

Here is a particular fellow talking about the US Civil War, saying if only there had been fair and calm expression of opinion it would never have come to half a million men madly slaughtered. That was Ulysses S Grant writing his memoirs. I am really providing you with this example to give you an idea of the kind of thing I am talking about.



Just as the 18th and 19th centuries were about setting up checks and balances between the political representatives of the people in the lower house and the political representatives of the property classes in the upper house—which was the case with the House of Lords, initially the Senate in the US and certainly around Australia in all of the colonies—we were setting up checks and balances between property and democracy. Now that the upper houses are all democratised to some extent, I think we should either have a third chamber or replace the upper chamber—and of course that works well in Queensland because we even have a chamber for them to move into—with a citizen's house, a house of people chosen by lot. I do not think you even need to give it much power because it would not have been possible for Tony Abbott to have got the carbon pricing abolition through possibly the House and certainly the Senate if there was a people's chamber coming to the view which I am very confident that it would by 60 per cent or more that that was a really dumb idea. By the way, it is costing the federal budget \$11 billion a year that we abolish carbon pricing. We do not hear that, but that is the story.

That is what I am trying to bring about. I want to leave you with these images. I began with that image about Brexit and this is how people are deliberating on Brexit in the United Kingdom, and that is another image. You laugh at that and that is fair enough because we are very used to that, but I do not laugh at that. I am the son of someone who escaped the holocaust and it fills me with absolute horror that that is a normal way that we go about trying to persuade people. When I look at Donald Trump I am filled with horror and I would like to do this a different way. Thank you.

**Mr FRASER:** Thanks very much, Nicholas. The next speaker is Colin James.

**Mr JAMES:** Kia ora. I have the same issue with lecterns, obviously. I am interested that trust in parliamentary technology will have dropped this morning and it probably reached the level of academic technology of the same sort in New Zealand, which almost invariably goes wrong, so I am quite fascinated by that exercise. Kia ora tatou. The full version of what I am about to say—and this is a really cut-down version—is on the ASPG website. By the way, I understand it is the Australasian Study of Parliament Group—I just thought I would make that point—and it will also be on [colinjames.co.nz](http://colinjames.co.nz) tomorrow.

My paper essentially talks of three tensions. One is between the impact on citizens of rapidly developing digital technology and citizens' reaction to that impact, including through parliaments. The second is between liberal democracy and autocracy, which a growing body of commentary worries democracy is losing. The third lies under these two tensions between the wisdom of crowds and the madness of crowds, and my term 'madness of crowds' comes from an 1841 book by Charles Mackay titled the *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds* which includes the tulip mania, the South Sea Bubble and could recently have included collateral debt obligations.

When we talk about liberal democracy we mostly talk about representative democracy channelled through parliaments. In its modern form, representative democracy is only around a century and a half old. In the preceding era of oligarchic parliaments, only a select elite of property owners and aristocracy were directly represented. The rest of the population—the crowd—at most consented and did so passively. 'Acquiesced' is a better term. This was in essence an oligarchy. As AC Grayling has usefully pulled together in his latest book, the oligarchy from Plato to the 19th century distrusted 'the crowd'—the demos. Plato said it was—

... driven in unruly fashion by emotion, self-interest, prejudice, anger, ignorance and thoughtlessness into rash, cruel, destructive and self-destructive action.

I think we have seen that in Helsinki! Lee Kuan Yew said that the exuberance of democracy leads to undisciplined and disorderly conduct, and my paper has in a note a really interesting quote from Winston Churchill on democracy as well and a different one from the ones that have been used.

As the Industrial Revolution lifted rising numbers out of poverty, the elites realised direct representation—what might be called active consent—could safely be extended to those rising classes and had to be if social order and cohesion were to be maintained. In 1893 New Zealand was the first country to take this to its logical conclusion with universal suffrage, including women and Indigenous Maori. In fact, the Maori got it first. To channel the crowd's preferences, demands and needs into practical programs, parties evolved and in their mature form liberal democracies came to be dominated by parties of the Centre Left and Centre Right alternating in office and operating within informally understood policy boundaries which could be pushed to the left or to the right a bit but within limits. I call this the era of bounded rationality. Most of the people most of the time thought the system more or less worked. There was a high level of trust, and that is the glue that holds liberal democracies together, as Fukuyama has written about.

Bounded rationality still reigns in Aotearoa/New Zealand. A recent survey found a marked lift since 2016 in trust and confidence—and the general levels anyway are higher than what we saw on those graphs—in government, ministers and MPs, thanks probably to the election of a remarkable young woman as Prime Minister last year. It still operates broadly in Australia, as far as I can see from across the Tasman, but I defer to those graphs. In Northern Hemisphere liberal democracies, the Centre Left/Centre Right hegemony has ended and with it has gone bounded rationality. The vehicles of protest range from the far Right to the far Left to the oddball—that is, Italy—and from parties or movements to demagogues such as Boris Johnson and Donald Trump or fresh faced saviours such as Emmanuel Macron.

In the still new post-1990 democracies of Eastern Europe, autocracy is on the rise. The May/June issue of *Foreign Affairs* asked on its front cover: 'Is democracy dying?' Books and articles in this vein are multiplying. In short, in liberal democracies the crowd is no longer moderated by moderate parties. The elites accordingly are agitated. The agitation assumes representative democracy is democracy. It is not. Representation is only one channel through which the demos—the crowd—can exercise and moderate its will. But actually, as my paper details, there have long been and now there are a growing number of alternative ways to express opinion, to develop ways of thinking, to assemble and assess evidence, to build coalitions, to work through competing nations for options for action, reach consensus or a majority agreement and mandate action, and I go through those in my paper and include, I might say, collaborative governance, which is an exercise in the Land and Water Forum in New Zealand which is interesting.

These alternative mechanisms have been enhanced and greatly added to by digital technology. Far more populous crowds can be reached and can interact across far greater distances at lightning speed, and the larger the crowd the more irrational its members can be. What the crowds say about themselves and to others is harvested and processed using artificial intelligence. There are a couple of new books this year which go through that really usefully, and I quote them in the paper.

These new technologies have wreaked serious damage on the keeper of truth, the fourth estate. The new era robber barons—Facebook, Google, Amazon and other social media—have sucked much of the advertising lifeblood out of traditional media and diminished the role of traditional media's fact-seeking journalists. They channel 'news' according to their users' clicks, reinforcing preference, prejudice and preconception. They carry bots, automated accounts which autonomously spread messages—that is, astroturfing; amplify allies' messages—propaganda; and dampen opponents' messages—roadblocking. An Illinois university study found that a fifth of Twitter messages in the 2016 United States election were generated by such bots. That garbles real news and enables the spread of fake news, which is the antithesis of truth and the enemy of trust on which representative democracy depends. Political parties and candidates and hostile governments or crooks use the personal data they harvest to target bots and distort voting, as in the United States presidential election and the Brexit referendum. Representative democracy and its parliaments face potentially existential threats.

That is the bad news—the fuelling of a fulsome madness of crowds with distorted, fabricated and malicious ideas. This is the post-truth, the title that this conference talks of. Moreover, this digitised world is the one twentysomethings and younger have grown up with. They think differently, cohort by cohort. Not surprisingly, voter turnout in elections has declined in New Zealand and in other real democracies in which voting is not compulsory. The good news is that the new media and the other threads of the web also can and do enable and fuel a wisdom of crowds and participation in ways that in the past were difficult to organise or not even imaginable. Can those ways of collective problem solving deliver for politics what the peer-to-peer commons does in generating Wikipedia entries or finding solutions to complex digital technology issues?

There is crowd funding or business start-ups, charities and other ventures. In 2016 in New Zealand an iconic beach was rescued into public ownership. Pressure groups organise digitally as, for example, in New Zealand such as justice reform groups JustSpeak and People Against Prisons. Informal movements can be much more easily generated as in the overthrow of the Egyptian regime in 2011 or the #MeToo Movement exposing sexual harassment. These developments do appear to be pointing to the development, however unevenly, of alternative ways of doing democracy. I term this 'distributed democracy' by analogy with distributed electricity generation, as in solar panels et cetera. Just as distributed electricity systems still need big generators and a grid, sovereign national states need central authority and so a national legislature and government.

Second, while distributed democracy leaves room for madness of crowds, it also makes room for wisdom of crowds. That can apply even in autocracies which claim all wisdom lies in the centre as, for example, China's Emperor Xi Jinping does. We might say democracy is an interplay—a tension between

the madness of crowds and the wisdom of crowds. Both have always been in play. Liberal democracy works well when the wisdom prevails over the madness, as during the time of bounded rationality. Freedom House reports that 2017 was the 12th consecutive year of decline in global freedom. That lapse noted by Freedom House cannot be assumed to be temporary. Xi Jinping, Vladimir Putin, Viktor Orban and Recep Erdogan and their devotees have ambitions directly contradictory to liberal democracy.

Is it all gloom? Actually, in liberal democracies madness has not vanquished wisdom. The foundations are still sound even if the superstructure needs repairs. There is a case for optimism. Steven Pinker has presented mountain ranges of evidence that humans across most of the world have been treating each other better century by century and decade by decade on a per person calculation. That points not to the triumph of autocracy but towards something that might look more like a descendent or outgrowth of or migration towards liberal democracy.

One reason we have become despondent and why large minorities have turned away from liberal democracy is the relentlessly negative tone of the traditional media. We play up the bad, the disgusting, the violent, the worst side of human nature. We think that is what readers, listeners and viewers want. Entertainment trumps information.

That negative tone was no better encapsulated than the first words of the emailed weekend briefing of the *New York Times* of 20 May on the royal wedding: 'Let's start with some good news for a change'. Pinker overstates his case, but the underlying point, I think, has merit. If so, there is life and value in the liberal democracies, upsides worth developing, including in the capacity for distributed democracy to build the wisdom of crowds.

If that is to be so, parliaments will be critical to building the wisdom and quelling the madness. As the lawmaking meeting places—the places to talk—parliaments can take initiatives that can influence the course of debate, argument and resolution. A quick list might go something like this.

First, stamp out bad behaviour. The New Zealand parliament's question time, despite some improvements of the Speaker this past year, I have to acknowledge, is still a disgrace to parliament and the nation—a sufficient reason not to vote or at least not to vote for the incumbents. Partisanship cannot be eliminated because politics begets tribes with different ambitions for themselves, their supporters and the country. Airing those differences should be by principled debate and not snide, personalised, denigrating and partisan argument and catcalling.

Second, rework debate in a much strengthened committee structure to get more focus on improving legislation and informing it with disinterested expert, especially scientific, evidence. Third, help MPs behave more like the responsible representatives they need to be and, I think, mostly want to be by beefing up resources: good salaries, more administrative support in parliament and in electorates—and, in the case of New Zealand, list MPs in the area they choose as their base—strong research support, including funded access to private and academic experts and scientists for evidence, and access to departmental advice.

Fourth, reduce voter cynicism about who really runs the show by greatly increasing public funding of political parties and tightening rules limiting private donations and requiring information on those donations to be widely distributed publicly by way of social media so people who do not normally engage in politics see who is paying whom.

Fifth, related to that, generously publicly fund something like Radio New Zealand or the Australian Broadcasting Corporation to produce a platform of factual, fact checked information that other serious media or even social media can draw on. Also, publicly subsidise selected serious media websites such as, in New Zealand, Newsroom. I would add also The Conversation in Australia which is excellent.

Sixth, related to that, start looking for ways to mandate the curation of social media and hold the curators to account. Obvious mechanisms are tax and regulation, but the regulators will need to be very nimble, fast and innovative to keep up with changes in technologies, algorithms and platforms.

Seventh, set up an independent fiscal commission appointed by the whole of parliament and convert some other commissions into parliamentary commissions similarly appointed. That is commissions that are responsible to parliament, not the government. In New Zealand that could include the Human Rights Commission and the planned climate commission. First—and New Zealand especially take note—rewrite the appointment, dismissal and oversight rules of such commissions to ensure proper, open, just process.

Eighth, adopt the principle of subsidiarity and enable and mandate local councils to take more power and do more. Councils vary greatly in quality, but they are closer to their segments of the crowd than parliaments are. If well-resourced councils might prove able to develop internet based ways of engaging

and drawing from the crowd positively to develop wise policies and programs, the crowd can see, respect and value as relevant and see that they are not the preserve of a distant elite. Parliaments could learn from such experiments and innovations and lift their respect and relevance.

Ninth, and following on from that, start to take parliament and decision-making to the people through the innovative use of digital technology to inform, consult, engage and involve voters in more complex decisions than binary yes/no referendums. That could mean taking collaborative governance, citizen juries and assemblies and deliberative polling much wider than small samples and securing voter responses with blockchain technology to encourage interaction.

How far could that go? A recent book muses on citizen internet panels—and I have quoted this book in the paper—even a national panel comprising millions of people. ‘Decisions that affect a lot of people should involve a lot of people’—that is a bit of a surprise in a democracy.

To a fading baby boomer like me this seems to stray into science fiction territory, but in the digital world much that was science fiction 40 or 50 years ago is fact now. Why not new ways of doing democracy if the alternative is outdated, outmanoeuvred, outsmarted and then illegitimate parliaments? We need parliaments to focus politics and ideas and execute policies and decisions. But those parliaments need to be modern, as they learned they needed to be in the 19th century when the aristocracy and upper classes were challenged by the merchant and industrial classes and a new industrial working class.

How all this evolves and especially whether facts and common sense, which are the nearest we get to truth in politics, will prevail will be a large factor in the evolution of trust in parliament. The fundamental point is that democracy is the property of the demos. The optimist in me says that ultimately the decisions the demos makes rest on the wisdom of crowds. There is room for optimism that the wisdom of crowds might yet trump the madness of crowds. If so, liberal democracy has a way to go yet.

**Mr FRASER:** The next speaker is Professor Matthew Hornsey from the University of Queensland.

**Prof. HORNSEY:** I am a social psychologist from the University of Queensland. This will be a slightly different talk from the other talks we have heard this morning. I am going to be talking about some research that I have done on climate change in collaboration with Emily Harris, who is a PhD student of mine, and Kelly Fielding, an environmental psychologist.

I am going to be talking about climate change in a second, but before I do that I want to talk about the ozone layer. I do not know how many of you have an active memory of the crisis around the ozone layer. Looking around, I think many of you would. There are a few fresh faces in the crowd who maybe do not have a meaningful memory of that. For people my age and older, there was a time when it just seemed plausible that at some point the ozone layer would thin out to the point that we would die—that we would be burnt up or would have to live underground or whatever. It was quite a frightening existential crisis.

The reason that is a dim memory for many of us now is that scientists cottoned on pretty quickly to the cause of the problem—the CFCs that came from aerosol cans and other places. Pretty soon after the science landed on that, governments responded. The first definitive evidence that CFCs were contributing to the thinning of the ozone layer over the Antarctic did not happen until 1985. Within 15 months governments around the world had banded together and signed a treaty phasing out CFCs globally. If you think about examples where governments act swiftly and decisively in response to an early warning message from scientists about an impending environmental catastrophe, the story about the ozone layer is a very good news story—it is a success story.

Let us talk about another example of scientists coming up with an early warning signal about an impending environmental crisis. We have known for a long time that the planet’s temperatures are increasing. This slide is one way of demonstrating that. This is temperatures over the last 150 years or so. The further that line goes from the centre, the hotter that year was. It bunches up very tightly for a long time, but in the last few decades it has started to spool out. You see that expansion and that expansion rapidly increase. Then we get these hanging threads at the end. The last couple of years have been very hot indeed.

This slide is another way of looking at the same type of information. The blue bar is the average surface temperature on the planet over the last 150 years or so. The red bar is the CO<sub>2</sub> concentration in the atmosphere over that same time. Some 97 per cent of climate scientists are telling us that red bar is causing the blue bar—it is the CO<sub>2</sub> that is causing the increases in temperature. There is a fair consensus around that. It is long been presumed that that is the case.

This slide is an extract from a special message to Congress from Lyndon Johnson back in 1965. He was effectively making the case that we are changing the composition of the atmosphere and that carbon dioxide is going to cause problems. If you were in 1965 hearing a speech like that to Congress and you had to try to predict what was going to happen, you might think it is going a bit like the ozone case—you have this accumulating evidence and then governments will act sensibly, swiftly and decisively to respond to that accumulating evidence. We know that that is not what happened. Governments on the whole have been relatively slow to respond to this problem. We know that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions have increased every year since 1965. Not just that, we know that there is a substantial portion of the public who deny the reality of the evidence around anthropogenic climate change. Not just that, there are very powerful people—national leaders—who deny the reality of that evidence as well.

You look at this and you ask why this story about the link between CO<sub>2</sub> and global temperatures is playing out so differently from the one about the link between CFCs and the ozone. One answer to that question is carried in a book by an historian from Harvard called Naomi Oreskes and her colleague Erik Conway. In the book *Merchants of Doubt* they make the case—stating the obvious—that climate change is threatening. The fossil fuel industry is directly threatened by climate change. It is not just the fossil fuel industry that is threatened but also some conservatives—particularly conservatives who are wedded to the notion of free enterprise and weirded out by the notion of big government et cetera. For people like that, climate science is a bit of a nightmare. On some level it does imply a big government response designed to curb the freedom of enterprise. It is better to reject the science than to come on the board with that solution if you are on a particular part of the political spectrum.

They argued that this spectrum of threats kicked off an organised campaign of misinformation. They are very specific about how that works. Naomi Oreskes talks in particular about these three scientists. They are nuclear physicists, actually. They were involved in the development of the atomic bomb, back in the day. They had very strong, virulent anti-communist sentiments. They saw government regulation as a slippery slope on the path towards communism. They waged this campaign against the planet science as it emerged through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. They were minority voices within the scientific community, but these voices were amplified by the support of certain conservative think tanks which, in turn, were funded by the fossil fuel industry. The anti-government, pro-business rhetoric caught the ear of the Republican Party in the US. This conservative messaging from the Republican Party was faithfully relayed by the conservative media. Before you know it, you have this organised, integrated campaign of misinformation designed to plant seeds of doubt in the public about whether the science was in on climate change.

It has been very effective. We know that 97 per cent of climate scientists believe that humans are largely responsible for climate change, but if you ask people what is the consensus—‘How many scientists agree with this?’—they massively underestimate the amount of consensus that is out there. That is partly a direct result of this campaign of misinformation that is out there.

I argue that the greatest triumph for this campaign has been the extent to which it has insinuated its way into the mainstream of the Republican Party, the mainstreaming of climate scepticism in the Republican Party in the US. We saw in the last round of elections—the primaries—to elect the Republican nominee for the last election that a majority of the 12 or 13 people who put their hand up for election, on the public record lie somewhere on that spectrum of climate scepticism. That is quite extraordinary. It is not just Donald Trump. We had Ted Cruz talking about global-warming alarmists being the equivalent of flat-earthers. Rick Perry says that is a contrived, phoney mess, that Al Gore is a prophet of a secular carbon cult. Rick Santorum says that it is just an excuse for more government control of your life, it is junk science, it is all going to fall apart.

We see that messaging from conservative elites trickle down into the general public as well. I do not know how well you can see this data. This is part of a meta-analysis that I did with colleagues back in the day looking at what predicts people’s belief in anthropogenic climate change. The bigger the bar, the greater the correlation between that variable and people’s belief in climate change. You can see that these are demographic predictors based on us crunching polls together from around about. Political affiliation—who you plan to vote for in the next election—blows everything else out of the water in terms of demographics. People who intend to vote conservative are more sceptical, as you would expect, and that is much more predictive of climate beliefs than any of the usual fault lines that we see in society around age, race, sex et cetera. Education is quite a weak predictor as well. These are the ideology predictors of belief in climate change based on us crunching together 100 or so studies on this.

The top three relate to certain conservative oriented ideologies—the extent to which you believe in the rights of the individual over the regulatory hand of society, the extent to which you believe that hierarchies are normal and natural, that it is okay to have haves and have-nots, the extent to which you believe in the free market. The more people believe these types of ideologies, the less they are on board with the science of anthropogenic climate change.

