

VOICES

of

LEADERSHIP

2019





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VOICES --- *of* --- **LEADERSHIP** 2019

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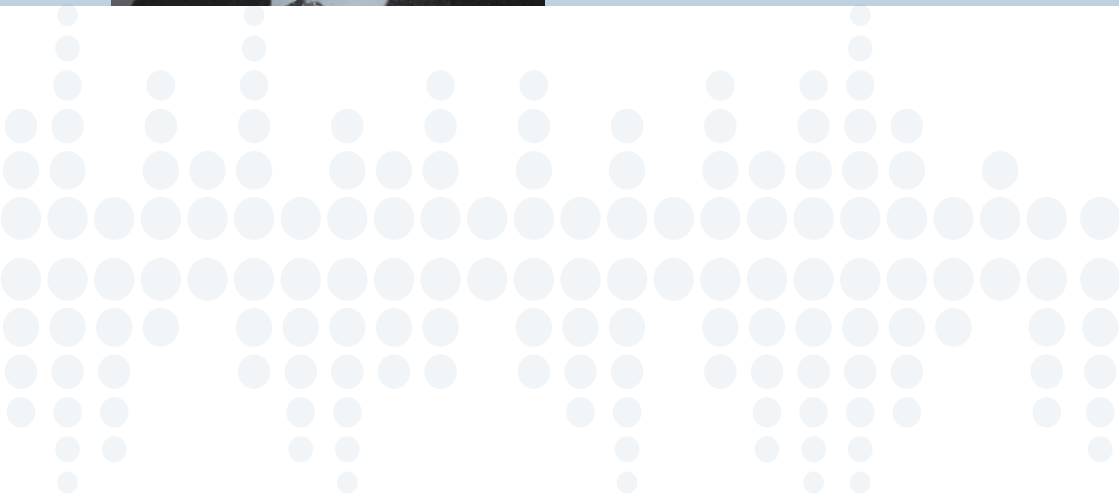
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Preface

by David Borger

The best universities are those that go above and beyond their traditional teaching and research remits, to engage and collaborate with the region and communities they are situated in.

Western Sydney University's recent historic development of campuses in urban locations, such as the Parramatta and Liverpool CBDs, has spurred much-needed cultural and economic development in growing city centres.

The University has developed policy-relevant data and research, and expert white papers on key issues facing Western Sydney. There has been a noticeable increase in academic thought leaders developing strong public voices that are influencing and shaping public policy.

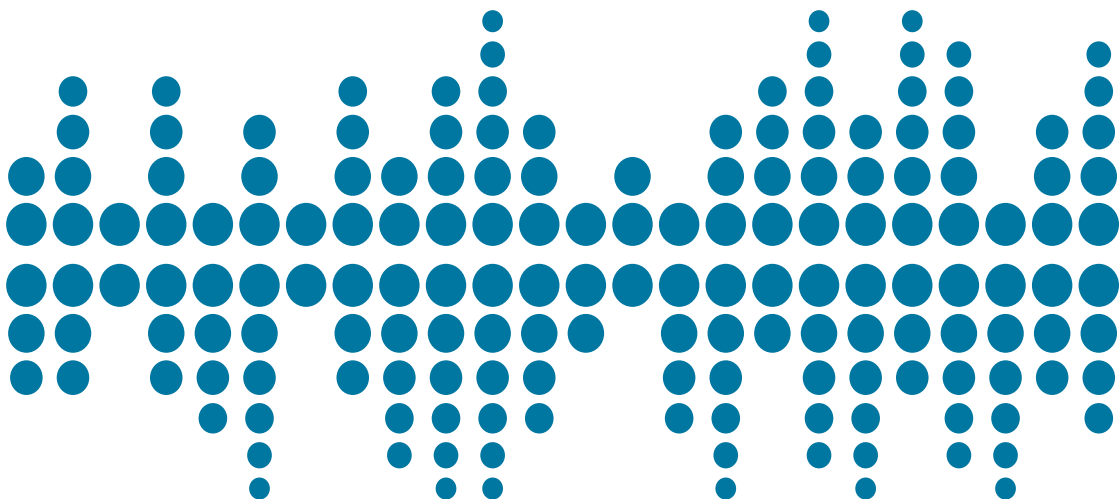
In taking a stand on so many issues, the University has strengthened its position as an anchor institution.


This is a positive and welcome development for Western Sydney. The region has historically suffered from a lack of focus by policy makers, which in turn has led to significant social and economic challenges for its people.

This collection of articles and speeches foregrounds Western Sydney University's ongoing commitment to engaging with its community in various fora to collectively theorise and problem-solve. They move beyond the 'deficit analysis' and highlight the University's role as a compelling thought leader.

I commend the authors of the opinion pieces and note that we are moving forward to a more confident period in our region's history.

David Borger is Executive Director of Western Sydney Business Chamber and recipient of an Honorary Fellowship from Western Sydney University.





Government & Civic Design



2018 Lachlan Macquarie Lecture

PROFESSOR PETER SHERGOLD AC

A 3-D picture of Western Sydney has emerged in the last decade. Three thematic motifs of region have been interwoven into a familiar if disjointed narrative. The adjectival triumvirate are: different, disadvantaged and dynamic. Let us consider each in turn.