These measures do not mention climate, but they are much more predictive of climate change beliefs than things that are more explicit about the climate than, for example, whether you have had personal experience of flooding and droughts. It is more predictive than the extent to which you know about science and are science literate. It is more predictive than education et cetera.

That has become a bit of a mantra in the field—yes, conservatives are more sceptical. If there is one thing that people know about climate deniers et cetera it is that they are more conservative. I feel a little troubled by that assumed wisdom, because the data around this are drawn largely from America. That makes me a little nervous about whether we can generalise that.

The other thing is that the type of narrative that Naomi Oreskes talks about in the *Merchants of Doubt*—this campaign of misinformation—is a very American story. We are talking about American scientists, American think tanks, American fossil fuel industries and American media. Out of curiosity, my colleagues and I were interested in the extent to which this relationship is a global phenomenon or whether it is something that is particularly strong in America—whether it is an ‘only in America’ kind of phenomenon. Of course, coming from Australia and seeing certain signs that similar patterns might be playing out in Australia, I was curious about that as well.

That is what we were doing. It is a very simple study. We just measure a bunch of beliefs—ideologies—that are aligned with conservatism. We also measure the extent to which people believe in anthropogenic climate change. We did that across 25 nations.

I am going to show you correlations. I am going to let you get your eye in. I know that that is a complex table and I hope that you can see it okay. For this table, we are looking at the correlation between the extent to which people self-identify as being right wing on a left-to-right spectrum and their scepticism about climate change. This dotted line is a correlation of zero. That means that there is no relationship. The further the square goes to the right of that dotted line, we are talking about positive correlations. That means the more right wing people are, the more sceptical they are about climate science. These little bars here are confidence intervals. If they straddle that dotted vertical line, it is effectively saying there is no reliable relationship there. One of the messages here is that, for about three-quarters of the countries, we are seeing no reliable relationship between the extent to which people self-identify as being left or right politically and the extent to which they feel sceptical about climate change—no relationship.

Another part of the story is that, if you look down here—this is America—it comes out as an outlier in this type of graph. This strong relationship that we presume is out there is particularly strong in America. It is there for other countries. Australia came out the second strongest in terms of that relationship between being right wing and conservative.

This is another version of the same story. This time we measured whether people self-identified as being liberal or conservative. This is not language that people in Australia find very easy. We do not see that relationship in Australia. We tend to think of it in terms of left and right, but it is the same story. Across most countries there is no relationship between being conservative and being sceptical. America is an exception and Canada came out as the second strongest there.

This is the same story, but this time we are measuring individualism—a conservative ideology. Again, it is significant in Australia. It is mostly significant in America. In most countries you do not see that relationship. This one is hierarchical values—the extent that you believe in hierarchies, that it is okay. You are not necessarily committed to egalitarianism as a moral virtue. Again, we see the same story: a large relationship in America. The second strongest is in Australia. Mostly, you do not see a relationship there.

Before we move on, I am going to detour a little bit and talk about conspiracy theorising. Because there is so much consensus among scientists around climate change, it is hard to be a climate sceptic without presuming that there is some kind of conspiracy going on. The standard conspiracies are that scientists cook up the science to get funding or they cook up the science to advance their green Marxist agenda, or that governments seize on fake science to get an excuse to raise taxes on the public and things like that. This is Donald Trump’s conspiracy theory. This is quite a rare one. It is peculiar to Donald Trump.

We know that there are a lot of conspiracies about climate change science, but I do not want to talk about specific theories; I want to talk about a conspiratorial mindset. Some people think this is how the world works—that we live in a world where there are these vast networks of people with bad intentions who conduct these elaborate hoaxes on the public and they can do that in near perfect secrecy: ‘This is just the way the world works and if you do not believe that, you are being naive.’ If that is your world view, we talk about that as a conspiratorial mindset, or a conspiratorial ideation.

If you have that belief then you are open-minded to any particular conspiracy. This is a fun study that was done back in the day when they asked people the extent to which they endorsed these two conspiracies. One of them was that when America claimed to have assassinated Osama bin Laden it was a PR stunt; he was already dead. Another conspiracy theory is that when America claimed to have assassinated Osama bin Laden it was a PR stunt; he is still out there and he is still alive. It cannot be both. He cannot be both alive and dead but, in fact, there is a sizeable positive correlation between those two things. The more people believed that he was already dead, the more they believed that he was still alive, which sounds funny but in some ways it is not, because for these people they are just out there and their antennae are alive to any alternative account of events.

That means that you can substitute one conspiracy theory for another. If you believe conspiracy theories generally, you are more likely to seize on conspiracy theories around climate change. We asked people the extent to which they believed these four world-famous conspiracies: that Princess Diana was killed by MI5; that a group of elites—or illuminati—have taken over the world and are controlling the world in secret; that JFK was killed as part of an organised conspiracy, not by a lone gunman. That JFK one is the most endorsed conspiracy theory in the world. The second most endorsed conspiracy theory in the world is that climate change is a hoax. The author had the soft version of the insider 9/11 one. This is the one that says that America knew it was going to happen and they allowed it to happen as a way of advancing their nefarious agenda. We measured the extent to which people believed those conspiracies.

I have to say that this correlates widely with anti-vax attitudes. You can predict about 25 to 30 per cent of variance in anti-vax attitudes from knowing whether they think Princess Diana was murdered. Famously, there was some evidence in America that that is also true of climate change beliefs and we see it there. We replicate that effect, but across the world we do not get that effect at all. It does not seem to be a player with climate change.

We get this story in America. It was the strongest correlation across all five of those variables. There is a spectrum of strength in that relationship and we were interested in understanding that spectrum. One thing that came out over and over again is that, in explaining the difference in strength of relationships across the world, that was predicted by the per capita carbon emissions of that country. That makes sense from a *Merchants of Doubt* perspective. When the carbon emissions are high, that is a proxy for fossil fuel reliance, which is a proxy for the vested interests that are out there. It is only under those circumstances that you see these campaigns of misinformation coaching conservatives about how to think about climate change. In the absence of the vested interests, there is nothing inherent to be conservative that makes people reject the climate science. That is one conclusion that we have from there. Just like conservatives did not feel the need to reject the science around the ozone layer, there is nothing inherent to be conservative that makes people anti science. They have to be trained. They have to be coached by conservative elites. When does that happen? When the vested interests are high and it is worth launching a campaign of misinformation. That requires collaboration between government and media and think tanks et cetera.

It is interesting that, when I present this research, some people see this as a pessimistic thing. Some of my reviewers were saying, ‘Isn’t it sad that we live in a world where in some countries like America—and to an extent Australia—the vested interests are such that people will engage in these campaigns of misinformation about something as important and planet defining as climate change. That is depressing.’ It is, but I would have to say that, having seen this whole thing through the lens of an American narrative and American data and also through my understanding of domestic politics, the fact that three-quarters of the country says there is no relationship at all was an optimistic thing. I feel like, globally, in most countries you can rely on the fact that people can appraise climate science through the lens of things other than their conservative world views. I think that is a promising sign. That is an optimistic sign in terms of our ability to respond to this globally. Thank you.

**Mr FRASER:** Thanks very much, Matthew. We will open this to questions and discussion. If you indicate that you want to say something, I will select you as I see you. If you could say who you are and where you are from? Thank you.

**Dr FRITH:** I am from the University of Queensland. I have a question for Professor Hornsey. You briefly brought up conspiracy theories. I feel that the sheer popularity of conspiracy theories, particularly amongst the younger generation, very powerfully undermines public trust in government by virtue of the fact that it very clearly denies that the government has the public's interest at heart. Do you believe that there is any way for the government, from its current unfavourable position, to essentially regain the higher ground in that situation where such a high percentage of people essentially believe that the government is not on their side?

**Prof. HORNSEY:** That is a difficult question. I feel like there has been an increase in conspiratorial mindsets over the last two or three decades. I think many people would presume that that is probably correlated with the penetration of the internet into our lives and now, of course, everybody can find an echo chamber that reinforces their world view. That makes it very, very difficult. When you look at things that normally influence people, statements like '97 per cent of climate scientists believe X'; 'the vast majority of people believe X'; or 'the government says "we think that X is a problem"' are quite authoritative for many of us, but for people with a conspiratorial mindset it is proof of the conspiracy—that these types of statements are proof that there is a conspiracy out there. I think to those people it is very difficult to know what to do about that and I think the extent to which these things do take hold is a bit of an existential threat to the authority of governments.

It is a bit of a tricky line, though. I think for many people it would encourage people to be sceptical about government and messages, and it is good for people to have a healthy scepticism about that. We probably do not want people to have an automatic world view that just presumes that there are conspiracies out there or that the government is acting in bad faith. To be honest, I have tried to do research to try to turn this around. Once people have a conspiratorial mindset it is very difficult to reduce it. I have not found an intervention that has actually been successful in doing that. It is something that troubles me, but I am going to keep trying.

**Mr JAMES:** Can I add very briefly—an interesting presentation, thank you—that the Americans have badly distorted the word 'conservative' and we would not recognise, certainly in New Zealand, a conservative being anything like most of the Republicans who have been taken off track by the Tea Party and other forces. If you take Roger Scruton, for instance, an English conservative who writes a lot on conservatism, you would not get to American conservatism. He has written a book on conservative green politics. Anyway, if you take the word 'conservative', it has in it the word 'conserve'.

**Mr GRUEN:** One thought is that this state of affairs is partly the result of the fact that we are the consumers of politics and there are producers of politics who are politicians and journalists and so on. If people are not responsible they can indulge in these kinds of things. I guess there will always be people in the community who are mentally ill, hearing voices and so on—I do not say that as a joke; it is a serious thing—but they are a very small minority, and my hunch is that, even in the presence of a smattering of conspiracy theorists in a jury situation, amongst their peers that becomes a much more powerful way to detox that, because they are not being spoken to by an other; they are deliberating with other people and other people like them are saying, 'I don't think that is the way it is.' I think the sort of ridiculousness of a lot of things that travel around are really a function of the fact that it does not matter for people; they are really playing a game when they are in politics, and when they are actually making decisions and they are amongst other people who are making the same decision the psychology of that is very different.

**Ms SAWER:** Thank you, panel, for very stimulating presentations. I have a question for Nicholas Gruen, who has presented such a persuasive and eloquent case for citizen juries or citizen assemblies on the grounds that they help generate unitary democracy, an ethic of care and so on. Citizen juries or citizen assemblies are not just democratic mechanisms; they also involve elites who choose who are the stakeholders, who are the experts and so on who will present evidence and arguments to the citizen jury. I know this because I am asked for advice sometimes on who should present to citizen assemblies in Canberra and I do not think I am somebody who would be categorised as a member of the demos; I would probably be categorised as a member of the political elite. So how do you overcome this particular democratic issue?

**Mr GRUEN:** That is certainly a very good question. I was very impressed with a mechanism that was used in what was called a citizen jury—it should have been called a citizens chamber—which deliberated on nuclear waste in South Australia. There were 340 people in this deliberation so they needed spokespeople. They had a problem—the same kind of problem—which was who should be the spokespeople in this radically democratic body. This is what the organisers, who were an elite in some



sense, did. They said, 'Who wants to be a spokesperson? Stand up.' About 15 people stood up. They said, 'Point to the third person on your right. Now you can sit down. The person third on your right can stand up.' That was the first thing they did. But they did not then say, 'You are the spokespeople.' This was on the fourth day of a four-day deliberation. They said, 'Can you go off into a room,' and they spent the first hour deciding the criteria according to which they would choose spokespeople and the second hour talking about who they had met in the citizens chamber who met those criteria. One of the things you are doing there is cutting the connection between self-assertion and authority and merit.

Let us say we had a citizens chamber—and this is just an instance, but I would run it with 227 people, which is the same number of parliamentarians we have in Australia, and they would be appointed for six years and paid a good salary and rotated a third each two years. Through this process we will be developing an alumni of people who have been in a citizens chamber. I would like to see that alumni chosen with a mechanism such as that and they would be the people who would provide some kind of meta governance for the chamber. That is one way of doing it. I certainly accept your question, which is 'how do we do this?'

One final point is that we think of all these democratic mechanisms as levelling mechanisms, but a critical reason we believe in democracy is not just because it is fairer but we think it is less bad, to quote Churchill—it is the least bad way to do it. In other words, merit comes out of this process. The reason Wikipedia works is not because it is democratic. That is the beauty of it. The reason Wikipedia works is that people can choose the more meritorious from the less meritorious. That is the really secret sauce and that is what we are trying to get to. What has happened to our toxified democracy is that a system of merit has been toxified by optimisation by people of power, influence and money working out ways to work their way through its democratic structure to get what they want. That is why we need to try to use these other mechanisms and think about the very question you have raised very seriously.

**Ms HYLAND-WOOD:** My name is Bernadette Hyland-Wood. I am at UQ in political science/international studies as a PhD candidate. Thank you very much for a very interesting panel and a focus on future contributions and how we can pave the path forward. I have an observation and a question. I had the experience of being in the US during Donald Trump's campaign—living and working in the Washington DC area. One of the observations I had is that people were no longer listening; no-one wanted to engage in conversation about politics. That is a big change in the last 15 years in the US. I would comment that in Australia, on average, the people that I come in contact with in the greater Brisbane area, be it at a car dealership or a store or at the university, are far more informed on US politics than those in my family and circle—not my professional circle in the US but day-to-day people that you would meet doing your grocery shopping et cetera. You still have Q&A here where Pauline Hanson will sit down, albeit somewhat uncomfortably, with the Muslim minister who invited her to come over to his house for dinner. That is just not happening in the United States anymore. The conversation is not even happening at the highest levels nor in the community.

My question to you is: what is different about Australia that that conversation is at least still allowed to happen and happens in reality and there is less what feels like polarisation, even amongst your own political parties, than in the United States, where people are just in families refusing even to have a discussion over the dinner table about it at holiday time? It was quite noticeable after the Trump election. There were lots of divisions. It was written about and I experienced it in my own family. People would not even talk about it. I had family members who voted for Trump and others who worked on Bill Clinton's campaign back in 1992.

**Mr JAMES:** It is even more true of New Zealand. I argued that Centre Left/Centre Right hegemony still applies in New Zealand. Of course there are little excrescences, but basically that is still there. That Rugby football picture of how politics has worked from basically the forties onwards until recently in the Northern Hemisphere still applies in New Zealand. The discussion you have with people is normally rational, which is quite a good thing. By the way, Nicholas, journalists do not make politics; they just watch it.

**Ms HYLAND-WOOD:** Several US cabinet members in Trump's cabinet have New Zealand citizenship, and that is their destination peppershoot prophet: everything goes to hell in a handbasket.

**Mr JAMES:** We had some interesting immigration decisions, including by a certain person, and there is also a certain former CEO of a New Zealand company who then went to GM and has turned up.

**Mr GRUEN:** I am just sort of freewheeling, but maybe in the United States you have had very vigorous media competition for much longer. It is also a much more unequal society—it always has been—and it is a society which has a race base to it. I have also read quite a bit of Francis Fukuyama's stuff about

America in the 19th century, and the American democracy in the 19th century is a fairly scary beast to behold. It was not too hot here, either. American democracy has been pretty kind of awful from about Roosevelt to Reagan, if you like, and then it kind of goes off again. That is just a description. I do not know quite what is behind it.

009 **Ms KANONGATA'A-SUISUIKI:** I am a Labour list member of parliament in New Zealand. I thank you for your presentations this morning. I have an observation and a challenge. You have all shared your presentations and of the people you quoted, the majority were men. Most of the emotions that were negatively affecting the planet were from men. You are all men. How would you support other views of the other gender in terms of being involved in the conversation?

**Mr JAMES:** From very early in my time covering politics I was very much in favour of more women. My great achievement in my second year was to get my assistant admitted to the parliamentary press bar, which had not been the case. She was the second woman to be admitted. I am personally in favour of that. I am not quite sure how I would have extended what I said to specifically select women into my discourse.

I noted that New Zealand was the first country in the world to have universal voting for women and for Indigenous Maori. That is an assumption that I make in everything that I say. I cannot see why I would specifically say women. I did not say anything about specifically men either. Yes, I am a man; that is a pity. I will try better; I will try harder.

**Mr GRUEN:** That is the thing about random selection. I made some comments in response to answers about merit. We think of democracy as having to be about elections. Once you have elections, all of the mechanisms where things are normalised and power presents itself replicate themselves through elections. There is something incredibly healthy about saying, 'Actually, we want to leave this up to some dice.' We want to randomise it and then we want to get a large number of people, not just one. We do not want to make it a crazy guess on chance. We want to randomise a group and then say, 'What do you think?'

One of the things you can do is make it representative sortition. I do not particularly favour it, but I am not strongly against it either. The idea is to say, 'We are going to keep rolling the dice and we will keep rolling it until we get 50 per cent women and 50 per cent men. We will keep rolling it until we get the right number of people from regional places as opposed to the city, until we get a stratified sample, until we get a representative number of people from different age groups.'

If you have 227 people you will do pretty well on that score. What I like about them is that if we set quotas for women—and I am not against setting quotas for women—it is not ideal because what you will do is then select women who are particularly well adapted to this milieu that we are trying to do something about. That is why this is a different way, a more humble way of trying to bring about some of these things and trying to respect the fact that when we come up with a system of meritocracy we will miss things. There will be things that we will miss and those things will go unrepresented.

In this set-up you get yourself another go at representing things which would otherwise not be represented—for instance, people who are not very articulate. I want them represented. As somebody who is relatively articulate—and I say only relatively—I am no better than they are. I am no better than somebody who votes for One Nation and I do not want more power than somebody who votes for One Nation because I really am a democrat.

If I am wrong and if bodies like that make decisions that are bad enough, I will not be a democrat. I believe I am going to do better by being a democrat. I am going to have a richer, happier life by saying that there is nothing special about me—that I have too many PhDs and all that sort of thing. It is a serious business.

**Mr JAMES:** Can I just note that 40 per cent of the current New Zealand parliament are women. I think if we were sitting here in 10 years time—that is three more elections—we would be getting pretty close to 50.

**Prof. HORNSEY:** The public face of climate denial is male. I think that leads a lot of people to believe that men are the problem with climate scepticism, but the effect is very weak. At the grassroots level, climate scepticism, unfortunately, is quite gender inclusive.

**Mr FRASER:** Thank you very much everyone. We appreciate the three panellists and the efforts they have made to be with us this morning. We will break for 15 minutes and resume at 11.05 am.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.51 am to 11.06 am.**

010 **Ms FERGUSON:** My name is Lesley Ferguson. I have the honour of chairing this session this morning. We have four presenters this morning. Each is going to have 15 minutes. Rather than announce them prior to each of them speaking, I will announce the four now and then we will just keep things churning over. Before I introduce them, the air conditioning has been turned up but it might take a while for it to have an effect on the room. I understand that Travers may have to leave the podium during this session, so please excuse Travers if he has to leave.

We have Dr Travers McLeod. He is the CEO of the Centre for Policy Development. I understand that is an independent Australian policy think tank. We have Adjunct Professor Colleen Lewis, who I do not think needs any introduction to the group here. Colleen is an adjunct professor at the National Centre for Australian Studies at Monash University. She is also our president. We have Jannine Williams, who is a lecturer in human resource management at the University of Queensland. We have Paul Grant, who is the Deputy Clerk of the Legislative Council of Western Australia. We have Rebecca Burton, who is the EA to the Clerk of the Legislative Council in Western Australia. We will start with Dr Travers.

**Dr McLEOD:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for that introduction. It is a privilege to be here and I am grateful to the organisers for inviting me. I will start by acknowledging the traditional owners and pay my respects—I am sure it was done this morning—to elders of the past and the present and, especially, the elders to come. As was said, my name is Travers McLeod. I am the chief executive of the Centre for Policy Development. We are an independent policy institute based in Melbourne and Sydney chaired by Terry Moran AC, who was the secretary of Prime Minister and Cabinet under prime ministers Rudd and Gillard.

I am going to try to be short and sharp today so that we can get through the discussions and have plenty of time for a conversation. I would like to start, if I can, with a caveat and then an explanation. First, the caveat: I am always slightly suspicious of panels on trust, which is what this panel is about. When I was a postgraduate student a Canadian friend of mine—a good friend of mine—was writing his PhD thesis on trust in international relations in the 1920s and 1930s, during which, let us be frank, there was not much trust. He spent his entire first year thinking about how to define ‘trust’. I am not even going to attempt to do that in the 10 or 15 minutes that I have, except to say that I am going to focus on trust in democracy and in government in Australia and our confidence, or conviction, that it is delivering or not delivering.

The reason I have been asked to present—and this is the explanation—is that last December the Centre for Policy Development celebrated its 10th anniversary. The focus of our anniversary series for the 10th anniversary was Australia’s democracy. In December we put out a discussion paper, which you have the image of on the screen, that was focused on the findings of that anniversary series. It was called ‘What do Australian’s want? Active and effective government fit for the ages’.

I want to stress—because I am conscious that there are a number of people in the room who are not from Australia and parliamentarians from other countries in the region—that our focus was not just on Australia. In fact, the key oration in the series was given by former Indonesian foreign minister Marty Natalegawa. His topic was ‘Can democracy deliver?’ He gave an eloquent, humble, passionate speech and answered that question with a resounding yes. In fact, Marty spoke about the newness of what he called the Indonesian democratic process. He reminded us that democracy is not an event but a process. He reminded Australians that his experience of multiple foreign ministers with whom he had interacted revealed that it was challenging in developed democracies as well as developing democracies and it requires continual upkeep and defence. In fact, Marty’s point was that good democracies are stable but not static. It is a little known fact that Indonesia has one of the most vibrant democracies in the world. More people tweet from Jakarta every day than they do any other city in the world, which is quite remarkable.

What was unique about the substantive work on democracy that we did as part of our 10th anniversary series was the attitudes research that informed it. We held a round table in Melbourne in November last year with a bunch of people from business, government, the media, academia, civil society, ACOSS, the business council, the ACTU, development agencies, Secretary Heather Smith from the Commonwealth department of industry, a number of informed voices from both sides of politics and those from outside of government giving feedback on the attitudes research that was done and the draft of this discussion paper. I should say that, if you have more questions after this presentation, all of the papers and the findings are available on our website.

The attitudes research was done by us in combination with the ANU, Professor Glenn Withers, and Essential. We did that because Glenn had done two very similar surveys of attitudes to government services—to tax and to government—in the 1990s and a few years ago. He had done the first one when  
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he was chair of then prime minister Paul Keating's economic policy advisory council in 1994 and the second one when he was working with the Australian Council of Learned Academies, which were doing work for the Chief Scientist and for former prime minister Abbott. We wanted to get a sense of how attitudes and preferences to democracy had changed over time and drill down into Australian attitudes to democracy itself.

Before I take you through the findings and offer some conclusions, let me lay my cards on the table about what we found. The first—and this will not surprise you—is a sizeable distrust about institutions in Australia and around the world. Politicians and parliaments cop it, but so do business and the media. Those on the front line of service delivery closest to their communities, including local government, tend to be trusted much more.

011 The second finding—and this might surprise you—is that Australians have a huge appetite to reboot and to renew their democracy. We found overwhelming support for a number of reforms to the systems and processes of the way that Australia's democracy and its government function. Those reforms, which I will mention in a moment, go to the connection of government to local communities and to the people, and also to the length of policy horizons that governments and independent agencies concern themselves with. The last finding was that, in our view, reforms to systems and processes will not be enough to rebuild trust in democracy. That is because of how Australians conceive of democracy itself. I will talk about that in the closing.

Briefly on the findings, as you will see from this slide which captures some of the findings, Australians do not have a particularly healthy view of the current democratic bargain. There are two points to highlight here. Seventy-three per cent of Australians thought politics was fixated on short-term gains and not on addressing the long-term challenges facing us, such as climate change and other longer term policy challenges. Incidentally, that number rose to 88 per cent for Australians over the age of 55. The second point—and this probably goes a little to what Nick Gruen was talking about this morning—is an overwhelming desire for citizens to have a greater say in policy development. One of the examples was having citizens on parliamentary committees, which was given as part of the attitudes research. We saw a majority of those findings, in numbers over 70 per cent, across political persuasions.

As you will know, our findings came out in December last year, but there have been some more recent surveys about trust and confidence that reinforce some of the things that we found in our attitudes research. The Edelman survey many of you will be familiar with. Over the trend in that survey, NGOs are trusted more than government, business and the media. The media has actually shot up by 10 points for informed citizens under the Edelman survey in the last poll, partly I think as a response to the 'fake news' crisis and what that has meant for traditional forms of media.

The Committee of Economic Development of Australia, CEDA, put out a big pulse survey a few weeks ago. They found that only five per cent of Australians believed they had gained a lot after 26 years of consecutive economic growth and 79 per cent thought that the gap between richest and poorest was unacceptable. There is the NAB wellbeing index. The chair of NAB is Ken Henry, who was the treasury secretary when Australia introduced a wellbeing index. The NAB wellbeing index is at its lowest level since it was introduced.

The positive, from our point of view, in thinking about trust in government is that, to use a cliché, Australians do not want to drain the swamp. They actually have a very favourable view of democracy and of the sorts of reforms that could reboot and renew democracy. Some of the examples that were overwhelmingly supported are listed here. They are around strengthening the code of conduct of behaviour; an independent federal integrity commissioner; a national ICAC; imbedding the public sector in more parts of Australia, and not just Sydney and Melbourne; support for longer parliamentary terms federally; I have mentioned citizen involvement and, in fact, more sizeable reforms to federation and constitutional reform—the constitutional convention was one of the things that was quite well supported. For us, that was surprising. Despite there being broad overwhelming negativity about the state of politics and the effectiveness of parliamentarians to respond to what the community wanted, there is huge faith in a number of reforms that could get the policy-making process going again.

One thing that Glenn Withers observed, because he was really the trusted expert on this across the three surveys, was the consistency in findings from 1994 onwards. There is strong community support for essential services, not just health and education but others—VET, early childhood and aged care; a

consistent willingness, when the attitudes to those services were drilled into, to pay more for those services if that was required; rising scepticism about a reliance on outsourced service delivery; and we have talked about the overall impressions about politics.

It is important to reflect just briefly on these trends around a more active and effective government. We detected quite a lot of fidelity or faith in the role of government in being an active service provider designer with civil society and other providers but an increasing scepticism around outsourcing. To summarise, we thought that the pendulum seems to be swinging away from a nearly 50-year consensus around the primacy of markets, the benefits of outsourcing complex service delivery systems and a general preference towards smaller government. Replacing that consensus seems to be an increasing acceptance of a larger role for government, including their enhanced involvement in service delivery and bolder policy initiatives alongside industry and civil society. In December of this year we are bringing out Professor Mariana Mazzucato, with whom you might be familiar. She talks about public value, understanding public value and rethinking government and the role of the state. She will be carrying on the themes that we uncovered in last year's series on democracy.

I will not dwell on this slide, but we did ask, as Glenn did in his previous surveys, for a view on the most important policy priorities for the country. It is interesting the ones that emerged. I am happy to circulate these slides afterwards. They are up on our website anyway. It is very interesting to observe what came out overwhelmingly compared to what was dominating the political discourse at the time.

The most fascinating finding for me was this last one about what the purpose of our democracy is. Whatever your views on Robert Menzies, he had a wonderful line about democracy in his 1942 Forgotten People speeches, his broadcasts. He said that Australians disagree among ourselves on almost every conceivable subject but we are all democrats. Our faith in democracy was a source of strength but also one of our greatest dangers. For Menzies, democracy was like a piano that had to be played. We must understand and experience democracy if democracy is to be a living faith and is to survive. To play democracy well means looking beyond the mechanics of electing a government to what was in the public interest.

In my previous life as a lapsed academic, in interviews for PPE candidates in the UK the first question we used to ask them was, 'What is democracy?' The most common answer we would get was that democracy is majoritarian government. It is 50 plus one, using elections to determine who governs. What we see in these findings is something quite different and something that would probably yield a different result if it was asked in the United States or other democracies. One in three Australians thought the main purpose of democracy was ensuring people are treated fairly and equally, including the most vulnerable. This rose to one in two for Australians earning an average full-time income. This response was chosen above the other responses, such as ensuring people are free to decide how to live their lives, electing representatives, protecting individual rights et cetera.

To us this reveals a couple of key things about Australia's democratic bargain. The first is that it is about much more than voting governments in and out. The bargain is purposeful. It is about ends, not just means. The bargain is bigger than in other countries. Australians want an active government that boosts equality and protects the most vulnerable. They believe that government can be a productive partner.

To summarise, we outlined a number of ideas that might go to this purpose in the paper. There is a general distrust around government in Australia but, despite that, there is an enormous appetite for reforms to fix or improve systems and processes that might get the policy-making process going again and get it closer to the people and a longer policy-making cycle. The big question, from our perspective, is whether that is enough. We think it is a necessary but not a sufficient condition, because what is really lacking is a set of ideas that can generate the next reform cycle that is much more in sync with that underlying purpose of democracy that Australians believe in. I will leave it there, thank you.

**Prof. LEWIS:** I am going to get straight into the paper, because we do not have a lot of time. This paper started off at 40 minutes and somehow or other I have got it down to 15 minutes. I am going to read quite a bit so that I do not get sidetracked, which is my wont.

The Australian community's level of trust in politicians, public servants, political institutions and the media is declining. The situation is such that we may well be approaching a precipice and a dangerous one. Should we trip over the edge of that precipice, the consequences for us all may not be pleasant and

not what we want. I am going to cover some very complex issues feeding into the trust deficit. Despite the time constraint, I really hope that by the end of my presentation I have convinced you that many people, many actors in Australian society, have to differing degrees contributed to the current situation. Therefore, we all need to come together and take action to arrest the decline.

Several methodologically sound surveys that I have analysed indicate the same thing: trust is trending in a worrying direction. The collective findings of these surveys, which cover 2014 to 2018, so they are very recent, are best summed up by the comment in the 2017 Edelman trust survey. It notes: trust freefalls in the land down under. Many factors are contributing to this freefall. These include, but are not limited to, the behaviour of members of parliament and political parties inside and outside of the parliament; their failure to apply the public office/public trust principle; a perceived lack of openness, transparency and accountability in the public sector and perceived poor standards of service delivery by public servants; the media, old and new; the rise in the number and influence of ministerial advisers; the demise in frank and fearless advice; the state of the economy; the marketing of politics as if they were a Big Mac; leadership issues; community expectations; and, very importantly, community obligations. Obviously I do not have time to cover them all, but I am happy to discuss them informally with people throughout the conference.

Before I raise the behaviour of members of parliament, I want to make an important qualifying remark. When referring to the unethical behaviour of members of parliament, I stress that I am not talking about all members of parliament. Many of our elected representatives work very hard and in the public interest. They are not always just about their own personal interest or the party interest. We need to keep that in mind, I think. However, I am not going to revise the list of the wrongdoings or worse by some individual parliamentarians, as they have been covered very well by the media and I am sure they are familiar to you.

Those members of parliament who engage in unethical conduct are arguably the key factors influencing the Australian community's very low opinion of their elected representatives and the degree to which they trust them, and the broader political system itself, to act in the public interest. People get angry when they see relatively well paid members of parliament failing to distinguish personal and job related expenses, nor do they think very kindly of those who search for loopholes in expense related schemes and take every advantage of them for their personal gain. Unfortunately, the dark shadow cast by those particular parliamentarians unfairly influences people's opinion of them all.

012 Another factor leading to the low opinion people have of parliamentarians is the almost daily practice of MPs publicly denigrating the character of members of their own profession. The message they constantly convey through the media is that MPs in other political parties are untruthful and they are cheats. They accuse each other of having no moral compass and using any means, no matter how unscrupulous, to achieve their ends. The behaviour of our elected representatives during question time embarrasses Australians and is seen as disgraceful. It really reflects very badly on our sovereign institution of parliament. With insults being traded on a daily basis inside and outside of parliaments, MPs themselves cultivate the very poor reputation that they have. They do so by creating the narrative about the ethical standards considered the norm in their profession.

I turn now to political parties. Political parties' 'whatever it takes' approach to winning power is feeding the trust deficit. So, too, is the domination by particular factions and now subfactions within parties—and I am talking about all political parties, or the big two at least—and their influence on the selection of candidates to run for office. Evidence shows that candidates are selected from a very small gene pool. Former long-serving prime ministers Bob Hawke and John Howard have expressed their grave concerns about the rise in the number of MPs who are career politicians and, as a result, have no life experience before entering politics. Both believe that the two major parties are becoming less representative of the diversity of the people they are elected to serve. Hawke and Howard see the narrow focus backgrounds of those selected to be candidates as contributing to the problem Australia is facing in the political space.

I turn now to the media. Even though the Australian community accepts that a free media is an essential part of democracy, it is one of the most distrusted institutions in Australia. There are several reasons for this, but I will only address a few as I think you are probably familiar with what the problems are in relation to the media. The reasons include the advent of the 24/7 insomniac media, which has been accompanied by massive reductions in old media. When reporting political news, the emphasis is increasingly on infotainment and the negative and the sensational aspect of the story. While this approach influences people's opinions of the media, it also impacts negatively on their perceptions of MPs and public policies. For example, when a perfectly reasonable policy is announced the media inevitably asks ministers what I consider is a rather inane question. That question is, 'Can you guarantee, Minister, that no one

person will be worse off as a result of this policy?' I did public policy in a few degrees and there are very few public policies that have all winners. However, in pursuit of the negative and sensational, too many in the media rush about to find anyone who might not benefit from that particular policy, and it is these people who become the story. In defence of good journalists and good journalism—and it still exists in some quarters—the public has an obligation to inform itself about all sides of a story, but does it? I am going to return to the obligations of the public later.

I will now look at ministerial advisers. Partisan ministerial advisers have existed in Australia since the 1970s, but their number has risen significantly since then. Professor Maria Maley from the ANU succinctly sums up their influence. As she explains, ministerial partisan staff work in a privileged location. They can guide the direction public policy takes and negate the influence of senior public servants who, theoretically at least, have responsibility for offering politically neutral, impartial, frank and fearless advice to their political masters. Ministerial advisers are the principal confidants of prime ministers, premiers and ministers and are often the people these senior politicians trust the most. One of the major problems with their rising influence is that the advice ministers seek, rely on and often act on is too often based on the interests of the party and/or the individual minister rather than the public interest. I am not suggesting that all advice from partisan ministerial advisers always ignores the public interest, but I am suggesting that it is not always given the priority that it should receive.

Of course, the flip side of the rise in the number and influence of partisan ministerial advisers is the demise of nonpartisan advice from public servants. The move by respective governments to place senior members of the bureaucracy onto short-term contracts also has the potential to stymie the giving of frank and fearless advice. If a senior public servant is four years into their five-year contract, they may resist being too frank and too fearless. The sacking of department heads by incoming governments is another barrier to impartial advice. The sacking occurs not because of incompetence but, rather, because the senior members of the incoming government believe some department heads have been too close to the previous government, which was from a different political party. The Australian community does not place a lot of trust in the Public Service, with only 37 per cent thinking that it acts ethically and honestly. The opinions people have formed are not always logical, as two of the four most trusted professions in Australia are nurses and teachers and a great deal of them are public servants.

I now turn to community expectations. At this stage I am not going to come out with any definitive statements. Rather, I am going to raise questions in relation to community expectations. I think they are questions that need to be examined, something I hope to do in the future with my research. These questions are: does the community demand too much of government? Are their demands becoming unreasonable? Does the community expect government to deliver more services while simultaneously not wanting to pay more taxes? Are governments blamed for outcomes over which they have little control? As much respected and political journalist Laura Tingle asked in an excellent quarterly essay that she wrote some years ago, are politicians really as bad as we make them out to be? I would argue that the time has come for the community to question its own conduct and then to perhaps rethink why it has such little trust in the MPs that they have elected to represent them in the parliament in which their representatives serve and in their Public Service and the democratic political system, although that does not come anywhere down near the trust deficit as other things.

I now turn to community obligations. This is another area that requires further examination. I will start the examination from the premise that democracy comes with obligations and all those obligations do not rest on the shoulders of parliamentarians, government, the Public Service, political institutions and the media. The community also has responsibility for the health of our democratic political system. It has an obligation to consider with an open mind all aspects of an argument before coming to a conclusion and to resist the really easy option of being influenced by fear campaigns, robocalls, three-word slogans and pork-barrelling. In other words, the community has an obligation to be well informed before casting its vote. Another question worthy of further examination is whether members of the community continually place their personal interest before the national or state and territory based public interest.

Where to from here? What if anything can be done to start the long journey needed to restore some modicum of trust in various facets of the democratic political system? I refer to comments from one of my heroes, Tony Fitzgerald QC. He offers advice that may help to prevent us falling off that trust precipice that I mentioned earlier. As Fitzgerald said in an article last year—

Politicians will find it impossible to regain public trust unless they behave like normal, honourable people: treat everyone equally, tell the truth, explain decisions, disclose any direct or indirect benefits for themselves or their allies ...

Fitzgerald also noted that politicians must not have regard to any matter except the public interest when making decisions. However, politicians cannot restore trust alone; the community must also look inwardly and question whether their default position is simply to complain. Fitzgerald concluded his powerful article by arguing—

Those to whom democracy is less important than ideology are of course free to vote as they choose and to continue complaining as political chaos escalates.

We have an obligation to act and to inform ourselves. If we fail to do so, we must also share part of the blame for the situation in which we currently find ourselves. After all, we give power to those who determine the rules of the political game for us all.

**Dr J WILLIAMS:** I am Jannine Williams. I am here from Queensland University of Technology School of Management. You might be able to tell by my accent that I am not a local. I have come over from the UK—just in January—to join the school. I am part of a group of four researchers looking at women and leadership.

This particular project I would like to talk to you today about with the 15 minutes that I have is a project that we have ongoing at the moment looking at audience responses to women and political leaders and connecting that to their legitimacy as political leaders. We are not talking specifically about trust, but what I would like to maybe suggest is that the way in which the media portray women leaders has significant implications for their trustworthiness.

This project follows from over 30 years of research across a number of different disciplines which have identified that we have a persistent problem in recognising women's legitimacy as political leaders. This is exacerbated by cultural representations in the media. It leads to something of an exclusion or a misrepresentation in the way that women leaders are portrayed in the media and can have significant implications for women in terms of their willingness or ability to participate in both public life and public service.

This project follows on from the funded project in the UK from the Economic and Social Research Council, which looked at media studies, communication studies and management and organisation studies. What we noticed was that, in terms of how we think about leadership and political leadership, there is something of a difficulty that is recognised for women political leaders in that, whilst they can occupy leadership roles, they are comparatively devalued against a persistent association of leadership with men. Whilst we might recognise that there are some stereotypes that shape the ways in which we think about leadership, we still persistently associate leadership with men and masculinity or certain forms of masculinity. It is also recognised that the media are central to the circulation and the influence of beliefs and behaviours in terms of how we respond to women in these particular contexts.

013 That is the sort of background to the project that we are working on at the moment. It is a work in progress. We have some analysis of the data that we collected. What we did—you may know this particular article. We decided to have a look and to talk to our audience and participants about an article that appeared in the *Daily Mail*. This was Tuesday, 28 March 2017. Do many people in the audience recognise this picture? Yes. It was widely circulated and recirculated within the media. There were lots of media responses as well as social media responses to this. I am going to leave that image up there for a moment.

For those of you who did not see it, it is a representation of Scotland's First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, and the UK Prime Minister, Theresa May. They met in a hotel in Glasgow when they were talking about Brexit and the Scottish situation in terms of whether they are going to stay with the UK or to separate. We chose this because we think it is an extreme example of the ways in which the media portray women leaders but also because these are two women occupying some of the highest UK political leadership roles, so it tells us something, we think, about women and leadership and audience responses.

I am going to leave the image up while I talk a little about the methodology. We went out and we talked to a group of audience members. We talked to academics and becoming academics and PhDs because we thought they would be familiar with applying methodologies et cetera and they could focus on the text and image. We asked them to look at the argumentation in the text—how did the journalist position these women in the words and the story itself? We asked them to look at this particular image and to think about what sort of social meaning is communicated. Then we asked them to compare the image and the text to tell us whether they thought there was incongruence or intention—does it tell us something interesting in terms of what the story is trying to portray?