First, Western Sydney is perceived as different. It has come to represent ‘the edge of the metropolis’ not just geographically but culturally. Those outside share a pervading sense that they think and do things differently there: the place and its people, real and imagined, challenge Sydney’s prevailing social mores.

There is growing recognition that its inhabitants – the ‘Westies’ – are becoming politically more influential just as their idiosyncratic distinctiveness is being acted out on the national stage. Preparing for the Australian postal ballot on marriage law, much of the commentariat’s focus was on the potential impact of conservative traditionalists in the rural outback. As it transpired, the most atypical area in terms of substantial opposition to same-sex marriage comprised the predominately Labor electorates of Western Sydney – Blaxland, Chifley, Fowler, McMahon, Parramatta, Watson and Werriwa. Western Sydney, shockingly, had turned out to be a very different place from the Sydney of the Mardi Gras and rainbow-striped pedestrian crossings. ‘Western Sydney electorates deliver staunch opposition,’ headlined The Daily Telegraph. ‘Western Sydney shouts no,’ screamed The Australian.

‘Do we need to talk about Western Sydney?’ asked Caroline Overington rhetorically. The answer was yes, but how was one to interpret the character of difference? Souls were searched. The Huffington Post reported that the results in Western Sydney had left ‘a despondent aftertaste’. The ABC, safely sequestered in its inner-city Ultimo headquarters, pleaded with its audience not to blame everyone in Western Sydney for what one academic – in an ABC blog – characterised as its ‘lack of fortitude and social backwardness’.

Many commentators reflected with concern upon the region’s ethno-religious diversity as a cause of cultural conservatism. A few went further, questioning whether those opposed to marriage equality had by their vote revealed a failure to integrate into Australian mainstream society. The fact that the postal ballot revealed a high level of civic and political engagement by Western Sydney residents was judged less creditworthy than that they had used participatory democracy to exercise choice in an unexpected and uncomfortable way.

For many observers, the vote against marriage equality made manifest a sentiment that had been sensed for a significant while. Cross the ANZAC bridge and a different Sydney awaited. Indeed, Western Sydney, the place, has now become a metaphor for difference, distinctiveness, differentiation, dissimilarity and – in this instance – discord. ‘There’s something about Western Sydney... that seems to tap into the Australian political psyche,’ argued Ben Eltham. ‘To paraphrase Voltaire, if Western Sydney did not exist, it would have been necessary to invent it’ as a place to play out the diverging aspirations and anxieties of Australian nationhood.

There is a second familiar story of Western Sydney which often emerges as an explanation of the first. Its narrative centres on disadvantage. In the popular mind (and I quote from the attributes identified by Kathy Marks) Western Sydney's difference has its roots in locational disadvantage – it's not just a 'gritty, hardworking and unglamorous' place but 'a sprawling, unintelligible wasteland devoid of culture; a simmering cauldron of religious fundamentalism and 'otherness'; an impoverished, potentially mutinous underclass.'

I recognise these people from undergraduate study of 'Marxism 101': it's the lumpenproletariat, the lowest orders of society who in their abjectness lack the saving grace of class consciousness. In this day of reality television we can even watch the underclass play out the perceived hopelessness of their lives. Its documentary drama – sometimes criticised as 'poverty porn' – is represented by *Struggle Street* which was set, at least originally, in Mount Druitt.

It is a tale oft told. Repeated media headlines continue to reinforce its recurrent tropes. Here are a few examples from many: 'Western Sydney GP's under pressure with demand from disadvantaged patients'; 'Southwest Sydney suburbs among the most disadvantaged'; 'Rising Crisis in our (Western) Suburbs'; 'Helping Western Sydney out of "Institutionalised Disadvantage"'; 'Transport and Social Exclusion in Western Sydney' and 'Academics label western suburbs "ghettos"'. Disadvantage – along with 'poor', 'violent', 'worst' and 'rough' – are the descriptors commonly chosen to shorthand the manifestations of deprivation in Western Sydney.

This media portrayal creates a stigmatising image of place and person but it is a negative stereotype rooted firmly in empirical evidence. The work of Tony Vinson and Margot Rawsthorne on postcode disadvantage has revealed an Australia marked by locational vulnerability. Over the last decade their research has identified a web of place-based disadvantage that extends beyond education, employment, health, income and wealth. Across 21 measurable variables – including, for example, the incidence of criminal convictions, psychiatric admissions and domestic violence – there exists a high degree of connectedness between the disparate identifiers of impoverishment. Many of the mapped areas of greatest urban deprivation are located in Western Sydney: amongst the most disadvantaged postcodes are Cabramatta, Claymore, Fairfield, Mount Druitt and Villawood. According to the research, in many of these areas poverty is becoming persistent and entrenched.

They are communities in danger of 'dropping off the edge'.

The recent report by the Western Sydney Community Forum and St Vincent de Paul Society on community wellbeing also found that overall the region was under pressure. Its people experienced greater levels of housing stress, higher rates of obesity and more need for care assistance from support workers than the rest of Sydney.

According to research undertaken by Hal Pawson, Kath Hulse and Lynda Cheshire for the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI), there is clear evidence in Western Sydney of continuing spatial concentration of socio-economic disadvantage. Their conclusion, though, is

more nuanced. They find that whilst the polarising process and depth of localised disadvantage is apparent, the outcomes are less extreme than those experienced in the United States.