The question that I am going to talk about today is: what did the audience identify in this article and how does it relate to how we perceive and respond to women political leaders? What we came to realise is that it had significant implications. We turned to a theory developed by Judith Butler which suggests that in order to be recognised—that is, to be who we want to be—we need to have others to respond to us in a way that treats us with respect and acknowledges this desired state. This is both through personal interactions and in wider society. We have to be intelligible to others. For these women, they need to be intelligible as leaders—to be a woman or a man, an Australian or a politician—and that the media frames their particular stories in a way where they are trying to communicate a meaning, a way for the audience to interpret these images and text. This is really important that we pay attention to this.

What Judith Butler tells us to do is to think about how the media communicates that. This is where we turn to this idea of affect—ffective disposition. Affect is that feeling that we get. It is the feeling that we get when we go to the theatre. For example, we walk through the foyer, the lighting is dimmed, there is music and we have that sense of anticipation and excitement. It is that feeling that we get before it becomes a full emotion, before we can articulate it. What we wanted to do and what we became aware of is that this is a really important part of how the media communicates to us the legitimacy or otherwise of our political leaders.

What did we find? The first theme that we noted was that of irony. What our audience told us was that there were four themes that came through. We characterised this as multivalent framing. What do we mean by multivalent framing? Here we are talking about the way in which there are multiple interpretations and multiple meanings portrayed within what seems to be a really simple, short journal article. It is a couple of hundred words—the image on the front page and then about 200 or 300 words on pages 5 and 6 that we analysed. What they told us through their analysis was that there was a framing of these women leaders that they needed to be understood through irony and through the female body through battle and women fighting, power and thinking through the political context in that political and powerful sense. We use it as a way to think about how the audience and the media interact to frame women as legitimate or otherwise.

Here we have a quote from one of the groups, workshop 1—group 1—who said, ‘What we can see here is there is a sort of play around irony in talking about the women in this way.’ The headline read ‘Finest weapons at their command? Those pins!’ Those ‘pins’ were talking about women’s legs, of course. What were they saying? They were saying that through a post-feminist lens you could not actually talk about women leaders in this way, in a straight way—that actually we have to make a bit of a joke about it. What they said to us was that it was not really a joke. It is actually not Luddite irony; it is much more assailing irony. It is a put-down. It is a way of destroying these women and their credibility.

This dissimulation, this attempt to conceal the meaning of the article, really has an evaluative edge. It is a political and an ethical force that is meant to move us. It is meant to communicate not only meaning but also affect, to make us feel a particular way towards these women leaders. Brian Massumi tells us that it communicates the potential of an affective fact. What we mean by that is it is a feeling that becomes reality regardless of whether the threat is really there or not. This threat relates to the second theme that our participants and the audience identified within the article.

I have a couple of snippets here from the article. On the front page is ‘Never mind Brexit, who won Legs-it!’ So we are framing the article in a way that this is not about the political argument. This is not about political debate. This is not about the political capabilities of these women leaders. This is about their legs and who has the best legs. They were very concerned in terms of how the women were set up and that they were battling through their clothes—for example, who is winning, who is losing. There is violence, there is aggression, there is wildness and there is danger that is brought to bear through this article. You can see that in that second quote there where we have ‘Legend—or rather Hollywood—has it that the Scottish knight William Wallace daubed himself head-to-toe in blue woad ...’ et cetera and Nicola Sturgeon is associated with this threat to the UK union. What is important here is the competition between the women. It is around their appearance—who has better legs. There is a catfight atmosphere that is being created. This is somewhat problematic, we might argue, when we think about how we respond to our women leaders and women leaders in the most senior political positions in the UK.

I will put that image from the front page back up again—those pins, those legs there. We also saw through the analysis that the women were to be defined through their body. Their sexuality was privileged—their body and dress. They were successful whether they dressed well, whether they looked well, whether they performed their femininity well. That signalled their reliability and their respectability to the audience, so the allure and the sex through the legs, through sexual, you know—it is kind of objectifying these women

essentially. The problem with this was that, in bringing to the fore their femininity and bringing to the fore the way in which they were women, it was intentioned with this idea of a professional politician. The audience were very cognisant of that. They did not always buy it. They found the article to be vulgar. They found it problematic. When they looked at the image of the two women leaders—if I go back to it—they did not necessarily see the way in which the women were described by the journalist in the same way. They saw them as confident. They saw them as strong, political leaders. However, the journalist tells us and the article tells us not to interpret them in this way, which is somewhat problematic.

The final theme I will mention is power. The audience suggested that, on the one hand, the main point of the article was to undermine the women's power but they observed that within the argumentation, whilst we were being encouraged to devalue both women, we were encouraged a little to value Nicola Sturgeon over Theresa May. There was a big concern with power and class. Class is obviously a big issue within UK politics and UK society. We had this metaphor of the wild warrior clan with Nicola Sturgeon and with Theresa we had this vicar's daughter—prim, proper, middle class et cetera. This argumentation and this way of portraying the women was a way of suggesting that they had limited potential and that there was tension between them. Also, the audience were encouraged and they did rebuke the women. They said that actually they should never have allowed themselves to be photographed in this way. The audience responded quite negatively to the women allowing themselves to be photographed from a low angle.

Then there is also a third part to this theme which suggests that there is a question there about the journalist's intent. The journalist—you may not know—is the wife of Michael Gove, who stood against Theresa May for the premiership of the Conservative Party, and there were some tensions there as well. They said that she has written this with the intention of invoking not only the *Daily Mail* readers but also a wider social media audience—the *Daily Mail* likes to get that click-through and that response to their articles—so there were some complexities there, too.

In many respects we might think this is a fairly simple journal article. We might want to dismiss it. We might think it has no real meaning and no real value in terms of how we think about women as political leaders. However, what the audience analysis has highlighted for us—and these are the discussion points that we would like to take forward—is that there is a very complex story being told there. It is very complex in that some of the ways in which the argument is portrayed reinforce, reiterate and strengthen this affective feeling of dissidence and dislike of the women as political leaders and, we might say, a distrust of them and their capabilities as senior leaders, senior politicians, within the UK. It speaks to the literature that suggests that women remain out of place in leadership positions.

What we want to do is think through what the implications are for this. How do we talk to audiences? How do we engage people in critiquing these sorts of ways of framing women leaders and what are the implications for them? How can we engage audiences, for example, in having a more ethical response, in challenging and rejecting these ways of thinking and talking about women leaders, and what are the implications for our women political leaders in terms of our society and our community's responses to them in terms of their trustworthiness?

**Ms BURTON:** We will talk to you today about parliament as a longstanding institution. The first identifiably English parliament dates back to the reign of King Athelstan from 924 to 939. The common name for these late Anglo-Saxon assemblies was the 'witan', or literally 'wise men'.

The core work of parliament has changed little since medieval times. It is still part of the law-making process, it still holds a magnifying glass up to the activities of government and it still gathers information to inform debate into matters of public interest. By contrast, the non-parliamentary role of two of parliament's component parts—the government ministry and the individual members of parliament—have each undergone very significant changes to their roles over the past millennium.

The growth in the size of government has certainly increased the responsibility and pressure upon parliament to scrutinise an expansive bureaucracy and budget. The development of communications technology and saturation media coverage of politics has increased the visibility of parliament and individual politicians. It has also increased public expectations as to what parliament and related bodies can and should deliver.

The parliament was once the single most important way to articulate public concern. Now it is competing with a variety of alternatives, such as government watchdogs, the traditional news media and social media. Despite an increasing social media presence by parliaments, the public still relies heavily on the traditional media outlets for news about the workings of parliament. This is not assisted by both the sheer volume of material and the arcane processes that a casual observer of parliamentary proceedings

needs to wade through to find a few gems of information for a 15-second media grab at the end of the day. Therefore, it is not surprising that it is the latest political party leadership challenge, or an MP's controversial or scandalous private actions that makes the nightly news much more often than the latest parliamentary committee report or bill passed. It is in this environment that the public is posed the question by pollsters as to how much they trust parliament.

One data source for assessing trust in parliament is the World Values Survey. This figure shows the level of confidence respondents have in parliament in Australia versus other institutions, with parliament in the red line. We can see that confidence in parliament has declined significantly since the 1981 to 1984 survey wave. When compared against other countries with established democracies included in the survey, the level of trust in parliament in Australia falls within the average range of 29 per cent to 40 per cent, with the United States having the dubious honour of having the least trust in parliament, at only 19 per cent. This pattern of declining confidence in parliament and government is reflected in similar surveys, such as the Edelman Trust Barometer. It also extends to declining satisfaction with democracy as evidenced by voter turnout. This is covered in detail in our paper.

For possible explanations for the decline in trust, we looked at the association of parliament with government and the management of the economy. As we have experienced a relatively stable rate of economic growth over the past few years, we felt that GDP had no correlation with the decline in trust. We also looked at unemployment but, again, this has been relatively stable over the past few years so it is unlikely to have had an impact on the level of trust. We then looked at wages growth and noticed that this might provide an explanation for the decline in trust. Despite a low but stable economic growth rate and historically low unemployment, wages growth in Australia has declined markedly in the past decade. This statistic in particular could explain a high level of dissatisfaction with the government and political processes generally. A stable but somewhat underperforming economy has been accompanied by a tumultuous decade in Australian politics.

Another possible explanation for the decline in trust may lie with the association of parliament with changes in party leadership. A perception of a revolving door in the Prime Minister's office in recent years has perhaps led Australian voters to lack confidence that the leader of the party they vote into government will continue in the position for the duration of the term. In 1941, Sir Robert Menzies was the first Australian prime minister to be overthrown by his own party. It was another 30 years before it happened again, when John Gorton fell in March 1971. Twenty years later, Paul Keating defeated Bob Hawke in December 1991. In the entire century up until 2010, only three sitting prime ministers were victims of party coups. Then in just five years three more followed. Kevin Rudd was defeated by Julia Gillard in June 2010; Kevin Rudd then defeated Julia Gillard to resume the prime ministership three years later, in June 2013; and Malcolm Turnbull defeated Tony Abbott in September 2015.

Another possible explanation for the decline in trust may lie with the association of parliament with individual members of parliament. The 2017 Roy Morgan poll shows that the level of trust in state members of parliament is only 16 per cent, ranking only above professions like union leaders, real estate agents and car salesmen. Interestingly, while parliamentary institutions and MPs in general appear towards the bottom of polls in trust, the attitudes towards individual politicians and particularly local representatives are generally much higher. A prime example of the local MP halo effect is former West Australian state opposition leader, treasurer and transport minister, the Hon. Troy Buswell. He was the subject of a series of controversies and regular media headlines between 2008 and 2014 yet, despite an almost constant litany of scandals in this time, the personal popularity of Troy Buswell as a local MP saw an increase in his two-party preferred vote—from 50.85 per cent in 2005 to 71.2 per cent in 2013—and there was no significant impact on voter turnout in his electorate during elections. By contrast, when he resigned in 2014, the next Vasse state by-election saw a five per cent drop in voter turnout compared to any election when Troy Buswell had contested the seat.

As a final observation on the important and highly visible role played by local MPs, we conducted a short random Facebook poll to get a quick and dirty response from a politically savvy group, the Legislative Council of Western Australia Facebook followers, to the following question: if you were involved in a dispute with a state government department or a local government, who would you go to for assistance? Our respondents could tick all that applied. Of the 31 answers and 101 votes received, the votes overwhelmingly revealed that their first port of call would be their local member of state parliament. Most people would not prioritise petitioning a state parliament or going to a committee of state parliament to resolve the complaint, with those options falling to eight and nine out of the 10 given. I will now hand over to Paul for some case studies.

**Mr GRANT:** Thanks, Bec. Our paper deals with three case studies of three separate parliaments that are currently gripped with controversies that could significantly affect the trust in those institutions. The first one is Brexit and the UK parliament. How is this affecting the UK parliament? The UK parliament passed a bill authorising a referendum to be held as to whether Britain should leave the European Union. Many people thought that would be the end of the story as far as parliament would be involved. As we know, the referendum resulted in a 51.9 per cent majority of the vote in favour of Brexit, with a voter turnout of only 72 per cent. Then the constitutional question arose as to whether the British government had the authority to go ahead and negotiate Brexit without any further contact with the parliament.

The English High Court and then subsequently the British Supreme Court ruled that, yes, parliament did have an additional role to play in this and that the British government could not unilaterally go ahead and negotiate Brexit. This resulted in right-wing newspapers attacking the judiciary, calling them enemies of the people. When the newspapers realised that parliament would then have to reconsider the matter, there were references to Oliver Cromwell, civil wars, dissolving the parliament and all sorts of discussion in the right-wing press that people were being denied their democratic vote, which was the referendum.

With the British government in the House of Commons supporting Brexit, it then fell upon the House of Lords as the body that was seen as being the main interference with Brexit. The House of Lords in April 2018 passed several amendments to the Brexit legislation, namely, requiring yet another bill to be passed by the UK parliament once the Brexit negotiations were concluded and, secondly, seeking to permit the parliament to give directions if the Brexit negotiations seemed to be falling through.

In May 2018 there was an interesting ComRes survey into attitudes towards the House of Lords. Fifty-eight per cent of respondents and 76 per cent of older voters agreed that it would be wrong for the House of Lords to use its powers to interfere with Brexit. Seventy-six per cent of those polled also felt that the House of Lords was out of touch with the public.

As things currently stand, there are three types of voters, three main attitudes. One is that the British parliament will interfere and stop Brexit from occurring, another is that they will introduce a soft Brexit and the third is that the House of Lords is taking far too long in dealing with the Brexit legislation and is just delaying matters. The ComRes poll also indicated that only 70 per cent of the British public would turn out to vote at the next election. Even though there seems to be a lot of mistrust in the parliament, there seems to be no discernible impact on voter intentions and the turnout.

Case study No. 2 is the citizenship crisis. We know that a number of members of the Australian House of Representatives and Senate were disqualified from their membership of those houses as a result of section 44 of the Constitution. How did the parliament get involved? Its Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters undertook an inquiry. It did a report on section 44 and came to the conclusion that section 44 was no longer fit for purpose. The committee recommended that it be either repealed or amended. The report received a negative reaction from the government, which immediately ruled out a referendum on section 44. The Prime Minister went even further and said that what people have to do is simply get their act together and fill out their forms to a high standard, just like the Australian public expects. The report received a mixed reaction from the media and other commentators, who noted that the Australian public is reluctant to amend the Constitution and have a jaundiced view of politics.

What can parliament do? It is not the role of parliament—the institution—to publicly defend its role. Like the judiciary and the Crown, the parliament stoically leaves its defence to the discretion of the executive and individual MPs. Is parliament the type of institution that people require a high degree of confidence in anyway? In the modern era, a high confidence rating seems synonymous with giving an instant satisfaction to the public. In the electronic communication age, there are high expectations by consumers that bureaucracies and government service providers and consumer watchdog agencies will respond instantaneously to their queries—a typical day in parliament.

015 Although opinion polls suggest that up to a third of the public may not have a great deal of confidence in parliament as an institution, you have to think that part of this arises from parliament's very nature as a place of perceived interminable conflict and argument. Parliament is not a place that a petitioner should go to for instant satisfaction. Even when the numbers in the parliament create the most compliant legislature, the institution is never truly a simple rubber stamp of the executive. Parliamentary procedures, traditions, customs and usage ensure that nothing ever occurs instantaneously in the parliament.

The simple fact that parliament exists primarily to deliberate and discuss matters, ideally at length, whereas executive government is seen as the decision-maker and action implementer, may account for the fact that government tends to be ever slightly more popular than parliaments in the opinion polls. As the

Inter-Parliamentary Union has observed, in short, an institution whose role it is to reflect division of opinion may inevitably divide opinion. It may be that parliaments need to educate citizens better on the need to tolerate conflict in a highly diverse, complex, modern, democratic political system. Only then will people better appreciate the usefulness of institutional arrangements that try to put together solutions boasting too many voices.

**Ms FERGUSON:** I found it extremely informative, in fact very insightful and certainly thought provoking. On that note, we will take questions from the floor. We have permission to go a little bit over the 12.30 mark. Given that lunch is an hour and a half, we are going to cut a little bit into the lunchtime.

**Prof. COGHILL:** I am a member of the Victorian chapter. I would like to make a comment rather than ask a question. It is particularly relevant to what Travers had to say. There is a glimmer of hope in the Open Government Partnership which Australia has joined. Australia is one of over 70 countries that have signed up for it. One of the commitments they make in signing up is to engage the community—'civic engagement' it is termed. In Australia's case, that is actually being followed with a number of commitments made for each two-year cycle. In the case of community engagement there is some really terrific work being done by the department of industry. It looks like that might be then included in the next two-year round. I am wanting to draw attention to that. The way in which the process operates is itself to engage the community, so there are opportunities for people here and elsewhere in Australia to become involved in the process of Australia's membership of the Open Government Partnership.

**Dr REYNOLDS:** I used to be the chair of the local chapter of ASPG amongst other things. I was interested in the question about women and the leadership role. How much, as far as the UK is concerned, does Margaret Thatcher influence this?

**Dr J WILLIAMS:** Thank you for the question. It is very interesting because in part of the article there was reference to Margaret Thatcher and her stateswomanly contribution and that Theresa May and Nicola Sturgeon were being compared to her. I think her impact has been very significant, regardless of whether you agree or disagree with her politics.

**QUESTIONER:** We are talking about trust in parliament. Would changing the structure of parliament from an adversarial institution to an institution to bring people together change the trust in the parliament?

**Prof. LEWIS:** We do not know, I guess is the answer to that. One of the things that has been happening in trying to break down the adversarial nature of parliament is to look at the architecture. We are back in the dark ages with the architecture that we have in parliament. The suggestions have been made that it could be more like a horseshoe and people could be sat randomly, rather than, 'This is the opposition and this is the government and you're on the crossbenches.' There is quite a lot of literature now coming through suggesting that that might be a first step to change the attitude that people have when they go in so it is not quite so combative.

**Dr McLEOD:** It is a really good question. I am married to a New Zealander. I am always struck by how much more constructive and consensus oriented the New Zealand process seems to be, particularly at building coalitions around policies and even within governments. Germany is another example of that. I do not know the research, but I am sure that has a bit to do with the voting structures. Australia has a voting structure federally in the lower house, as many would know, that is biased towards majority government. A number of people have written about how there is growing double disillusionment around the major parties, and you see that in the votes. One consequence of an electoral system that favours stable majority government is that it might not build the DNA for coalition building and constructive policymaking across the party systems. That is something that certainly Australia lacks.

I spent six years in the UK, and when I got back the hostility of the tone in Australian political discourse struck me. Knowing people on both sides of the chamber, within offices and within the APS, knowing how much they actually agreed on what should be done and what could be done, their inability to see that play out in the public discourse I think was as frustrating to them as it was to people outside the parliament. It has been an insolvable problem that needs to be tackled.

Just on Ken's point, I think that is a great observation. Martin Parkinson announced citizens surveys earlier this year and there is the Thodey review into the APS, conducted by David Thodey, which is looking very closely at how people can be better connected towards local communities. The one thing I will say about the Open Government Partnership is that the one independent indicator on that partnership that we are falling behind on is open contracting and transparency around contracting, and I think Colleen made that point. Even the submission of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet on the use of consultants and contractors said that the artificial average staffing cap and the bias to use contractors had

meant a declining capability of PM&C itself and a loss of policy memory around key interventions. When the most senior department is saying that then you know there is an issue, and that is the indicator we are falling behind on.

**Mr GRANT:** When you talk about reducing conflict in parliament and making it less adversarial, I think this is where parliamentary committees have a really big role to play. I do not think in Australia we use parliamentary committees enough. I would be a supporter of all bills, all motions—everything—going before a committee. At a committee, where there is less of an adversarial nature, members from all parties tend to work together. They try to find the truth of things. They have access to expert evidence. They can bring the general public in to get their views as well. I think we really need to use the parliamentary committee system a lot more.

**Prof. LEWIS:** I want to make a comment about your suggestion on the committee system. I agree entirely that we need to use it more, but I also think that more respect needs to be paid to the committee system, and I will just point to a couple of matters. The Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters had six chairpersons in a 14-month period. That is a very important committee. It just goes to show the respect shown by political parties and by the parliament itself to that subject. Another one we have had recently is the select committee on whether we are going to have a national integrity commission. If you have a look at that, it is all about, 'I think we will consult more and we'll consider this and we'll wait till this report comes out.' We have been considering, consulting, thinking about and having inquiries into whether we need a national anti-corruption body for years. It is costing taxpayers a lot of money, yet the latest one that came out is reiterating the same thing. We can do so much better with our committee systems.

**Dr THORNTON:** I am also from Victoria. We have had a number of possible rationales for absence of trust in government. One of them that has not been canvassed, which I would quite like to hear the panel's opinion on, is the impact of external influences outside Australia on trust in government in Australia. I am thinking particularly of two examples, although there are possibly more. Firstly, there is the shift of power away from national governments with the effect of globalisation and the power of the large corporates. If you think now of the difficulties people are having with regulating Google, Facebook and very large corporates like that, it has really meant that when you ask an average citizen, 'Can people in government do anything?' they can see this absence of capacity to kind of regulate on an international level. The second one I think is also uppermost in the news cycle at the moment, and that is the more deliberate interference, if you think about the Trump and Russia issue, and how much any of that impacts externally on the way that trust in government is understood in Australia.

**Dr McLEOD:** That is a great point. I neglected to say something about that because I think it is a huge hidden variable bias—what is happening in the region, in our region especially. We are facing the most uncertain geopolitical environment to our north since the height of the Korean War or the Cuban missile crisis. I think that naturally makes communities more anxious, particularly when major trading partners and economic partners are themselves experiencing big structural transitions or political transitions, whether it be Brexit or the situation in the United States. There does not seem to be a clear view—at least within Australia—about our trajectory in the region and how that should evolve in light of those structural developments. I think that is worthy of exploration because there are a number of reasons why people are not as sure that the future will be brighter for their kids or grandkids, and the regional environment is one of them.

That said, there are a few trends that are common across a lot of these countries around insecure work, automation, inequality, disproportionate power between firms and workers, faith in the policymaking process and the control of governments over a given agenda around one of those problems. That is probably the biggest issue that is facing Australia's political system. Whereas previously problems were solvable within a given jurisdiction, that is increasingly not the case.

**Prof. LEWIS:** I can have a lot more to add to those very insightful comments except I did make the point that we tend to blame governments for things that are out of their control. I think that is one of the issues that we need to look at ourselves.

**Mrs NELSON:** My name is Beryce Nelson. I am from the Queensland branch and a member of the ART. I would like to ask if any of you have had a look at the Swiss situation, which is quite interesting, where they have five-year terms. They have five senior ministers only and the position of Prime Minister is rotated every year. They only have a year as Prime Minister, so you do not have the ego thing of demanding to be there forever, which is starting to creep in, and I think a big issue at the bottom of our lack of trust—the desire to be emperor, as is occurring around the world. They also have a system where they ask their

constituency on a regular basis their views on decision-making, and they do that electronically now, and they do not vote on those things until their citizen replies have come back. They are a small country and we are a large island. Using digital technology, would it be worth us looking at the citizen assemblies and the citizens discussions as at least beginning in an electronic format and asking people for their opinions on ideas and legislation before they are actually put into law and then have to be amended because they are so bad?

016 **Prof. LEWIS:** I am not an expert, but it sounds to me like I really should do some reading in that direction. That is all I could say. I take your point about them wanting to be emperors. Maybe sometimes we need to tell the emperor that he has no clothes.

**Dr McLEOD:** I agree with you that digital engagement of citizens is not done particularly well. It is true for big services as well. We have a \$7.5 billion employment services industry which does not have a huge digital offering. This has astounded some of the jurisdictions that have made contact with us about their employment services systems.

I have not looked at Switzerland, but we did look at some of the jurisdictions that had formed committees or commissions for future generations—Hungary and Israel. Finland has a particularly good committee for the future which is bipartisan, has a minister from both sides and has a much longer policy horizon for which it develops policy proposals or interventions. I am not sure we have experimented enough with some of those design interventions that might make a difference of the type that you are seeking.

**Ms BURTON:** It is interesting you talk about polling citizens throughout a term of a government. As we have raised One Nation before, we can mention Pauline Hanson's legislating by SurveyMonkey, which happened recently. Senators conducted a novel review of the citizenship bill. They asked the public for a yes-no vote on an online poll of Pauline Hanson's proposed legislation to change the citizenship law. Senator Hanson subsequently complained that foreign interference ruined the results of the survey in which 89.8 per cent of the respondents were against any change and 10.2 per cent were in favour.

**Mr SOLOMON:** It has long been my view that one of the worst mistakes a parliament has ever made was allowing the televising of parliament. I know this is not going to happen, but do you think that the behaviour of people in question time and therefore the reputation of parliament would be improved if the broadcasting, televising and filming of question time were banned?

**Mr GRANT:** I come from an upper house where we do not broadcast on television the upper house question time because it is quite boring compared to the assembly. It is broadcast over the internet. I do not know how many people actually watch the live broadcast of parliament over the internet. I do not have any figures for that. It is broadcast to some extent. It has not affected the behaviour of the members in the council. I suppose that is just due to the fact that members in the council are just answering questions usually on behalf of ministers who are located in the assembly. In lower houses behaviour tends to be quite bad during question time and always has been. That was the case even before it was televised. I do not think televising it has made their behaviour any worse.

**Dr McLEOD:** At risk of this being a parochial conversation, I offer my two cents worth. Question time could clearly be much better. I certainly think it needs to be televised. I do not know whether it is better to go to something like what the UK has, where they do it once a week, it is much more substantive, there are fewer Dorothy Dixers and it is a much more free-flowing policy debate. That is something that Paul Keating tried to do, but it has not been tried since. It is worth looking at those sorts of reforms.

I would encourage this group and others to be even bolder. We have had MPs on both sides of politics resign recently because of family pressure—and I am talking federally—and the inability to have young families, be a parliamentarian and be in Canberra 26 weeks of the year. We had the comment earlier about how our parliaments do not really look like Australia and do not allow for Australians from all walks of life to participate within them and represent their communities. Whether we need to rethink where parliamentary business is conducted and how it is conducted digitally or in person in a way that makes it easier for people who are not currently within it, which might make parliaments look more like the countries they are, I am not sure. I think we need to be much braver than question time reforms in thinking what that might look like.

**Prof. LEWIS:** Part of me wants to say, David, let's do away with it so that we do not have people grandstanding for the three-minute grab. When I was researching this years ago somebody said to me, 'Don't forget that Mr Whitlam threw a glass of water over somebody in parliament.' This was well before it was being televised. My reply was, 'Yes, and had it to been televised we would still be looking at it ad nauseam every week.'

**Mr WEBB:** Dr Williams, that was very insightful research. I am wondering if your research has implications for other diversity groups. You are focusing on the audience reaction to women, but what about Indigenous representation or people with culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds? Getting more representation of those groups in parliament is obviously a continuing issue. I am wondering if your research has any implications outside of the gender diversity sphere.

**Dr J WILLIAMS:** I think so. I think the theoretical framework that we are working with could help us to understand the ways in which different groups are represented within the media. I was very struck by the Australian media and its representation of Indigenous communities when I first arrived. I have not done any research on it. I was very struck by the way in which certain newspapers and certain media outlets portray certain communities. What would be really interesting for us to do, once we finish this particular project and finish writing it up, is look to contextually the way in which we are approaching this within the Australian context and to think about the ways in which the media are engaging audiences in the portrayal of different Australian communities, yes.

**Mr EADE:** Four years ago I spent three days in the north and western territory parliament in Canada. I went there because there it is proclaimed to be non-adversarial parliament. The chamber is round. They sit in a semicircle. During question time one of the politicians spoke rather harshly to the minister and said, 'When will you answer this question, Minister? I have been asking for three months and you have not answered the question and I am fed up.' Immediately every politician in the House banged the table. That particular politician came up to me afterwards and apologised for his behaviour.

**Ms KANONGATA'A SUISUIKI:** I want to acknowledge my affected disposition when I understood that the Australian understanding of democracy was ensuring that people are treated fairly and equally, including the most vulnerable. I want to state the obvious. The most trusted profession in Australia is nursing and the not-so-trusted is the media and parliament.

Sometimes we look for solutions. We question what value women in leadership add. In New Zealand women dominate the nursing field. I am just wondering whether that is the same in Australia. If we question whether women's leadership is valuable, wouldn't that be an obvious solution going forward? When you questioned people about their most trusted profession, did we ask why? Why did they choose nurses as the most trusted profession?

**Dr McLEOD:** My answer to your first question is yes. I think there is a very important reason nurses, doctors and teachers are amongst the most trusted in our community. They are public servants mostly. It is because they are close to their communities and they see everyone from all walks of life within them. One thing we have been arguing is that there is a big lesson from that in the way that you design and deliver services at the local level. I cannot comment on your other question about how they measured trust in that survey.

**Prof. LEWIS:** Teachers are also mainly females in Australia, so it is nurses and teachers. That figure came from the Roy Morgan survey. I think I have it here with me so if you want to chat to me later I will see what questions they asked.

**Dr J WILLIAMS:** I do not research in those particular professions, but I think it is a really interesting question. Bringing more diversity to leadership roles is a really important way to broaden debates and broaden the sorts of ideas that we debate and discuss and the ways in which communities are represented. It is very important. Women are a really important part of that. The diversity of women is really important too.

I am very conscious that when we are talking about Theresa May and Nicola Sturgeon we are talking about two white women in the UK context. We need more diversity there. In terms of nursing and teaching, I think we sometimes associate those professions with a more ethical orientation. I think it is possibly around engaging and thinking around how within other professions we think through the ethics and the morality of how we operate. It speaks to some of the comments around the way in which our politicians behave and their interests and how they communicate and represent their communities. I think they are really important debates to bring to the fore.

**Ms FERGUSON:** That brings this session to a close. Please thank the panel.

**Mr FRASER:** We will now break for lunch.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.41 pm to 2.00 pm.**



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**Prof. SAWER:** Welcome back to the first session of the afternoon. I am Marion Sawer from the Australian National University. In our first session we have three speakers. We will start with Frank Mols, then Casey Mazzeralla and then David Solomon. They will each speak for 15 minutes. I am not going to introduce them, in the interests of maximising their speaking time. As has been pointed out, their biographies are in the program so you can read about them there. There will be 15 minutes from each of the speakers and then hopefully we will have a good 15 minutes for Q&A at the end.

**Dr MOLS:** In the interests of time, I will probably be skipping a few slides in the process. The talk today is named after the book Jolanda Jetten and I published last year by Cambridge University Press called *The Wealth Paradox: Economic Prosperity and the Hardening of Attitudes*. The talk should probably have been called 'Populism and the Wealth Paradox' because that is what I am going to talk about.

There are a lot of assumptions that we have about when populist parties thrive, who makes them thrive and so forth. If I went to the Queen Street Mall, a couple of hundred of metres down the road, there would be a couple of things that people would tell me if I asked them about populist parties. They will tell me that populist parties will come up in times of economic crisis when people do it tough and/or when there are peaks in immigration. Hence, where we will find pockets of pronounced populist voting in areas most affected by crisis and hardship? Who votes for populist parties? We will hear constantly that it is uneducated blue-collar workers without degrees and with low-income jobs. Finally, there is the 'why' question. We also have huge assumptions about why people vote for populist parties. I will come back to that, but in a nutshell it is called relative deprivation. Nicholas Gruen this morning talked about materialist explanations. Well, they are really dominant in this discussion.

Where do these assumptions come from? I think the answer is fairly obvious. I think the Nazi Germany experience has given us a lot of that thought material. The logic here—and this is treated as self-evident; people might even wonder why I am giving a talk about this because it is so self-evident—is that the Great Depression led to Adolf Hitler's rise to power. What is the logic there? That is mapped on to the contemporary context: the losers of globalisation narrative is really one that derives strength from that historical experience that we think we have to remember in particular ways.

If we look at a picture of One Nation or Reclaim Australia, in this case, immediately that comes to mind: the crisis/relative deprivation story that we get from Nazi Germany. That is mapped on to populist voting. A huge amount of research in the social sciences and social psychology, in particular, has looked at this particular phenomena and come up with a causal chain. It is called the frustration-aggression chain—the idea that relative deprivation with stagnating incomes or declining incomes leads to frustration-aggression. That leads to lashing out and typically scapegoating third parties like immigrants.

You know all of this. This is intuitively all correct, but why did I start looking at these assumptions? It is because something piqued my interest back in 2002—16 years ago. Namely, the Netherlands—my home country, as you might have gathered from my accent—went through a quite prosperous phase. The economy in Europe at the time was not great but the Netherlands was holding out quite well. In fact, the *Economist* came out with a special issue with a feature article on the Dutch miracle economy. However, that same month a famous person—Pim Fortuyn—came out with his book called *The Rubble of Eight Years of Purple*, arguing that the country has been turned into a complete rubble. 'The country is in tatters' is what he uses as a catch phrase. 'It is rotten to the core. The elite are making all sorts of backroom deals and ordinary people are excluded.' What is so interesting is that this book came out in the same month—May 2002—so the wealth paradox is right here in some sense. What is perhaps more interesting is that this narrative really wins the day. Pim Fortuyn's party, the LPF party, secured 17 per cent in the national elections. By the way, he was murdered before these elections, but he was already set to secure 17 per cent of the vote in the 2002 elections which he did—or his party did.

Clearly we have a paradox or a contradiction between what economists tell us about the economy and how politicians are able to create a narrative that sticks. That piqued my interest. I thought, 'Is that the black swan? Are all other swans white? Have I just come across an oddity?' I started looking at this more systematically by looking at different countries—50 years of populist voting set off against economic indicators such as GDP growth, GDP per capita growth and unemployment levels. For example, GDP growth here is the grey mountain in the backdrop and unemployment is the dotted line. If you contrast that with the times at which populist parties have scored phenomenally well, there is no correlation whatsoever with economic performance, interestingly, at least if we use these indicators. We kept looking at more countries to verify and it was clearer and clearer. If anything, it became clear that populist parties can do exceptionally well in times of economic prosperity. That really made things very interesting.

Australia is a quite similar story in the last few years. We just heard that Australia has experienced 26 years of consecutive economic growth. In a sense, Australia is a bit like the Netherlands in 2002, the envy of the world. Yes, there is a global recession but the economy is still the envy of the world yet we see populist parties—in this case, One Nation—doing really well. This is so historically as well. If you see the grey bar there, the red bar is the global financial crisis. Before that, the economy was fairly healthy and One Nation scored well, particularly in Queensland. The paradox was clear there.

We also looked in the same way to immigration levels. When are there peaks in immigration and asylum seeking? Is that really the predictor, as many would believe? The same story emerges. There is very little in the way of a correlation. If anything, you see that Front National in France does terribly badly in a time when refugee and asylum seeking peaks at historic levels. I can give you many other countries as examples.

What is the evidence? If we go back to these assumptions, for us the first assumption that was kind of blown out of the water was this one—the when. That clearly did not match up with what we found, despite the compelling narrative of Nazi Germany and so forth. By the way, we are not the only ones who have noted that. Ignazi, for example, cited in Wilson and Hainsworth, makes the comment that now there is a tendency to attribute the global surge in populist parties to the global financial crisis, but in fact these parties have consecutively done well since the 1980s. The surge really goes back a lot longer than the global financial crisis. As I said, our research showed example after example that populist parties do well in times of economic prosperity.

The question is: where is populist party support biggest and strongest? That is the second assumption. The assumptions that we have just laid out here are also creating some sort of confirmation bias. We want to see that it is in rust belt states. Typically, journalists flock to Ohio and Pennsylvania rather than to Florida, for example, so you get confirmation of the narrative that we think holds true.

I have given a couple of examples here. Not long ago we saw Italy's Five Star Movement doing well in the southern part of Italy. Of course, immediately the headlines in the paper read 'The poor south turns populist' but we forget that populist parties have traditionally been strongest in northern Italy, which is far more wealthy. Similarly, Trump's support in the rust belt states—that narrative was peddled every night. You could hear the terms 'the losers of globalisation' and 'rust belt states' mentioned numerous times. No-one looked at Florida, for example, yet Florida was key in the election victory.

Brexit and Le Pen again are very much seen through this narrative—the relative deprivation story: aggression, frustration, lashing out. Germany's AfD success is attributed to the peak in asylum seeking—the searing refugee crisis—yet if we look where the AfD performed strongest it is in Eastern Germany, where typically refugees do not want to go. They go to Western Germany, or what used to be. So we see paradox after paradox.

Here is an example of the first round in the French elections. The moment the map started appearing on social media about where Front National had done well, which is the blue areas here, the narrative was 'France's rust belt states have turned Marine Le Pen'. Yet if you look at maps of poverty in France, the red areas being the poor areas of France, you see that there is hardly any correlation there. This is only very fleeting, I have to admit. This is not rigorous research. Confirmation bias goes a long way. From my perspective anyway, it can be encountered in history books. The way we remember the Nazi Germany experience has become part of that story of the confirmation bias. For example, when we started presenting our work there would always be somebody who would say, 'Hang on, the Nazi story is far too compelling. You are wrong. This is just not right.'

We also looked at research and electoral studies—there are not that many—looking at who voted NSDAP. Where was NSDAP strongest in Germany in the Weimar Republic in the lead-up to the Second World War? In fact, it was very strong. In a study by Hamilton looking at precincts in the city of Braunschweig, he found that the wealthiest precincts of Braunschweig were overwhelmingly NSDAP, with figures ranging between 61 and 65 per cent of the vote. Other studies looked more at the regional level and found the same thing. In fact, there it becomes more interesting. What they found is that the NSDAP—Hitler's party—did relatively poorly in the Ruhrgebiet, in the industrial heartland of Germany. It still is today. Where did the NSDAP score the strongest? It was in the really deprived poor areas—really poor—near the Czech border but also the more Protestant rural, wealthy parts in the north like Schleswig-Holstein, for example. We start to see a really interesting picture. Even serious research looking at NSDAP support washes up different and more interesting questions about where populism parties thrive.

The idea of poor, very wealthy and something more calm in the middle also comes up when you look at Switzerland. Switzerland has 26 cantons. There was a referendum a couple of years ago asking whether immigration from EU countries should be allowed or curbed. Where was support for curbing strongest? We predicted this on the basis of research. It was strongest in the poorest parts of Switzerland, the red areas here, and the wealthiest parts of Switzerland—the wealthy cantons of Zurich, Schwyz, Nidwalden and so forth—but not so much in the middle. We start to see a curvy, linear pattern here.

The ‘where’ question is also not entirely consistent with what we think, although it becomes less of a matter of saying, ‘This is just wrong.’ It becomes more complex. ‘Who is most likely to support?’ because that then becomes a really important question. There is a lot of research out there now that confirms the stereotype of the low-income, uneducated white male over 35 and so forth. That cannot be denied—that we know—but income and job security do not seem to be very good predictors of populist voting. I will give you a few snippets just as examples. The Dutch PVV voters in 2010 were 21 per cent more likely to earn a mean income, so they are not poorer than your average voter. Brexit leave voters, Danny Dorling found, self-identified as middle class more likely than as working class. Rothwell and Diego-Rosell in the United States did exit polls in the Trump campaign and found that on average Trump voters earn more than average, not less than average, and they are also less likely to be affected by the economic crisis.

We see some really counterintuitive patterns coming up here. What this is known as in the literature—and our book is partly about reviving interest in this pattern—is the V-curve pattern. We did not invent the term ‘V-curve pattern’; it comes from old political science research done by Grofman and Muller in 1973 who are in fact interested in prejudice. What they predict is that prejudice will decline as people earn more income, but what they found to their own surprise is that as people earn more and more the prejudice goes up again, hence the V-curve. Two sociologists, Guimond and Dambrun, in Grenoble, France replicate the effect in the 1990s and we replicated it in an experiment at UQ as well. That might go quite a way towards explaining some paradoxical trends that we cannot seem to explain with our conventional feelings. Populist right-wing parties unite strange bedfellows: people with conflicting economic interests. We think the creative narrative of the elite versus the ordinary people does the work.