One key tool that researchers depend upon is the Census-based Index of Relative Socioeconomic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD). It is designed to measure access to material and social resources and the ability of people to participate in society. It is readily apparent from the Index that in Sydney there is an area of relative disadvantage that stretches, like a clutched boomerang, from Richmond in the north, southwards to St Marys and Blacktown, extending eastwards to Auburn and Parramatta, down through Punchbowl, Lakemba and Bankstown and moving southwest via Cabramatta and Liverpool to Campbelltown.

Helpfully SBS has now placed on its website an interactive portal which allows participants to explore 'How advantaged or disadvantaged is my suburb?' The lower the score, the greater the disadvantage. Here is what I discovered in a few minutes.

In Western Sydney, Bidwill-Hebersham-Emerton comes in at bottom place at 785; Cabramatta scores 793; Liverpool-Canley Vale, 832; Warwick Farm, 857; Lakemba, 872; Fairfield West, 886; Auburn-Parramatta, 888; and Bankstown, 891. In stark contrast, Oyster Bay-Como in the south scores 1107; Manly-Fairlight on the Northern Beaches, 1113; Neutral Bay-Kirribilli in North Sydney, 1115; Alexandria in the Inner South, 1116; Balmain in the Inner West, 1118; Avalon-Palm Beach in the far Northern Beaches, 1119; and Rose Bay-Vaucluse in the Eastern Suburbs, 1139.

It is apparent, then, that many areas of Western Sydney are disadvantaged relative to those areas further east. Whether one measures youth unemployment, access to the internet, the availability of cultural institutions or the extent of tree canopy; and irrespective of whether one chooses to focus on the causes of disadvantage (such as access to medical facilities) or its deleterious effects (ill-health or reduced well-being), a geographical gulf is apparent.

This had led Jessica Irvine to suggest that there exists 'a deepening divide between the haves and have-nots in our glittering harbour city' (note the location of glitter). She has discerned a 'growing gap between Sydney's affluent east and north and its middle ring suburbs to the west and south.' Many similar articles have appeared in the last decade. They are usually written as a response to the publication of new indices of disadvantage, they are most often driven by a strong sense of social justice, and they tend to celebrate the success of individuals from Western Sydney as being achieved 'against the odds.' They are written with the right intentions but, as I will shortly argue, they are profoundly wrong in their assessments.

The third characterisation of Western Sydney represents the exact counterpoint to the second. There is an emerging recognition that Western Sydney is dynamic. After all, this is the region that is now the nation's third largest economy, driven by an unrelenting population growth significantly higher than that experienced elsewhere in Sydney. Population in the region has grown 16 per cent in the last decade. Greater Western Sydney's population will increase to 2.9 million over the next 20

years; that population, I reflect, is larger than the entire population of metropolitan Sydney when I arrived in this city from the UK in 1972. By 2050 it is likely to reach 4 million.

This is the Western Sydney of bulldozers, tunnelling machines and towering cranes. It is the region in which unprecedented infrastructure development is transforming space, place and possibility. It is the region represented by the Sydney Metro and Parramatta Light Rail, by West Connex and a plethora of motorway extensions and road widenings, by the prospect of rapid bus transit networks and north-south rail lines, and by commitments to innovation corridors, science parks and (yes) sporting stadia.

This is the Western Sydney that, in the vision of the Greater Sydney Commission, will become two exciting new cities, a Central River City and a Western Parkland City. It is the future represented by a Western Sydney digital-age airport and the prospect of a multimodal aerotropolis built around the economy of speed. It is an anticipated urban network of next-generation industries based on advanced manufacturing, robotic engineering, bio-medical and aeronautical research, e-commerce and distributional logistics, eco and heritage tourism and intensive greenhouse horticulture. This is Western Sydney imagined as a creative economy offering skilled, well-educated professional workers, and new high-tech, high-value jobs. It is the region of unlimited possibility which political imperative is creating and for which politicians like to claim credit.

The trouble with this 3-D picture of Western Sydney is that it remains determinedly one-dimensional. By focussing on the existing disadvantages of the region 'out there' (on the one hand) and the dynamic prospects of 'boomtown' (on the other), the essence of Western Sydney's emerging difference – and the source of its most intractable disadvantage – is ignored or misinterpreted. The real story of Western Sydney and its political future lies not in the consequences of the region's relative lack of amenities or the construction of new infrastructure that is intended to address that shortfall. The emerging story of Western Sydney is the transformation of its people. It is a tale of how the value of their 'otherness' is underestimated and distorted by the typecast manner in which they are observed from the outside.

This proposition can best be exemplified by posing a simple counterfactual question. How, on the basis of experience elsewhere in the world, might we expect that Western Sydney would have developed over the last 50 years? The answer, whether informed by the history of the North of England or the Great Lake States of America, is clear. Those areas, like Western Sydney, have experienced a sharp decline in manufacturing industry and a precipitous diminution in the number of blue-collar, trade and production jobs associated with it. They have suffered the 'great disruption' created by deindustrialisation. They have felt the full force of globalisation and low-cost competition. They have, in the American epithet, become the 'rust belts'.