018 How does that translate into local themes? We looked at the Queensland election 2017 and looked at the 61 electorates where One Nation put up candidates in Queensland. We set that off against average household income in that electorate. Some electorates were new, so we did not have accurate data. Five or six did not exist, so we had to go by proxy there. If you look here, we were hoping to demonstrate a V-curve effect, but we did not find that. We found a quite weird patterning of support for populist parties. There was certainly not a declining line of low household income to higher household income. That is published at the moment in an article.

The conclusion is that I think we have one assumption wrong. It is hard to get that message across, because we are so wedded to the relative deprivation story. Therefore, the question about where populist parties thrive is often catching us by surprise. We find these wealthy pockets of populist voting that catch us by surprise.

The question of who votes for populist parties is a bit more complex. It is a confluence of two types of voters. It is the relative deprivation vote—people who do it tough, the low-educated male—and also the people on higher incomes. We call that relative gratification. On the one hand, there is the relative deprivation of the V-curve and relative gratification on the other side of the V-curve. That is typically forgotten and neglected.

When we think of Trump, the losers of globalisation in rust belt states dominate our imagination. We only see that side of the picture. We do not see the influx of affluent Trump voters who, also for different reasons, vote for Trump. What kind of logic is that? That is a work in progress. We are looking at that. We think it is about a sense of entitlement, status anxiety, status threat and status protection. For us to get a better handle on populist support, we need to account for both. We need to understand relative gratification as much as relative deprivation.

Interestingly, the book ended up being called *The Wealth Paradox*, not ‘Populism and the Wealth Paradox’, because we found a lot of evidence that these patterns also occur in other fields of study. You see it in stereotyping research. You see it in charitable giving literatures, where people start talking about the wealthier people become the stingier they become, that low-income earners give a large proportion of their income to charity. We see it in research into antisocial behaviour, rule breaking and compliance. We see that wealthier people are more likely to break rules and engage in unethical behaviour. Our research also shows us that this also now travels into support for populist parties.

Of course, we are all wedded to the idea that meritocracy is good. We all want to live in a meritocracy, where effort is rewarded. I want to close on these words by Alexis de Tocqueville, who travelled through the United States. He observed and compared the American meritocracy with the British aristocracy, where class is fixed and meritocracy is more fluid. He made observations that really speak to our research—namely, that in a meritocracy people are forever fretting and worrying about their wealth in ways that people in fixed-class societies do not. Certainly in his time the working-class Englishman would be content, or at least made do, with the status that he or she was given, whereas in a meritocracy, where you are constantly being reminded that your success is your making, people become anxious and also quite protective of their achievements and their status—a sense of entitlement. You could call that the shadow side of meritocracy.

The *Guardian* was full of accounts of the losers of globalisation when Brexit happened. Nowadays we see other titles. Luckily, we are no longer the only ones to make this point. The media is now full of bafflement and says, 'We need to understand the middle class populist vote.' I will leave it at that. Thank you.

**Ms MAZZARELLA:** I will be discussing electoral systems, trust in parliament and vulnerability to populism. I was really interested in looking at how we can build resilience in our electoral systems, particularly in our parliaments, with regard to populism. That links into what we were discussing this morning when we were talking about trust, particularly trust in parliament and how globally it definitely appears to be declining. I will discuss a little bit more of that in a moment.

I am going to touch on populism and its dangers, trust in parliament, which we discussed a little bit before, and some of the findings that I have made. I looked at 17 different countries. I looked at data from the World Values Survey and the European Values Study and combined that to try to get a longitudinal look at how trust in parliament has shifted over the past few decades.

The key element of the populist rhetoric is this idea of two groups—sometimes a third—in right-wing populism. I am using Cas Mudde's definition of populism, which is that it is a thin-centred ideology that argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people. When they talk about 'the people', that is a moral distinction. It is not necessarily an empirical one. You have the people versus the elite. That is usually the pure, morally positive people versus the corrupt and evil elite.

When I say that it is a moral distinction, I mean that, usually, the way a populist would present this is, 'The people are me and everyone I represent and we are the only true people,' and the populist is the only real person who can represent them. Everyone else by default and by definition is the elite. Even if there is someone in society who might be otherwise seen to be morally positive, or a role model, or in any other kind of way positive, the very fact that they criticise the populist means that they are, by definition, either part of the elite or a puppet of the elite or controlled by the elite.

This means that any criticism can be rebuffed, whether they are campaigning for power—in which case all of their political opponents are part of the corrupt elite or a puppet of it—or in power, when they can then rebuff any criticisms. You see this with Trump as well. In a tweet—of course—a little while ago, when discussing the Mueller investigation, he said that real Americans need to start attacking this scam investigation, making that distinction between real and not. You can see that here as well. The quote is—

... it's not just the political system that's rigged. It's the whole economy.

...

It's rigged against you, the American people.

...

This election will decide whether we are ruled by the people, or by the politicians.

The reason this can be quite dangerous is that then this rhetoric can start leading to an erosion of some of the checks and balances that we take for granted in some liberal democracies. If we took the rhetoric, the logic that the populist presents—that they represent the people and that they are the only true representative of the people—then any power transferred to them is just transferring power to the people. What could be wrong with that? That is a rhetoric that we see popping up. You can see it with Trump. This was from his inauguration speech—

... today we are not merely transferring power from one Administration to another, or from one party to another—but we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People.

You can see the damage that this sort of rhetoric has done in Poland. In 2015 the Law and Justice party won a majority and since then has significantly increased the powers of the ruling party. It weakened the Constitutional Tribunal, which is Poland's constitutional court—and the entire judicial system as a result of that—as well as tightened media controls and other things that we would usually associate with a strong and thriving democracy. This quote is from Frans Timmermans, the First Vice-President of the European Commission. In December 2017 he asserted—

Today in Poland the constitutionality of legislation can no longer be guaranteed.

And—

... there is now a clear risk of a serious breach of the rule of law.

That is after two years. It is quite frightening. This is why—and I think this morning really emphasised this—trust in parliament is so essential. I believe that trust in parliament is one of our main guards against this sort of thing.

It is not just parliament but also other democratic institutions. The more trust the people have, the greater understanding and value they place in our democratic institutions. That will be the resistance to this sort of populist rhetoric. If the populists can stand up in a country where trust is already at absolutely dire levels and say, 'The parliament is corrupt. The courts are corrupt. More power to me means more power to you,' it is very troubling. If there is strong trust in people, if people can look at the parliament and say, 'No, we trust that parliament. I can see my representative. I can see myself reflected in that parliament,' I feel that there would be a much greater resistance and a stronger resilience in those parliaments.

If this is what we need, and if we all agree that trust in parliament is important, how do we go about building that trust and strengthening that trust? I was really interested in looking at electoral systems and the structures of parliament. There was a question in the previous session going to this point. I was very excited to hear that. I wanted to compare proportional systems and various other ones.

I looked at van der Meer's four aspects by which parliaments are judged to be worthy of trust. The first is competence, which I think goes without explanation. There is intrinsic commitment. That is caring for or sharing the same goals as the population. This is the element of trust that is usually linked to proportional systems. This is the one that proportional systems benefit from. The idea is that if a population is more clearly reflected in the composition of its parliament it is easier for its population to look at that and say, 'Yes, I can see myself being reflected in that. I can see that I am being represented.' We have extrinsic commitment, which is being able to be held to account by the population by denying future support. That usually benefits majoritarian or pluralistic systems. The reason that majoritarian systems will benefit more from this is that there is usually one ruling party or there will be a coalition of one or two parties. It is easier to pinpoint who is in power and punish them if you are not happy with them. The idea of looking at one group instead of a coalition of five parties and having to pinpoint and determine who or which element of that party was causing a particular policy that were you not happy with and then punishing them by not voting for them the next time—that is lot easier when there is just the one party that you need to point out and say, 'I am not voting for you next time.' Then we have predictability, which goes without saying.

The two that I will be looking at, as you have probably guessed, are intrinsic and extrinsic commitment and seeing which one plays out the stronger. I looked at the average trust in parliament. This is the average trust across that 1981 to 2014 period. The purple colour is proportional systems. The blue is semiproportional systems. The orange is majoritarian or pluralistic systems.

When I say a 'semiproportional' system, I will give a little bit more information about that. That system is like Australia, where they have two chambers that have a significant impact on legislation. One chamber has majoritarian or pluralistic representation and another has proportional. It also accounts for countries like Mexico and Japan, which have parallel systems. Each of their chambers have two elections, one in which a certain number of seats are set aside for majoritarian and the other in which a certain number are set aside for a more proportional system. They are a little bit different. The orange is for the majoritarian representation.

019 You can see that proportional electoral systems just generally do seem to enjoy more trust in parliament than countries with non-proportional systems. You can see that Norway is quite strong, but you can also see that India and France are up there, so majoritarian systems are also benefiting. This probably links into van der Meer's theories. You can see that they are benefiting both from that intrinsic commitment—that reflection—and also that extrinsic commitment. What is interesting, though, is that the

semiproportional systems all seem to fall down the bottom half of the graph. That is quite interesting because what I would have guessed if you had a really strong intrinsic commitment is that the more proportional along a sort of sliding scale the semiproportional should be next, but what I think might be happening here is that the semiproportional systems are not proportional enough to really benefit from that intrinsic commitment aspect of trust; nor are they really majoritarian or pluralistic enough to be benefiting from that extrinsic commitment, so they sort of end up not really benefiting from either.

I also looked at volatility of trust—wanting to know whether or not trust was bouncing all over the place. Obviously when you are looking at certain elements of trust different cultures might rate things differently based on how they are going, so what I wanted to look at was whether there was a real kind of volatility present. I also was interested to see whether certain systems had more stability, but as you can see there is not really much of a correlation there. I really wanted to dig down a little bit deeper into that one, but there was not a whole lot of correlation there. An interesting thing to point out, though, is that you can see Poland had the highest volatility, so their trust basically took a nosedive over this time period but it did bounce around a little bit as well. It was quite volatile during this period, so that volatility being linked to vulnerability to populism is still quite significant and potentially linked in there.

I also looked at changes in trust. I looked at it over the long term and the short term. You can see over the long term I predicted that the level of trust in parliament would decline less in countries with proportional systems than non-proportional systems, and overall this was supported. You can also see that, although trust did drop in the majority of countries that I had a look at, the three countries in which it did not—where it actually increased—were all proportional. It is over the short term that was a little bit more interesting. Over the short term trust decreased in some of these countries still, but you can see that in a number of countries trust has actually increased. The time period here was between 2005 and 2014 or the nearest available data points. Some of the countries participated in different groups at different times.

Here you can see that, again, we have quite a strong showing for the proportional systems but with some of the other systems also enjoying those increasing levels of trust. It is also interesting to note here that almost all of the proportional systems did experience a recent increase in trust, with only Spain not and with four of the five countries with the greatest increases in trust having proportional systems. It is also interesting to note that, again looking at the semiproportional systems—and India, I apologise, is coloured incorrectly—all of the semiproportional systems decreased in trust over that short term, so they have all decreased in trust over both the long term and the short term.

This was just a preliminary study. As you might have noticed, not every country is represented and I was really wanting to dig into a lot more depth in future research, particularly looking at a wider study incorporating more of those countries and also a deeper study because what would really be interesting to map against this would be populist levels—that is, when you see the levels of trust and then you map it against populist levels whether systems such as proportional systems are more resilient in trust during times of high levels of populism.

Part of the difficulty that I found in looking into this, though, particularly over this long period, was the fact that populism itself, other than just being a difficult term to define, was also a contested one. A lot of parties a lot of people might point to and say, 'They're definitely a populist party.' You would have others coming in and saying, 'No, they're not. They're just a particular type of party that happens to be appealing to people at this point in time.' It is a difficult thing to really define definitively. I would really be interested in delving down into that, because I think it is really important that we, particularly as parliamentary staff and academics and other interested individuals, work towards ensuring that we can guard against the negative impacts of populism, because populism in and of itself cannot be shut out. We cannot say to people, 'No, sorry, you can't vote for those people. Those people are wrong.' We are a democracy. We are here so that people can choose whoever it is that they vote for. If people are voted in on a majority and they are voted in legitimately, we need to be able to represent that—we need to have that reflected—but we also need to safeguard those intrinsic elements of liberal democracy that we have. We need to maintain those checks and balances. We need to make sure that we can keep these structures sound. Even if we have populist activity rising and even if we have populist activity at any level, as long as we can maintain those safeguards we will be all right.

**Dr SOLOMON:** Good afternoon. The word 'trust' has many meanings. The main way it has been addressed at this conference is in terms of the use, 'I trust you.' I am going to look at a different meaning in the sense that it is described this way in the *Macquarie Dictionary*—

the obligation or responsibility imposed on one in whom confidence or authority is placed: *a position of trust.*

It is also in a legal sense described as—

a fiduciary relationship in which one person (the trustee) holds the title to property ... for the benefit of another ...

I have titled this paper 'Public Office As/Is a Public Trust'. This encapsulates two concepts used by judges and commentators to describe the obligations and duties of those elected or appointed to public office—that is, members of parliament, officials and others who discharge public duties.

The first public office as a public trust is favoured by some judges who take the word 'trust' in a strictly legal sense involving fiduciary obligations under equitable principles. Former Chief Justice of the High Court Robert French has referred to the public trust metaphor, saying the notion of public office as a public trust is an old one borrowed from the principles of equity which define the duties of a trustee. The second—public office is a public trust—uses public trust as a special kind of trust involving obligations not necessarily the same as those that arise with private legal trusts. This is not to say that the public trust is not a legal concept. As you will see, it is the basis on which successful criminal prosecutions have been brought against some politicians in recent years, most notably the former New South Wales minister Eddie Obeid. In fact the term 'public trust' has been recognised and adopted in statutes establishing anti-corruption bodies in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and Victoria, requiring these bodies to provide a safeguard against a breach of public trust. It is also recognised as an ethical requirement in, for example, the Queensland Public Sector Ethics Act, which states 'in recognition that public office involves a public trust', and in the Commonwealth government's ministerial code, which says 'in recognition that public office is a public trust'.

The public trust principle is not restricted to criminal laws. Last year it was used in aid of a decision by the High Court that South Australian Senator Bob Day was disqualified from sitting as a senator under the Constitution. The High Court's reasons set out in general terms what are the public trust obligations and duties of a member of parliament as a public officer. These include that parliamentarians have a duty not to use their position to promote their own pecuniary interests or those of family or entities close to them in circumstances where there is a conflict or a real or substantial possibility of conflict between those interests and their duty to the public, and the fundamental obligation of members of parliament in carrying out their functions was to act with fidelity and single-mindedness to the welfare of the community.

Significantly, the High Court's decision also shows that these obligations and duties are fundamental under the Constitution. In one sense there is nothing particularly new about that High Court decision. The various judgements quote and adopt statements from judgements of the High Court dating back almost a century, but they come at a time when there is renewed interest in the notion of the public trust and the conduct that is required of or forbidden to members of parliament and other public officers. The public trust notion in English and American law has a long history and I will not go through this in any detail, but it can be traced back to medieval law in England. Even through the time when the monarchy was of course responsible for all public offices, the judges were able to find a way of saying, 'Nevertheless, there was a duty to the public, not just to the king.' The relevant criminal law also followed that same idea.

According to former Chief Justice French, the importance of the public trust metaphor diminished over time with the rise of specific mechanisms for oversight and accountability including statutory regulation of the Public Service, parliamentary scrutiny of official action, the political accountability of ministers and the employment arrangement of officials. However, he said that a loss of faith in these mechanisms in the late 20th century was one of the principal stimuli to renewed interest in the public trust and its implications both for officials and for our government. The person most responsible for this discussion of the public trust was a professor at ANU, Paul Finn, who later became a judge of the Federal Court. He was responsible for advising the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission in Queensland about public sector ethics. He also was an adviser to the Western Australian royal commission, WA Inc, in the early nineties.

The public trust doctrine requires a public officer to advance the public interest as opposed to personal interests. This raises the further question of how the public interest might be determined or if it is possible to say with any precision what that public interest might be. A couple of years ago former Chief Justice Sir Gerard Brennan said—

This notion of the public interest is not merely a rhetorical device—a shibboleth to be proclaimed in a feel-good piece of oratory. It has a profound practical significance in proposals for political action and in any subsequent assessment. It is derived from the fiduciary nature of political office: a fundamental conception which underpins a free democracy.

It has long been established legal principle that a member of Parliament holds 'a fiduciary relation towards the public' ... and 'undertakes and has imposed upon him a public duty and a public trust' ... The duties of a public trustee are not identical with the duties of a private trustee but there is an analogous limitation imposed on the conduct of the trustee ... The limitation demands that all decisions and exercises of power be taken in the interests of the beneficiaries and that duty cannot be subordinated to, or qualified by the interests of the trustee.

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I shall skip lots of quotes and lots of history. I will mention the Obeid case, because it is a recent example of the way that the common law seeks to enforce the trust principle through the criminal law. Obeid was a former minister in New South Wales. He was charged that, while holding office as a member of the Legislative Council, he did in the course of or connected to his public office wilfully misconduct himself by making representations to a public servant with the intention of seeking an outcome favourable to a company in which he had an interest, knowing at the time he made the representations that he had a commercial and/or beneficial and/or family and/or personal interest in the said tenancies, which he did not disclose to the public servant. He was found guilty. On appeal, his counsel argued that court proceedings involved an assessment of the standards, responsibilities and obligations of a member of parliament which meant that the matter fell within the exclusive jurisdiction of the parliament and, therefore, could not be heard by the Supreme Court at all. That was rejected by all of the judges.

The issue of whether he had failed in his trust duty was argued on the basis that it was for the Crown to establish beyond reasonable doubt that it was Obeid's sole purpose to advantage his or his family's pecuniary interest. That meant it was not necessary to specify the specific obligations and duties of a member of parliament. An attempt by senior counsel for Obeid to have those obligations and duties spelt out was rejected when the appeal went to the High Court. It said the basis on which the matter had been argued in the lower court was sufficient for the conviction to stand.

The Day case involved the allegation that Mr Day was disqualified from sitting as a senator because of the provisions of section 44(v) of the Constitution, which states in part that anyone who has a direct or indirect pecuniary interest in any agreement with the Public Service of the Commonwealth shall be incapable of sitting as a senator. The issue was with the arrangements for the lease of the property in which Day had an interest, which was to be leased by the Commonwealth for use by Day as an electoral office. The significant issue that had to be met by the court was that Chief Justice Barwick, back in 1975, had held that the disqualification was a very limited one.

The court, in fact, unanimously overturned Chief Justice Barwick's interpretation of the Constitution and said that there was a wide duty of public interest involved. They said that the object of the section was to ensure not only that the Public Service of the Commonwealth is not in a position to exercise undue influence over members of parliament, which is what Chief Justice Barwick had said, but also that members of parliament will not seek to benefit by such arrangements or to put themselves in a position where their duty to the people they represent and their own personal interests may conflict. They said a construction of that section which proceeds from an understanding that parliamentarians have a duty as a representative of others to act in the public interest is consistent with the place of that provision in its wider constitutional context.

The representative parliamentary democracy for which the Constitution provides informs an understanding of specific provisions such as that section and assists in determining the content of that duty, which includes an obligation to act according to good conscience, uninfluenced by other considerations, especially personal financial considerations. They quoted an earlier High Court judgement from 1920 as talking about parliamentarians having a single-mindedness for the welfare of the community. Another judge in the Day case said that the fundamental obligation of a member of parliament in relation to the parliament of which he is a constituent unit subsists essentially as at any period in our history. That fundamental obligation is the duty to serve and, in serving, to act with fidelity and with a single-mindedness for the welfare of the community.

Therefore, the judgements in the High Court indicate that members of Australian parliaments have a duty to act in the public interest; that they have a fundamental obligation to serve; that they should act with fidelity, with a single-mindedness for the welfare of the community; that they are obliged to act according to good conscience, uninfluenced by other considerations, especially personal financial considerations; that they should avoid putting themselves in a position where their duty to the people they represent and their own personal interests may conflict. The court did not use the term 'public trust', but that term is a convenient shorthand for those obligations that I have just read out, that are set out in the judgements of the High Court.