That could have been Western Sydney's fate. Many feared it might be. In 1971 well over a third of the workforce in Western Sydney was employed in manufacturing. The percentages in Blacktown, Fairfield and Parramatta were 35.4 per cent, 38.3 per cent and 33.9 per cent respectively. By 2016 these figures had plummeted to 8.2 per cent, 11.9 per cent and 5.8 per cent. If one examines the

experience of Newcastle, Sunderland, Huddersfield or Swansea in the UK, or of Cleveland, Detroit or Buffalo in the US, one can readily imagine the consequences of such long-term decline: soaring unemployment rates, falling incomes, dilapidated infrastructure, lowering house prices, rising crime rates, youth outmigration, societal alienation (and, in consequence, a growing attraction of their voters to the populist politics of protectionism).

Yet Western Sydney, where the manufacturing transformation has been just as significant, has not become a decaying social wasteland. Unemployment remains low, incomes are improving, population is soaring as newcomers move in and real estate values are increasing.

The shift away from manufacturing has been remarkably successful. In the perceptive words of my colleague at Western Sydney University, Phillip O'Neill, 'Western Sydney has transformed its labour market magnificently'. It represents 'one of the outstanding stories of workplace transformation on the globe'.

Poverty is not the defining character of its people. Indeed, by some measures Western Sydney has become decidedly 'middle class'. Weekly household incomes in 2016 reveal that residents of Greater Western Sydney are somewhat underrepresented in the small group of fortunate Australians who earn \$6,000 or more per week, but they are also significantly underrepresented in the much larger group that is forced to live on less than \$1,500 a week. By contrast they are distinctly overrepresented in those households with middling incomes of \$2,000-\$2,500 per week.

They are also more 'middle class' in occupation. There has been a sharp increase in the number of Western Sydney residents who are now employed as managers and professionals (who now represent 30.9 per cent of the workforce), and a concomitant decrease in the relative proportion of technicians, trade workers, machinery operators, drivers and labourers (who today together represent 32.1 per cent of the workforce). Meanwhile the unemployment rate in Western Sydney has dropped from 10.2 per cent in 1991 to around 6 per cent today: 5.2 per cent in Parramatta, 6.0 per cent in Blacktown and 6.4 per cent in the South West. Youth unemployment in Western Sydney is now at its lowest level in almost 20 years.

The real story of the declining socio-economic gap between the 'West' and the rest of Sydney is in education. The traditional tale of two cities is rapidly losing its persuasiveness. Between 2001 and 2016 the proportion of Western Sydney residents with a degree rose from 10.7 per cent to 20.7 per cent. During that period the gap has significantly narrowed between the proportion of residents from Western Sydney who go to university compared with those from elsewhere in Sydney. By 2016, 22.7 per cent of Sydney graduates resided in the west.

The most important aspect of the educational transformation taking place within Western Sydney has gone largely unremarked. The demand for trade skills is declining sharply whereas the demand for graduate qualifications is soaring. In 1991 there were far more TAFE students residing in Greater Western Sydney than there were university students (49,222 compared to 36,449). By 2001, there were still more Western Sydney residents attending TAFE than university (55,098 compared to

53,753). Since then there has been an educational revolution. By 2016 the number of TAFE students had fallen significantly (to 43,682) whereas the number of university students had doubled (106,163). In 1991 there had been just 72 university students for every 100 TAFE students. In stark contrast, by 2016 there were 243 university students for every 100 TAFE students. These are the figures that point to the future of employment preferences for the people of Western Sydney.

The contrast with most other deindustrialised areas around the world could not be starker. Here's a social experiment. Next time you are hosting an overseas visitor tell them of a hypothetical Australian urban area, situated outside the metropolitan CBD, which has experienced a calamitous fall in manufacturing industries and which has now become home to a population that is 75 per cent migrant, the great majority of whom come from a non-English speaking background. It is likely that they will quickly apprise the demographic profile and imagine Parramatta to be an area of acute social and economic disadvantage. And they will be hopelessly wrong.

For the emerging story from the most recent census, which the Sydney Morning Herald reported with incredulity, is that Rhodes and Westmead – rather than Manly, Mosman or Woollahra – are now the Sydney suburbs with the largest share of their residents holding degrees. Of those who live in the city of Parramatta, 37 per cent have a degree, compared to 28 per cent for Sydney as a whole. Almost half of adult resident workers had a Bachelor or higher degree; indeed, Parramatta was home to the largest number of postgraduates of any Sydney suburb. That's just the start. What is happening in Parramatta will soon be reflected in the experience of Campbelltown, Liverpool, Penrith and Bankstown.

The recent history of Western Sydney bears testimony to the power of higher education to enhance collective human capital, create a skilled workforce and forge pathways of economic opportunity. I hope you will forgive me for highlighting the valuable contribution that a single institution (Western Sydney University) has made to this educational transformation, with its highly beneficial public and private impacts. I am its Chancellor. This year, at some point during the December graduations, I will present a testamur to the University's 200,000th graduate. More than three quarters of our students live in Western Sydney and most have a strong preference to continue to stay here when they complete their higher education. I estimate that at least 40 per cent of the quarter million graduates who now reside in Western Sydney are our alumni. That is an extraordinary achievement for a single educational institution. Unless the University finds itself stymied by short-sighted government policy decisions that effectively cap the entry of capable students to our campuses, I anticipate that our relative contribution will continue to rise.

The avowed disadvantage of Western Sydney is often one created in the mind. Deeply embedded social mores and unrecognised assumptions create an imagined sense of Sydney's cultural geography. For many, the 'West' is the urban frontier of Sydney, a porous border across which 'squinties' commute, most often for work, sometimes for education, less frequently for fun and occasionally – if they are lucky enough to be successful – for good. On summer weekends it is the 'Westies' who drive east to the beaches and take up valuable parking space. Passport controls are

ineffective. They arrive undocumented. Most leave again, much to the relief of those who live in Cronulla, Bondi and Manly.

Let me illustrate the manner in which customary stereotypes and unstated presuppositions create a diminished perception of Western Sydney that says far more about the observer than the observed (or, in the instance I am about to give, the unobserved). Let me highlight an example of accessibility to an important service. It seems to represent an instance of shocking disadvantage. According to 2018 data, just 2 per cent of identified providers were located in the whole of Western Sydney whereas the Northern suburbs was home to 6 per cent, the Inner West 7 per cent, the Eastern suburbs 10 per cent and – extraordinarily – Inner Sydney and the CBD almost 65 per cent.

This, according to the latest addition of Fairfax's Good Food Guide, represents the grossly unequal distribution of decent restaurants in Sydney. Apparently there exists a vast gastronomic wasteland that stretches from La Tratt at Fairfield to Restaurant Como at Blaxland; between those two distant points there is not one restaurant worthy of recognition. It gets worse. Not one of the city's 20 top coffee shops is situated in Western Sydney. If you want to sip lattes and breakfast on smashed avocados, stay in the City or the Inner West.

There exists, an unquestioning outsider might surmise, deprivation on a massive scale. If we are to believe the gourmand elite, there is a good quality Turkish restaurant in Canberra – but not one in Western Sydney. There are top Middle Eastern restaurants in Surry Hills and Redfern, Korean restaurants in Potts Point, African restaurants in Adelaide, Vietnamese restaurants in Chippendale and Darlinghurst, and Chinese restaurants just about everywhere – but, amazingly, not one establishment makes the cut in Western Sydney. Apparently, there is one good Indian restaurant in the West, but it is located in North Strathfield rather than Harris Park. Only in one small type of food provision does Western Sydney score its fair share of outlets. The Guide's is intrepid explorers found low-cost, downmarket establishments in Harris Park, Granville, Lakemba, Fairfield, Auburn, Cabramatta, Campsie and Merrylands. Only if you want 'cheap' eats rather than 'good' food do you head west.

Apologies if I am labouring my point on the lingering power of stereotype. What is conveyed in the Guide is not a dispassionate view of culinary quality, but a set of unchallenged assumptions about how the publishers and editors think of Sydney as a city and how they imagine the perspective of their readers.

But there exists a far more substantive way in which the perception of the observer can distort reality. The challenges faced by Western Sydney and its people tend to be viewed almost exclusively through the prism of social deprivation. Consequently, potential strengths are imagined as weaknesses and opportunities are seen as barriers.

Consider the wonderful diversity of students who come on stage at our Rydalmere campus to receive their degrees, cheered on by their proud parents (80 per cent of whom never enjoyed the opportunity to attend university). They represent the future face of Australia. More than at other Sydney universities, these students have for financial reasons had to work long hours whilst studying. They are much more likely to come from low socio-economic status families. Almost a third of the local students speak a language other than English when they return to their homes at night; indeed, English is often their second or third language.

Seen through the lens of disadvantage these are barriers to be overcome. However, seen through the lens of productive diversity, these characteristics are sources of human capital value. Should it surprise us that Western Sydney University graduates, already experienced in the discipline of the workplace, receive higher levels of employer satisfaction than students from any other Sydney university? Should it surprise us that students with fluency in another language and with deep understanding of a different culture are increasingly attractive to business?

Consider the intake of domestic students to Western Sydney University in 2017. Some 32 per cent (12,451 students) spoke a language in addition to English: of the bilingual students 20 per cent (2,546 students) spoke Arabic; 10 per cent (1,214 students) a Chinese language (interestingly, more were fluent in Cantonese rather than Mandarin); 19 per cent (2,380 students) spoke a language of the Indian subcontinent (predominantly Nepali, Hindi, Bengali, Urdu, Punjabi, Tamil or Gujarati); 8 per cent (1,003 students) Vietnamese; 2 per cent (276 students) Turkish and 2 per cent (227 students) Korean.

Compare the figures of Australia's two-way trade in goods and services with the world and it is clear that the languages of our major non-English speaking trading partners in China, India, Korea and the Middle East (which together represent more than 40 per cent of our nation's trade) match well with the community languages most likely to be spoken by Western Sydney University students. Seen from this perspective, the ethno-religious diversity of our students – and of Western Sydney generally – should be recognised as an economic asset rather than a social threat.

I hope that my oration has conveyed a sense of impending promise. I am certain that it has also revealed an underlying frustration that the fundamentals of Western Sydney's potential remain too little recognised; it is infrastructure capital that captures media attention whilst the extraordinary investment in human capital remains less visible. The simplistic characterisations of 'Westies' as less educated, and enjoying fewer opportunities, have become ever more unrealistic. Yet whilst most indicators of regional disadvantage are narrowing there remains one intractable challenge.

This problem, too, can be exemplified by the experience of graduates from Western Sydney University. I recently perused the Graduate Outcome Survey for the students who completed their degrees in 2016. The good news is that 68.1 per cent of them still chose to live in Western Sydney after graduation. The bad news is that only 31.7 per cent of them are able to work there. For some that may be a choice but very many are forced to commute out of the region to find employment that makes use of their education.