**Prof. SAWER:** I cannot forbear to mention something, which is how much this panel took me back to a book that I published with Barry Hindess about 15 years ago called *Us and them: anti-elitism in Australia*, which in part was about the role of the Murdoch press in promoting this concept of an untrustworthy political class. That is something that Murdoch has done not only in Australia, of course, but also in the US, through Foxtel in particular. He had an important role in the Trump victory. I am sorry to have put in that ad.



**Mr EADE:** I have just a small point, Casey. New Zealand became a proportional representation country in 1996. Those charts should have had a cross on them or something, or the earlier ones, because it does not support your proportional case as much as it could have.

**Ms MAZZERALLA:** Yes, thank you very much for noting that; you are absolutely correct. It was 1993. I only incorporated data for New Zealand from that—

**Mr EADE** (Inaudible).

**Ms MAZZERALLA:** Yes, but I think the change was from 1993. Was that when it was brought in?

**Mr EADE:** It was brought in 1993, but it came into operation in 1996.

**Ms MAZZERALLA:** Yes, so I only incorporated data for New Zealand from that point. Actually, for the World Values Survey New Zealand participated only a couple of times. They participated in 1995, so just before that first election but after it had been brought in, and then in 2005 and 2010. Thank you very much for noting that.

It was actually really interesting—and I go into further detail in my paper—that research conducted after New Zealand shifted from the majoritarian pluralistic system to a proportional system showed a marked increase in the trust that people expressed in the political class. People expressed more trust in the politicians that they elected, saying they felt that they were more representative, that they had their interests at heart. Interestingly as well, they also put forward opinions in a survey that we conducted. I do apologise that I do not have the researchers' names to hand, but it is in the paper. They felt that the big interests were less influential over parliament and the decisions that it made after they moved to a proportional system. That was a really excellent point to make, thank you.

**Prof. SAWER:** Thank you, Colin. I think we are all looking forward to reading these full papers.

**Mr YUSSUF:** My name is Mohamed Yussuf and I am from Kenya. I am a Rotary Peace Fellow at the University of Queensland. My question is: can this kind of politics be legislated? For public officials, can they enact legislation so that in times of crisis you cannot dabble in conspiracy theories; you cannot be appealing to the worst emotions of humanity? There have to be judges who will judge on what is ethical and what is not.

**Ms MAZZERALLA:** That is a really interesting point. There are some constitutions, for example, that do have elements of an attempt to legislate against some of those dangerous elements. Often it is referred to as militant democracy. For example, in the German constitution there is a provision for particular political parties that are undemocratic, and that can apply to whether or not they are seen as a threat to liberal democracy. If a party came whose platform was authoritarian or whose platform was specifically against a particular minority within society, they would be seen potentially by the highest court in Germany as a danger to that democracy and their constitution actually allows for the banning of said parties.

Some people do argue, though, that those sorts of restrictions restrict democracy itself. I think that goes to that question you were asking about legislating against conspiracy theories or legislating against some of these things. It is really important to make sure that when we are defending democracy we do not end up damaging it ourselves. It is really a difficult balance to try to strike. Lots of different countries are approaching it in a lot of different ways, but it is really important that we try to preserve these institutions in such a way that we do not end up becoming worse than some of the damage that we might otherwise do.

**Dr MOLLS:** Maybe I can add two things. The role of parliaments is to really get serious about corruption and about donations. These are two domains in which politicians and parliaments can do a lot more. This morning we saw a beautiful paper by Matthew Hornsey about conspiracy theories. I thought it was very compelling. However, I think what was missing a little bit was the actual conspiracies that we have seen. We have had Enron. We have had Volkswagen software that was not quite doing what it was supposed to be doing. We have had the royal banking inquiry. I can go on and on. These are real conspiracies that I suspect enable the wacky, crazy conspiracies that populist parties thrive off. One thing parliamentarians can do is take that really seriously. I am not saying that they are not, but more attention for that would be better.

At a more local level, it is getting business donations to political parties under control, because I think that is really causing a lot of toxicity at a really mundane, local level. This is the stuff that people talk about at barbecues: 'Oh, this high-rise building was only approved because of political donations.' Those are two areas that I suggest deserve attention.

**Dr SMITH:** Casey, you called the Australian Westminster system semiproportional because we have a majoritarian lower house and a proportional upper house. If you look around the states of Australia, most of them would be semiproportional but Queensland would be majoritarian. Do you have statistics for that comparison?

**Ms MAZZERALLA:** No, I only looked at national levels. I only looked at and compared national level parliaments, but it would be a really fascinating area to look into. In particular, obviously levels of populism rise and fall within states as much as within national governments, looking at different countries. It would be really interesting to see, because I would imagine that you would also get quite a lot of influence from the national government and what was happening in the national government with regard to levels of populism in some of the states and vice versa. I think there would be strong influence in both directions. That is a really interesting point.

**Prof. ORR:** I am Graeme Orr from the law school up the river, as opposed to the one down the river. This is a question for David on the legal notion as opposed to the chivalric or metaphorical notion of public interest. It seems easy in venal cases, whether it is Eddie Obeid or Daryl Maguire who seek money for lobbying. What about cases where it is not so much helping your mates but helping your cause? Is it politics-as-usual for a minister or someone to assist a union that he has been a part of? Where do we draw the line? That is where I am concerned that the legal test or idea just starts to become something that is quite constraining of what might be a natural thing in a pluralistic society.

021 **Dr SOLOMON:** I think what is important is that the legal requirement set down by the High Court ought to influence the political debate about what should be required of ministers, members of parliament, officials and the like, without any expectation that you would be able to bring an action under the Constitution against an officer of the parliament in a civil constitutional sense. I am concerned, though, that the standards that have been set ought to be recognised. As a political goal, people should understand what the requirements are supposed to be and, in fact, are constitutionally the way members of parliament and officials are supposed to behave. As I say, I think that is going to be judged 99 per cent of the time in a political sense rather than in a legal sense.

**Mr WARD:** David, following on from your comments in relation to Mr Obeid, in New South Wales you are probably aware that we still have common law offences. One of the things he was charged with was the misuse of public office. Do you have some concerns that that common law offence still exists and should in fact be statutory or do you think that by having a common law offence such as that you have the necessary flexibility to make sure that you can get the right outcome, as it were, or do you think that the parliament needs to have that debate and co-define what an abuse of public office should be? There is an offence in the Crimes Act for members of the executive but not for members of parliament.

**Dr SOLOMON:** I would stick with the common law because it is more flexible. I am not sure that I would like the parliament to be cutting down on what the common law requires, because I am sure that the moment it starts redefining it it would cut down on its huge scope. I think the Obeid case will serve as a useful guide to would-be wrongdoers in the parliament.

**Prof. SAWER:** I think it is probably time for us to wrap up this particular panel, which has been fantastic. I just have to tell you that this was the first ever conference presentation given by Casey—the very first. Perhaps we should just make it clear that we are thanking all of the panel members, but this was exceptional. Thank you.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** Many argue that social media allows for citizen journalism that shines the light on abuses and corruption and gives a voice to the voiceless, especially when the media does not, but critics—many of them in government—say it also provides a platform for hate speech, racial and religious vilification, harassment and baseless conspiracy theories. Either way, social media is not going to go away, except when it is banned—like we have seen in Nauru for three years up until earlier this year, when they lifted their ban on Facebook, or in Papua New Guinea, where they have proposed a ban on Facebook for APEC, which is coming up in November. Social media is out there, but we are also seeing it as a representative of freedom of speech under attack in a number of Pacific countries.

We have a very broad topic today. It is social media's political influence in the Pacific region. We can talk about almost anything. My name is Stefan Armbruster. I will be chairing this discussion. I am SBS's Pacific correspondent, amongst other duties. I have a very distinguished panel with me here today. I would like to introduce Sean Dorney. Sean Dorney has covered the Pacific for more than four decades. He has seen countries emerge from under colonialism to independence and into modern states—I am not sure 'modern states' is the right phrase but an interesting hybrid anyway.

**Mr DORNEY:** Complex states.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** Complex states, yes. Sean has been a familiar voice and a fearless correspondent in the region. He is a Walkley Award winner, and I am hoping to get some very interesting insights from him.

Lisa Martin is a former diplomatic and defence correspondent for Australian Associated Press and was based in the Canberra gallery for seven years until a couple of weeks ago. She was a finalist last night in the midyear Walkley's for a special investigation into the health situation on Nauru and Manus for asylum seekers and refugees. She has also reported from across Melanesia. Included among her awards is a series on gender based violence in Papua New Guinea. In September she is hiking the Kokoda Track to raise money for a domestic violence crisis centre in PNG called Femili PNG.

Tess Newton Cain is a dual Vanuatu and UK citizen. She lived in Vanuatu for 20 years. She is a former law lecturer at USP. She has a consultancy that advises governments, developmental organisations, regional organisations and NGOs, with a focus on governance and political engagement. She has worked very closely with some of the governments and has seen social media's effect from the other side. She is currently an adjunct at ANU, James Cook University and the University of Queensland. She is a prolific social media consumer and user if you follow Pacific issues in that forum.

In terms of the format today, we are all going to have a little bit of a chat and then it is over to you. We are more than happy to take any questions on any subjects to do with social media in the Pacific. I will go first to you, Sean. You have covered a lot of elections. You have been there for almost every key political crisis in the Pacific as long as I can remember. Most recently you were amongst the Commonwealth observer team at the Papua New Guinea election last year which had many irregularities and many problems. For you, how have you seen social media change politics in the Pacific and do you think politicians in the Pacific are scared of it?

**Mr DORNEY:** Yes, they are. As you mentioned, there has been an effort to try to shut Facebook down in Papua New Guinea because Peter O'Neill and some of the other ministers are far from happy about what gets spread around on social media. There are not many controls on what is said. I follow a little bit of it. There are no boundaries when it comes to social media in Papua New Guinea. I can almost sympathise with the people who want to do something about it.

022 Social media is spreading rather rapidly in PNG, but mostly in the built-up areas. For instance, my wife, Pauline, who is from Manus Island and is here with us today, and I went back to Pauline's village recently, but in trying to organise that trip Pauline had a lot of trouble getting through because the towers that carry the signals mostly depend upon solar power and if you have several days of rain then the whole signal drops out and you cannot get through. In terms of our attempts to contact people in Manus, you almost have to wait until they go into the main city, into the capital, Lorengau, before you can contact people in any sort of regular way.

There are lots of differences in lots of Pacific island countries, but in Papua New Guinea, for instance, you still have something like 80 per cent of the people who do not live in built-up cities or towns. The message getting out to them sometimes can be quite erratic. Having said that, we have a nephew who is a school master of the primary school in Pauline's village and he has a couple of web pages going so Pauline can keep in contact with what is going on in the village when she can make contact with them. I think that is quite regular throughout the Pacific, that lots of people have actually set up their own sort of village Facebook pages, which is a pretty good socially cohesive thing for people who are not back in the village.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** In places like PNG, in some villages in some areas you have the haus boi, which is a traditional meeting place where people talk about issues in each village. Have Facebook and those social media platforms replaced those traditional meeting places—talking points—where people can get issues out and take them to their leaders?

**Mr DORNEY:** I would not say it is quite that dynamic yet. It certainly allows a lot more communication, but those village meeting houses are very, very important still in lots of places. I am diverting a little, but when we went back to Pauline's village—Tulu on Manus Island—one of the things that Pauline did notice was that no-one was listening to the radio anymore. Radio Manus, which is the provincial radio station, is out of action. The transmitters are not working. Radio Australia used to be a hugely important means of communication. Pauline's brother Bernard, who is the paramount chief there, used to constantly have the radio on to Radio Australia—and it was not just one radio for one person; it was one radio for lots of people. Now that Radio Australia is no longer broadcasting in short wave, that has been sort of stripped out of Papua New Guinea and the rest of the Pacific.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** We will talk about that in a minute. That is an interesting way of having your brother-in-law keep tabs on you, Sean, while you are travelling around the Pacific! Lisa, you have reported from AAP and you have covered the Pacific from Canberra effectively and flown there to cover when there have been visits by the Australian Prime Minister and ministers. AAP has shut its bureaus in the region down now but, Lisa, you have continued to cover what has been going on. How important has the social media information coming out of the Pacific been for you as an Australian journalist and in terms of telling stories from there and Australia's engagement with the region?

**Ms MARTIN:** I would say it is hugely important because I guess it gives you an insight into what is going on on the ground, at the grassroots where you cannot be. It is an excellent tool for finding sources who know information or who you can get a phone number from and then give someone a ring. Particularly in covering natural disasters, it is very useful to get footage and photos off social media to show the extent of the devastation. That is really important for aid groups on the ground who are trying to generate public empathy and get people to donate to cyclone appeals. It helps you to keep track of what is going on.

There have been some really interesting cases over the years of how particular Pacific island governments are starting to use social media to engage with their citizens. Fiji was quite an interesting example. A few years ago the Fijian government proposed changing the country's flag. They put 23 designs up on social media and sought public feedback. Basically, people hated all the options and they preferred the old design. They were quite happy to keep the Union Jack on the flag. At one point the Fijian police commissioner came out and basically threatened people with cybercrime for criticising the flag designs. The government had to propose a bill in parliament to outlaw making disparaging remarks about the potential new flag. Then Cyclone Winston happened and the whole concept got put on the backburner which I guess was perhaps a win for people power.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** In terms of your stories about Manus and Nauru, communications in both those countries are incredibly difficult. As a journalist, you cannot virtually get into Nauru at all and Manus is quite difficult as well. In terms of communicating with people there and getting the stories out—not just for the one that you were nominated for the award for but generally with asylum seekers and refugees there and contacting people—how pivotal has social media been in telling that story when quite often you have got the feeling that the Australian and PNG governments did not want those stories to come out?

**Ms MARTIN:** Absolutely, a lot of stories would not get reported unless you were able to talk directly with refugees and asylum seekers who are on the ground. It is very difficult in a climate of government secrecy, where the official information is non-existent.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** Suppressed.

**Ms MARTIN:** Everything is an on-water matter or an operational issue that they cannot talk about. It is incredibly frustrating. I guess as a journalist you are trying to navigate the course of events in a fair and unbiased manner. You also have to be wary of refugee advocates who might over-egg something for their own political means. Trying to get what actually happened sometimes and talking to eyewitnesses is really critical, because a lot of the time the truth kind of lies in a grey area between what the government says and what refugee supporters say happened. Trying to navigate that is just a minefield sometimes.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** Tess, you work on the other side of the information flow, in a way. You have worked a lot with the Vanuatu government. Could I call you a Vanuatu government insider?

**Dr NEWTON CAIN:** No.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** Okay, but you are an avid social media user and your country has probably one of the Pacific's most prolific politician social media users, Ralph Regenvanu. How effective have the governments in the region been at using social media to get their message across in competition, I suppose, with people who post generally for their own purposes? I am thinking in particular of a *60 Minutes* piece recently about China's influence in the Pacific, and they used Fiji and Vanuatu as case studies. It was a rather curious program. There was a direct response on social media. How effective are governments at the moment in getting their message across?

**Dr NEWTON CAIN:** I think, as with everything in the Pacific, it is very variable depending on which country you are looking at. The use of social media by political actors, whether individual politicians or as governments, varies depending on what is going on. It operates differently during election campaign times than it might during normal government running times. The opposition parties might use it differently from how people in government do. But there are definitely some quite interesting aspects of how governments use it that we can point to. Let us start with my position as a possible government insider.

In the immediate aftermath of Cyclone Pam I worked with the Office of the Prime Minister communications team and I did look after the social media side of things. What became evident then was that access to social media gave us a very easily turned on and cheap means of filling what could have been a potentially very damaging information vacuum. Essentially, what I did was use the Facebook page of the Office of the Prime Minister to create a very steady, calm, regulated flow of information. Some of that information was very boring—it was about when power was or was not going to be restored to particular places—and some of it was more significant, but what it meant was that, rather than people having no information and filling that vacuum with their own stories, which were inevitably going to be bad-news stories, they knew that they could go to that one place and if it was on the Prime Minister's Facebook page it had been checked, it was clear, it was true, it was something that they could rely on and they could then text that to their families in the village. They could text their families in Tanna and say, 'Okay, the ship is loaded and it is leaving tomorrow night. It is expected to dock at this time.' They could use that information as a source to then spread to other people in the country. The Facebook page was already there. We literally just had to switch it on and use it. That was quite an interesting way of being able to use it in a very specific circumstance where there was not much time, there were not many resources but we actually at least could keep a lid on the rumourmongering and the fearmongering that could have sprung up elsewhere.

You have mentioned individual politicians. Our foreign minister, Hon. Ralph Regenvanu, is a very good proponent of that, as is President Hilda Heine in the Marshall Islands. They are using particularly Twitter as a way of building and sustaining an international profile which they both need. They operate on the global stage. That allows them to have much greater outreach than might otherwise be the case. I think we have also seen particular instances. Yesterday, for example, Governor Allan Bird of East Sepik in Papua New Guinea used his Facebook page to put forward a very detailed midyear report of how he has allocated funding within his province and what projects he has used it for. I doubt that that is the only medium he has used—he has probably put something in the paper; he may have gone on the radio to talk about it as well—but he obviously recognises that that is one way of getting this information out to his voters, out to his constituents and telling that policy story, which is something that generally politicians and governments in the Pacific have still yet to really get to in a big way: telling people what their jobs as parliamentarians, legislators and governments are so that hopefully next time the elections come around people have a better idea as to who to pick because they know what it is that they are supposed to be doing.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** What about in terms of countering stories that come out maybe not from the country that it is about in the Pacific and responding to that? There is a lot of misreporting of what goes on in the Pacific. A lot of it is desktop journalism. People do not travel there because it is so expensive and so they just have to wing it with what they have and quite often those stories are very, very wrong.

**Dr NEWTON CAIN:** Yes. You have the people who cannot get there and then you have the people who do get there that we rather wish maybe had just stayed at home—not mentioning any names. Certainly, the *60 Minutes* story is a good example of that. Because some people are on social media there is that opportunity to say, 'This is wrong,' or, 'You did not take this into account,' or, 'You made a mistake,' or, 'Actually, no. That is not the way the name of our foreign minister is pronounced. Could you try getting it right next time you come?' It is possible to get very immediate feedback. Whether that has any impact on the people who have generated that is questionable.

The other thing is that in Pacific island countries—in Vanuatu that *60 Minutes* story was a nonstory. People in Vanuatu have much more important things to worry about than what some joker from Channel 9 is saying about them.

023 **Mr ARMBRUSTER:** To put this into context, a lot of the Pacific is still very, very isolated. In the Solomon Islands now they are getting their first—they do not have it yet—optic fibre cable to the country. They are one of the last countries in the world to have an optic fibre connection. That is an illustration of how isolated they are in terms of the information flow. In some places there is no mobile phone signal. There is no internet. I was on an island in the Solomon Islands four weeks ago that had a 2G mobile signal. These phones do not work there because they are not spec'd for 2G anymore. It is a very limited information flow.

I want to bring this discussion to another important point. While social media has taken off in the Pacific, services from Australia in another way have been withdrawn. That is what Sean was alluding to earlier with Radio Australia. Sean, what has happened to Radio Australia? Why was Radio Australia and short wave so important in the Pacific, where about 80 per cent of the population do not have access to radio or mobile phone technology?

**Mr DORNEY:** A lot of them do have access to short-wave radio. I was at a function the other day where I said I am a household name in the Pacific. I am not saying that in any boastful way; it is just that for years and years I was reporting on Radio Australia from all of those Pacific countries, so I am far better known in the Pacific than I am in Australia. That goes for some of the other Radio Australia reporters as well like Jemima Garrett and Geraldine Doogue. These are names that people in the Pacific know because they were listening to us on a daily basis for years and years.

One of the great things that Radio Australia did when it was broadcasting was let countries know what was going on in other countries in the Pacific. Radio New Zealand International is still doing that, but Radio Australia has pulled out of all of its short-wave broadcasting, which means that anyone who is not in a capital city or a major city that might have an FM radio—even then the ABC has shut down all of its FM radio stations in the northern Pacific. This is a combination of two things—one is budgetary cutbacks to the ABC but the other one is a lack of recognition, I think, within the ABC itself as to how important Radio Australia was to so many people in the Pacific. At one stage on social media I said one of the problems is that nobody in Sydney listens to short wave. It is a bit of an issue in the ABC that a lot of decisions are made in Sydney. It has very little—

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** Basis in reality.