This is the yawning gap that remains between aspiration and actuality. It is the rock upon which ambition and hope might yet founder.

The problem is job intensity. The demand for employment in Western Sydney is simply not keeping pace with the supply of skilled and educated labour available. And, given that large numbers of the region's residents lack access to public transport, the daily trip by car to and from work imposes a heavy congestion cost both on individuals and on the efficiency of the metropolitan economy. The '30 minute city' seems as far away as ever. There is a desperate need for the creation of more jobs – in particular, more high value-adding professional service careers – outside the Sydney CBD.

According to the Centre for Western Sydney, there were just 84 jobs in the region for every 100 workers in 2011. As Deloitte has emphasised, in their recent 'blueprint for economic transformation', that gap has continued to worsen. Today, almost a third of residents need to travel outside the region to work. The jobs deficit, which was estimated to be 160,000 in 2014, will have widened to between 210,000 and 306,000 in 2036 at present rates of job creation. As a consequence, in 20 years' time more than 400,000 (perhaps 500,000) Western Sydney residents will have to leave the region each day in pursuit of employment. However massive the investment in transport infrastructure, it will not be able to cope with an increase of that magnitude. We have to 're-design' Western Sydney.

The state government's continued commitment to move public service jobs out west can help to drive the relocation of Sydney employment. So can commitments from the Western Sydney Airport Corporation to give preference to regional workers both during the construction and operation of the airport. The move of major corporate offices to Parramatta and beyond is starting to offer new opportunities. So, too, will the continued expansion of university campuses and research facilities. But, I ask myself with increasing unease, will such forms of collective effort be sufficient?

The most important 'D' upon which depends the future of Western Sydney is demand. At present the supply of trained, skilled and educated workers in Western Sydney is rising faster than the call for their services. Can that trend be reversed? It is the answer to that question that will determine whether the scale of probabilities will tilt the region towards disadvantage or dynamism. For the foreseeable future Western Sydney – both as place and as metaphor – will continue to be different. It is the nature of that distinctiveness that hangs in the balance.

Professor Peter Shergold AC is Chancellor at Western Sydney University. This speech was delivered as the Lachlan Macquarie Lecture on 9 May 2018.



*Western Sydney
City Deal:
university key
to a successful
long-term plan*

PROFESSOR BARNEY GLOVER AO

A good deal is one that delivers the best outcome for everyone at the table. With the Western Sydney City Deal, that's what we have. And the region's residents and businesses are the biggest beneficiaries.

Smart cities are connected cities. They are cities that make the exchange of ideas, expertise and enterprise easy.

In these cities, transport connectivity isn't an issue, in fact, when it's done well, it's barely noticeable, it's second nature. That's the promise with this Deal.

The focus of the deal – the eight outer-west council areas dubbed the Western Parklands City – takes in several major Western Sydney University teaching and research sites, including its Penrith, Campbelltown, Hawkesbury and Liverpool CBD network of campuses.

The University is central to driving the Deal's bold educational, economic and 'livability' objectives. The deal commits to a set of objectives we share. It's about bringing more knowledge jobs to the region, connecting residents, and transforming it into a thriving hub of technological innovation, world-leading research and commercial enterprise.

Importantly, the signing of the deal coincides with the opening of our newest campus in the Liverpool CBD where teaching has started this week.

THE WESTERN SYDNEY UNIVERSITY LIVERPOOL CAMPUS.

These students, more than 4000 of them across Liverpool alone, will be critical to supporting precisely the type of innovation the Prime Minister and Premier are looking to see at the aerotropolis, and throughout the Western Parklands City.

The deal also aligns exceptionally well with the university's commitment to a health and medical research facility in Campbelltown. Bringing world-leading research to one of the region's fastest growing cities is a priority this deal supports through its livability objectives and broader focus on improving lives.

We're proud to support that along with Campbelltown City Council, the Ingham Institute and the South Western Sydney Health District. Western Sydney University has long been working towards achieving many of the deal's central objectives.

We matched a \$13.5 million investment from the federal government in 2013 towards building the site of the deal signing, the Werrington Park Corporate Centre, 10 minutes east of Penrith.

Five years on, the Corporate Centre has created 400 knowledge jobs and given rise to Western Sydney's first and largest start-up incubator network, Launch Pad.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull at the announcement of the Western Sydney City Deal at the Werrington Park corporate Centre on Sunday. AAP Image/Ben Rushton

This shows what's possible with vision, shared investment, good policy and sustained commitment from governments, universities and industry partners.

The knowledge-exchange framework of the deal will also enable the intensification of the University's and Launch Pad's partnership with the Sydney Science Park, bringing specialist research, industry collaboration and STEM focused education to the region.

Connections are pivotal. And while the deal's vital rail link may stop at St Marys, the university's 'innovation corridor' – an economic development strategy we released in 2015 – continues up into Richmond in the northwest.

This is the site of our Agripark, where with local and international partners we've built Australia's most technologically advanced glasshouse research facility. This is the beginning of a push to capitalise on trade opportunities in Asia and surrounds, where Western Sydney could lead as a global centre of excellence in food security and technology assisted cropping.

That would of course require a 'stage two' in the Western Sydney City Deal where a link between Richmond and the new South-West link could connect the Agripark to Badgerys, and then the world.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves. Yesterday Western Sydney sealed a great deal. Now the work really begins.

Professor Barney Glover AO is Vice-Chancellor and President of Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Daily Telegraph on 5 March 2018 (www.dailytelegraph.com.au).





*Second airport at
Badgerys Creek
will deliver jobs
close to home in
Western Sydney*

DAVID BORGER

The first time I stepped on an aeroplane was in 1976, when I was seven years old. My dad took my brother, sister and myself to Fiji for an exotic holiday.

I remember the long commute from the suburbs – we got in the car from Sefton in Sydney's western suburbs and made the pilgrimage to Kingsford Smith Airport.

While I didn't think much about airports then, I certainly appreciated the value of travel.

What I didn't realise was that one of the biggest infrastructure debates of Australia was beginning that year, with the commissioning of the Major Airport Needs of Sydney Study (MANS).

The report found Badgerys Creek was the best site to build a second airport in 1979.

Decades later, I found out my dad worked on this plan.

The airport has taken a long time with many false starts but sadly, dad passed away a few years ago and did not get to see the project take shape.

However, I think he could take solace in the fact that 40 years after the report his son would be standing at the site watching the Prime Minister give the signal for the first sod to be turned.

As the bulldozers are starting to level the site, the dust is also settling on one of the great infrastructure debates this city has seen.

Like John Bradfield's vision for the Harbour Bridge and the Sydney rail network that transformed the north shore and central Sydney, this aerotropolis will have a catalytic affect that we still can't quite imagine. As no doubt, the people in 1930, had no idea what that Bridge would do for Sydney.

It wasn't long ago when Western Sydney experienced far higher than average unemployment rates than the rest of Australia. The great hope of this airport city is to deliver great jobs close to home.

The other hope for the aerotropolis is to build a new model for the edge cities that will develop around the airport.

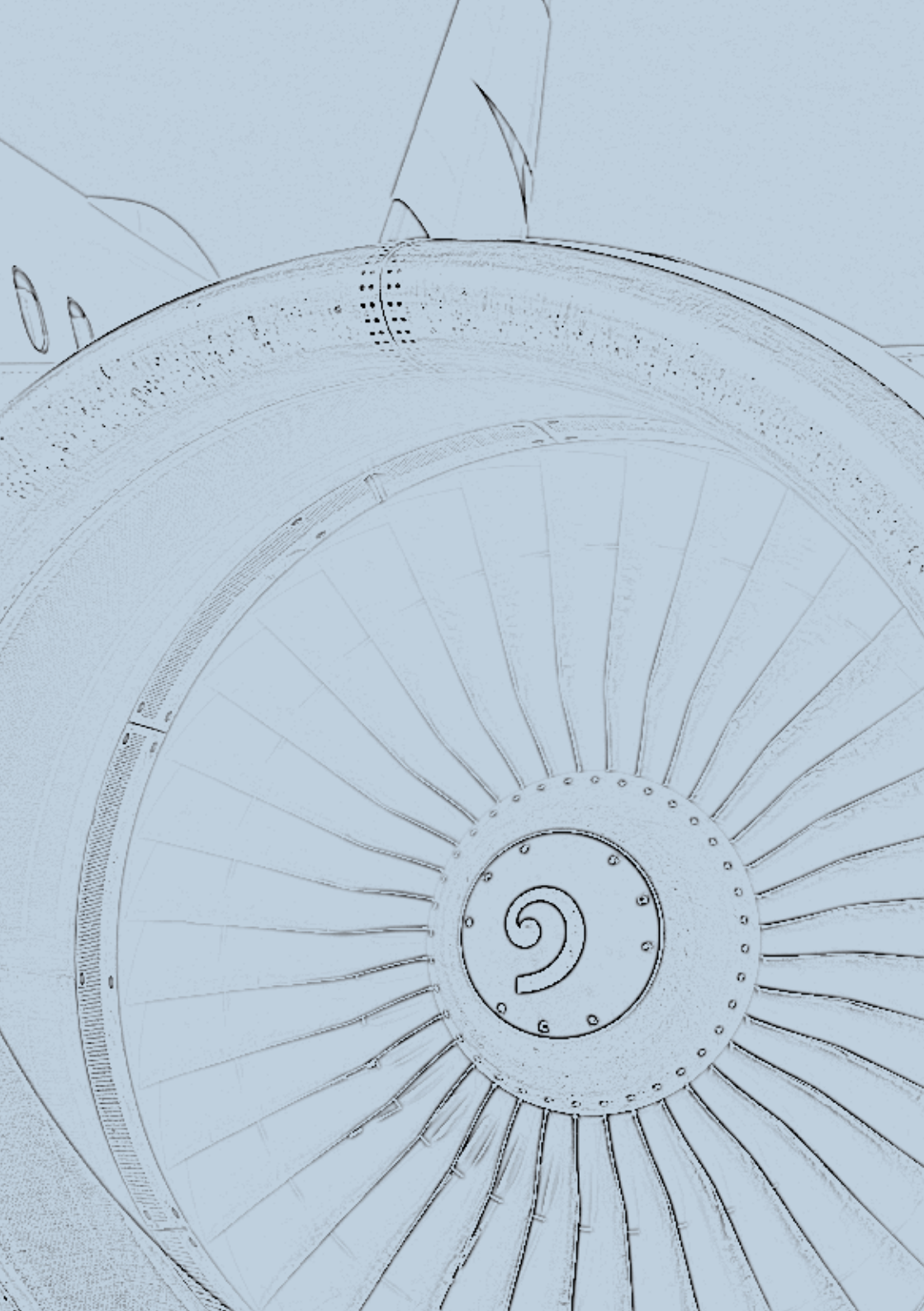
Railway stations will provide the opportunity to deliver traditional town centres that are interesting, walkable and activated with lots of things to do.