**Mr DORNEY:** Absolutely. The reality is that Radio Australia was hugely important throughout the region. It is not there anymore. There is an inquiry underway at the moment in Canberra into whether there should be a reinvestment by the Australian government in international broadcasting. Those submissions are closing early next month. There is a group of ex-ABC people who are very determined to get as many submissions in as they can. It is not only looking at short wave; it is looking at the whole range of broadcast and media technologies.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** Why that is significant is that, while social media is huge in the Pacific and the uptake has been massive, especially as data has become more accessible, there are so many people who are still isolated and do not have a voice in the Pacific. It was interesting listening to Radio Australia recently when they have been covering the issue of their lack of penetration now. They are getting phone calls from places where they cannot be heard anymore but those people are calling out to have the service back. I would like to open up the floor to anyone who would like to ask a question. There are so many issues in the Pacific to do with social media. We could really go all over the place.

**Mr YUSSUF:** Regarding social media, when you said the penetration in the Pacific islands is not that much, recently I was reading that all of those frequencies which used to broadcast Australian radio have been taken over by the Chinese, and obviously the Chinese have Germanic designs for the world. What should Australia be doing about this?

**Mr DORNEY:** Apparently someone from the ABC has sent someone off with a short-wave radio to see if it is true that the Chinese have taken over some of those frequencies. The ABC are saying they cannot pick it up. It would not surprise me at all if China has moved into that space that the ABC vacated. I think this story was first reported by Radio New Zealand International.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** It was first reported on Radio National and then Radio New Zealand International and then back to Australia.

**Mr DORNEY:** What was the question, sorry?

**Ms MARTIN:** What should Australia do about it?

**Mr YUSSUF:** Could those frequencies be taken back by Radio Australia? Obviously the Chinese have their own designs for the world.

**Mr DORNEY:** I am not an expert on short-wave radio, but I think there are a lot of frequencies that could be taken up. The ones that you have lost you cannot get back if someone else has taken them, but you can apply, I believe, for short-wave frequencies. If the message gets out strongly enough then people will switch to those new channels.

**Dr NEWTON CAIN:** I think this is part of a broader issue, which is: what does Australia want in terms of relationships with the Pacific island countries, which are the countries that are closest to Australia? Certainly this year I have been in Samoa, Fiji and Vanuatu and I have talked about this with people in all of those countries. What is becoming very clear to me is that in the Pacific we understand why the 'because China' thing matters here in Australia, but we are not interested in being friends with people: 'They only want to be friends with us because they are scared of someone else.' We are interested in relationships

with our neighbours that are built on a real understanding, mutual respect and shared values and interests. While it is great that Australia takes a bigger interest in the Pacific and is concerned about who is or is not broadcasting on short wave, if the only trigger for that is 'because China', that will get us so far but it is not going to make for long-lasting, sustainable, mutually nurturing relationships between this country and the countries that are closest to it.

**Mr DORNEY:** I absolutely agree with what Tess said. Australia's interest in the Pacific should not be driven by what China is doing. These are all our neighbours. For instance, we ran Papua New Guinea for 70 years but the average knowledge in Australia of what is going on in Papua New Guinea these days is quite minimal.

**Ms FIRTH:** This kind of works also within the context of what is happening within the Pacific islands and their use of social media. For the average consumer of social media, there is a certain anonymity around the nationalities that are pushing the content that they are viewing. I am interested in how all of these global views that are being introduced to social media and thus to the Australian political discourse influence Australian policies. For example, we have Australian teenagers whose views on Indigenous relations are largely shaped by American racial relations. My question for the panel is: is there anything we can do to reconnect with Australian policies and reconnect with Australian political discourse centred around our own issues instead of purely global ones without attempting to regulate or control social media in that sense?

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** Wow. That is a PhD topic. In terms of the Pacific and connecting to Australia, as a journalist I find social media incredibly powerful. People contact me directly. They are raising issues that basically the media in their own country do not raise. They look at a way of raising it directly in Australia. They have the ability through social media to contact any one of us and say, 'Hey, I have this thing going on,' or 'I know about this,' or 'There is that over there,' pointing you in the right direction. Suddenly you find that a story that would never have had a life is suddenly enlivened because it has been reported by someone in Australia, and it affects not only what is happening back in that country but also Australia's response to it. Something that the Australian government or DFAT might not have wanted discussed is suddenly on the table. From my perspective, it is incredibly important. Tess, could I pass that to you?

**Dr NEWTON CAIN:** Certainly I have seen in various social media spaces in the Pacific something similar to what you are alluding to, which is people grabbing something from one context, whether it is Australian, American or European, and literally dumping it on a Facebook page and saying, 'Well, you know, we should do this too,' which obviously opens up a conversation. Whilst that can be risky and whilst it can lead to people going off on some quite interesting and weird tangents, it certainly is very different from when I arrived to teach law in Vanuatu 20-odd years ago, when I could not tell my students from Tonga what was going on in their country because I could not get hold of a newspaper unless I literally got on a plane and flew to Tonga and got one. Now if I were still in education I would be able to access a lot more resources that I can share with Pacific island people.

As Sean mentioned, it is only really recently, since more people have had access to the internet, that I, as someone who tries to support these conversations, can say, 'Well, this is what is happening in Solomon Islands. Maybe people in Vanuatu might like to have a look at this,' or 'This is what is happening in Fiji.' Previously people in different Pacific island countries did not know what was going on in the country next door to them, even though it might be quite relevant. One of the interesting questions is: if the Australian government is doing this in this country, why aren't they doing it in your country as well? That is a conversation that is yet to really get going. Hopefully it is going to come next.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** Lisa, what sort of impact has social media from the Pacific had on the Australian government and Australian government policy? You have worked in defence and diplomacy. You must have seen some reactions from DFAT along the way.

**Ms MARTIN:** That is a huge question. I just do not think the Australian government is necessarily doing social media that well in terms of diplomacy. There was a report recently by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute about China and Weibo and WeChat. It was encouraging Australia's foreign minister and Prime Minister to engage directly on those Chinese social media platforms as a soft diplomacy measure. This report raised concerns about censorship. I know that DFAT does have a social media profile in terms of its high commissions and its embassies. I think most of the posts are just propaganda rubbish and very artificial and lacking a bit of authenticity and genuineness. You would not hang off every word. They are just boring. I guess a lot of diplomats are like that. They are very cautious, risk-averse people. That is just how they have to be. I feel like they could loosen up and show a bit more personality.

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To get back to your question, I think the cat is out of the bag with globalisation. It is too hard to change that now. You are getting global phenomena sweeping through. The election of Donald Trump in the US is quite a good example. There are a lot of Pacific island leaders emulating some of his attitudes to the mainstream media. A good example was earlier this year when Stefan and I were covering the Australia-Papua New Guinea Business Council. Peter O'Neill, the PNG Prime Minister, was in town in Brisbane giving a speech at this event. His visit coincided with the release of a report from Jubilee Australia, which is a think tank, and it was critical of the PNG LNG project. This report talked about how this promised economic boom had not been delivered. There was a threat of a civil war occurring, hundreds of millions of dollars were unaccounted for and the landowners were not getting their royalties. Peter O'Neill dismissed this report, without having read it, as fake news. I think it is really important that journalists in Australia and the Pacific show some solidarity and call that behaviour out from politicians when they are dismissing legitimate stories as fake news just because it is against their political narrative.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** It has made it harder for them to do that now, hasn't it?

**Ms MARTIN:** Yes.

**Mr WEBB:** Most Australian parliaments are twinned with a parliament in the Pacific islands. New South Wales is twinned with the Solomon Islands and with Bougainville. You have talked a little about governments using social media. I am interested if you have any reflections on how parliaments across the Pacific are using social media and whether that is different from how the governments are. The twinned relationships are a two-way relationship where both sides learn from each other. I am interested in whether there are any insights from that that might apply here as well.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** From my perspective, I find the parliaments themselves do not. Some government departments in various countries are very effective, but the parliaments themselves do not seem to have a social media presence at all. In terms of communication, Facebook, Messenger or WhatsApp are really useful for people who are tech savvy, but quite often the telephone is still the most important tool you have in terms of talking to someone and getting information out of them.

**Ms MARTIN:** I have found over the years that a lot of parliaments in the Pacific do not even have updated websites. It is very out of date trying to get accurate information about who is who in the zoo. It can be difficult at times. There definitely needs to be more capacity building to deal with some of those basics.

**Mr DORNEY:** I have not gone to many parliament sites to try to look up their social media activity. It would be interesting to know if there is any social media done by the Papua New Guinea parliament, but I do not know about it.

**Dr NEWTON CAIN:** A couple of parliaments do live-stream their proceedings when they are in session. That happens in Vanuatu and Fiji. People who are involved in parliament can use social media, for example, to publish what bills are going to be tabled and discussed. All the points that have been made are true, but I think it is important to recognise that you are dealing with agencies that are generally under-resourced, particularly the office of the parliament—so the Clerk's office and the Speaker's office. They are struggling to get the budget to keep the lights on and have the phone bill paid let alone all these other things. Whilst Facebook is free, you still need somebody who is being paid a salary to access these sources and do it. You are also dealing with agencies that do not have a very well established communications strategy at all, as Stefan said. They are not used to dealing with the media in any format. To expect them to suddenly be very prolific and sophisticated on social media is possibly unrealistic.

In terms of working with parliaments to improve or increase their visibility in that space, it is really about working with the relevant people to encourage them to identify a problem that they need solved and then work out whether a social media platform is the best way of solving that problem. If it is not solving a problem they do not already have, it does not need to be on their to-do list because there are more important things for them to be worrying about, like making sure Hansard is up to date and making sure the air conditioning works so that people do not fry when they are sitting in parliament in the middle of November.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** Quite a lot of parliaments, as Tess was saying, are almost shells of buildings most of the time when parliament is not sitting so resources are really slim.

**Ms KANONGATA'A-SUISUIKI:** Thank you for your high energy in talking about this subject. For me, in terms of women, we are here so we do not need an interpreter to speak. We do it well in parliament and everywhere else, but for you speaking English and dealing with multiple languages in the Pacific how do you know that the information you are receiving is the correct information? As a follow-up question: how do you know you are telling the true story of what you have heard?



**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** How do you know? As a journalist you have to make a value judgement on the information you are getting and you have to do that by crosschecking it as much as you can, which is not always easy in the Pacific to get that right. It takes a lot of time. This is part of the problem at the moment, I would say, and it is an important part of the process that people have experience, that they know what they are talking about. You can get a sense of what is going on and whether this is just another rumour, because in the Pacific rumours are fantastic. You get the best stories. It is amazing what goes on out there, if you believe everything.

In terms of accessing people via language, when you have people who are trilingual or quadrilingual speaking their tok ples, pidgin, English and maybe a neighbouring language as well—it is amazing; these people speak so many languages—quite often the stories do get through. As a journalist who covers the Pacific, I always make sure the stories I do go back to the community. I share it via social media, which has been incredibly effective, back to the Facebook pages of those communities and the individuals involved. It is amazing how they then pick that up and share it around.

I usually find enough English speakers in a community for them to understand the stories. They take it up and they share it around and get the message out of whatever was in that story. Interestingly, New Caledonia is our fourth closest neighbour to Australia—it is France, effectively, under their Constitution—and yet we hear nothing and they speak French. We hear nothing about what goes on in New Caledonia. To me, it is closer than Fiji and it is closer than the Solomon Islands, but with social media you can follow what is going on over there. One of the really handy functions they have is a translate button so you can see tweets from New Caledonia, hit 'translate' and it will give you a fairly rough approximation in English of what they are saying in French. It is an incredibly effective tool.

**Mr DORNEY:** I have found that you have to be pretty sceptical about what you are told. The more experience you have, the more ability you have to filter out what is plausible and what is not because you get told some fantastic stories, especially critical stories—criticisms of politicians and others. You get told some wondrous things that often turn out not to have much truth about them at all.

That is one of the problems we have as an Australian media with such a thin layer of people who know the Pacific or who have been in the Pacific. It is an issue. The only answer to it is to get out there, live there, experience things and get to know the place so you can sum up whether this is plausible or not, or check with other people if you are told something. I can understand the point you are making.

**Ms MARTIN:** It can be really hard as a journalist coming in to a foreign country. You are almost like a seagull in some respects. You sort of fly in, shit on people and then fly out again. I think it is important to get a broad sense of what is going on on the ground and talk to as many people as possible, talk to the local reporters and get some context. If you are coming in blind, you are not going to be an expert on what the nuances are. You will definitely need a lot of local knowledge. You need to tap into your local driver or your translator and get them to give you a 101 on what the context of this major issue is so you can get it right, not just for a foreign audience but out of respect for the people who are helping you contribute to the story on the ground.

**Mr DORNEY:** With regard to the point Lisa just made about local journalists, I have friendships throughout the Pacific and I have a very high regard for a lot of Pacific island journalists who were there. Often when I was chasing up stories I would go and check things out with them and get their impression as to whether this was a real story or not. I found it absolutely vital to build up good relationships with media throughout the Pacific. There are some terrific journalists out there.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** To go back to that theme, one of the issues that does not get discussed much in Australian media—and it is right on our doorstep—is West Papua and its status within Indonesia. It is a former Dutch colony that was effectively invaded by Indonesia and through a rather bizarre UN process then became Indonesian under international laws. Journalists cannot get into West Papua. Occasionally they will let someone in—quite often travel journalists.

Radio New Zealand got in a few years ago—it took them 18 months just to get a visa—and once they were there they had quite a lot of difficulties. Social media has been incredibly powerful for them. The Indonesian government has a very effective social media machine. They have accounts set up to counter whatever the West Papua liberation movements put out in terms of information. Their government—not their parliaments—have effectively sleeper accounts which then start tweeting counterinformation to what has been going out.

There was some coverage here over the weekend. There is a village in West Papua that allegedly—and this is the problem; we have to take it as allegedly—is on fire. The footage seems to check out that it was filmed within the last week. The allegation is that the Indonesian forces bombed this village from the air and set it on fire. There is this short snippet of footage that shows Indonesian forces running through this village with the villagers burning in the background.

Different media sources have tried to verify it as much as possible. There has been acknowledgment from the Indonesians that there has been military action in that region. There are about 1,000 troops on the ground. They are saying that the villagers were attacked by the freedom movement and as a result they caught fire. It is very hard to know in situations like that what is true.

The best way to do it in those circumstances is try to tell as much information as you are getting and say that this is unverified but something is going on. 'We cannot tell you because we are effectively banned from going here.' The more information that then draws out helps us as journalists further build a picture of what is going on in a place like that. Are there any further questions? We can talk about a few other things.

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In terms of social media, Nauru has been a really interesting case. Lisa is a good friend of the president, as am I. We are both on speaking terms with him but he does not really follow through on what he says a lot of the time. Nauru had a three-year ban on Facebook because information was coming out of there in relation to the government's structure and the Australian run regional processing centre on the island, so they basically shut it down. At the time, in 2015, it sounded like it was at the request of maybe another government—called the Australian government—which pretty much shut down a lot of the communication coming out of that country in terms of what was happening there. That is how challenged some of these places are by social media.

There is a court case going on in Nauru at the moment involving 19 people who protested outside the parliament. They have been charged with sedition, which is quite an antiquated law, as most of you would be aware. Most modern countries have got rid of the law of sedition. Those protestors are facing charges at the moment and they are still going through the courts. We hear almost nothing about that now, even though the Nauru government has thrown out the Australian judges who had been appointed there. When they leave the country they will not renew their visas. The information that does come out now is through Messenger, WhatsApp and things like that. It is a very effective tool. Lisa, what has your experience been?

**Ms MARTIN:** With regard to the protesters, it is quite interesting that earlier this year the Nauru government decided it was no longer going to use Australia's High Court, but it has not set up alternative arrangements. There are definitely a lot of justice and legal issues on Nauru.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** Nauru has now also banned the ABC from going to Nauru for the Pacific islands leaders forum.

**Ms MARTIN:** Yes, that is right. There was supposed to be a pool of three Australian media representatives going to cover Malcolm Turnbull's involvement in the Pacific islands leaders forum, which Nauru is hosting this year. In previous years there have not been quotas on the number of media representatives that have been allowed to go, but apparently there was quite a shortage of accommodation on the island. I do not know if you believe that. There were only three allocated spots for the Australian media, and the Nauru government rejected their application for an ABC cameraman. There was a photographer and a reporter who were going from Australian Associated Press, and the Canberra press gallery decided to protest this.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** They have decided to boycott it, haven't they?

**Ms MARTIN:** They decided to boycott. I think in some ways that is quite a misguided call, because Pacific coverage in Australia is quite sparse. The Pacific islands leaders forum is the one time of the year when you do get prominent Australian journalists and the press gallery actually paying attention to what is happening in the neighbourhood. There are some worthy issues on the agenda. I think arguably this year's forum is one of the most significant of recent years because of the debate about China's influence in the region. I think that President Baron Waqa would be quietly celebrating the fact that he will not have to deal with any pesky Australian journalists asking him obnoxious questions, because he is generally not a fan of having to answer questions.

**Mr DORNEY:** I have covered about 25 Pacific islands leaders forum meetings and two of those were in Nauru, where there were plenty of journalists. This issue of not enough accommodation is complete and utter rubbish. The problem in Nauru at the moment is that the man behind the throne, David Adeang, is

absolutely in charge of everything that goes on. David does not want any Australian media there. He would prefer there to be no foreign media coverage except those who want to come in and say that Nauru is one of the most wonderful places in the world. It is very difficult to find a journalist like that. Some of the opposition members of the Nauru parliament are now facing charges because they have spoken to the foreign media. One in particular has actually been banned from Nauru. I think he is living in New Zealand at the moment. Nauru is not a nice place.

**Dr NEWTON CAIN:** There is a much bigger issue here, which is that Nauru has said that it is exercising national sovereignty. That would be fine if this was a national summit that was taking place in Nauru, but Nauru is acting on behalf of the Pacific islands leaders forum, which is the apex political regional group in our part of the world. It is a forum of which Australia is a member. In 2000 all of the members of the forum signed what is called the Biketawa Declaration, which basically encapsulates rules of democratic culture, good governance and human rights by which all members of the forum consider themselves to be—I am not going to say they consider themselves to be bound, but they ascribe to all of those. They are basically the guiding principles under which the countries of the forum see themselves as operating. Essentially, people who are citizens of countries that are members of the forum should be asking their leaders whether they feel comfortable that Nauru has exercised its national sovereignty in such a way that it is essentially representative of the entire congregation. This is not just Nauru acting in its own right; Nauru is acting on behalf of 16 countries and states.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** Once again social media is playing a big role in that, because when the ban was announced it just absolutely lit up—not just from the upset members of the Canberra press gallery, who are very prolific and get very upset, but also journalists around the Pacific were communicating. That is one of the interesting things that has happened with social media in the region, because journalists are connected now throughout the region and can talk to each other directly. Whereas previously it was too expensive on the telephone, you had to send a letter or email service was a bit patchy if the accounts worked at all, now you have people tying up and bringing together issues. Climate change has been one of the really interesting ones around this. The Pacific has run a very effective campaign highlighting climate change which has gone to an international level, basically because of their use of social media and them pushing the message out.

**Ms MARTIN:** It is important to note that ordinarily if you are a foreign journalist applying for a visa to travel to Nauru it will cost you a nice \$8,000 just to make the application, with no guarantee that you will actually get your visa. That fee has been waived in relation to this forum, but it was brought in years ago obviously as an attempt to discourage Australian journalists from travelling to Nauru to try to cover the immigration detention centre and the plight of asylum seekers and refugees.

**Mr ARMBRUSTER:** I would like to thank the panel: Tess Newton Cain, Lisa Martin and Sean Dorney. Thank you all very much for coming along this afternoon. I know it has been a long day already and you have not had a break, so thank you very much.

**The conference concluded at 4.08 pm.**