It is time we put the old suburban model in the rubbish bin. No more mega malls and employment precincts that are disconnected from people and their homes. The old model was to develop a business park, a retail mall and a suburban estate and then separate them all with arterial roads. There are a number of potential edge cities surrounding the new airport, including North Bringelly. Our role should be to go back to the future for the walkable, civilised and gridded downtowns of yesteryear but also to go forward and design these around high densities, green streets and exploiting new technology such as driverless vehicles.

The spirit of the gold rush surrounding the Western Sydney aerotropolis has resulted in dozens of proponents hunting for ideas. They are looking at similar projects around the world and bringing the ideas to the site.

My dad may not have been John Bradfield but like many Sydneysiders, he made his own small contribution to a big idea that will change our city forever.

David Borger is Executive Director of Western Sydney Business Chamber and recipient of an Honorary Fellowship from Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in the Blacktown Advocate on 14 November 2018 (www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/blacktown-advocate).





*Education is
key to creating a
thriving metropolis
of three cities*

LUCY TURNBULL AO

Great cities create great universities and, equally, great universities shape great cities. Today, we are witnessing unprecedented collaboration between our universities that will establish Greater Sydney's Central River and Western Parkland Cities as world-class centres of learning and technological advancement and underpin the emerging Western Parkland City as arguably the most innovative place in Australia.

This represents a seismic shift, reshaping Greater Sydney to improve opportunities for all to share in our city's growth and success. It will put our city on the global stage as the crucible of talent and innovation in 21st century progress.

Greater Sydney's universities have a long and proud history of fostering education opportunities for all Sydneysiders, investing in new campuses and providing better access to world-class education within 30 minutes of where they live.

Better access to homes, jobs, health and education is a key aspiration behind rebalancing Greater Sydney as a metropolis of three cities. Access to education opens doors and opportunities and is an important step in creating a more equitable metropolis.

Statistics tell us that only 10 per cent of people living in south-western Sydney have a Bachelor degree compared to the Greater Sydney average of 20 per cent. Greater Sydney's university places also are dramatically skewed to the east.

But what these statistics don't tell us is how our universities, often seen as competitors, are working together to create an ecosystem of innovation and success that will create a new narrative for the Central River and Western Parkland Cities.

Western Sydney University is the pioneer of a geographically-distributed university education system beyond the Eastern Harbour City – addressing one of the fastest growing parts of Australia: one in 10 children in Australia lives in the Central and Western cities.

It is, in some ways, like the Californian State University system – where a university is not just located in one place, but a system of different campuses widely distributed. It demonstrates the idea of creating a polycentric city, where access to education and knowledge-intensive jobs is not just located in the Eastern City as has traditionally been the case in Greater Sydney.

This spreads educational opportunities across a wide area, encouraging the socioeconomic opportunities and mobility that are essential if we are going to live in an equitable and just society. This will be vital as the Western Parkland and Central River Cities combined will be home to a population of five million by 2056.

Greater Sydney's other universities have also been active and expanding their geographic footprints to the west, with a series of landmark announcements in the latter half of 2018 demonstrating this.

The University of New South Wales, Western Sydney University, University of Newcastle and University of Wollongong have joined forces to create a world-class, higher education institution in the heart of the new Western Sydney Aerotropolis.

With a clear focus on science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education, this institution, dubbed a 'Multiversity', will be an Australian first and a new opportunity for future students to gain the skills for the jobs of tomorrow closer to where they live.

This is an unrivalled opportunity for our world-class universities to form an integral part of a city which is being created from the ground up, and one of the biggest and boldest projects Australia has seen, or will see, for a very long time.

This was followed by the University of New South Wales and Western Sydney University, jointly announcing development of a preeminent Engineering Innovation Hub in Parramatta. This 15-storey 'vertical hub' in Hassall Street, Parramatta, will be home to a joint undergraduate engineering program by 2021 and bring world-leading research and innovation to Australia's fastest growing region.

The Premier also announced that the University of Sydney was partnering with the NSW Government to establish a second campus as part of a leading international health, education and research precinct in Westmead.

It's forecast that this new campus will attract more than 25,000 students and further grow Westmead as an exemplary health and education precinct.

Universities are much more than just their campuses. They create an ecosystem – attracting not just students, but businesses that want to partner in research and development.

This is fundamental to the supply of 'tomorrow's jobs' for Greater Sydney, where the knowledge economy is driven by the strategic interplay between universities, hospitals, research labs, and associated industries who draw strength from each other.

Research shows that these interactions are most productive when they occur in geographically dense clusters. At the Greater Sydney Commission, we have termed these health and education precincts as 'Collaboration Areas', and they are a key focus of our work.

Collaboration Areas bring together state government agencies, local councils, universities and other key stakeholders to meet the demands of urban growth and enhance the liveability, sustainability and productivity of these areas.



Universities are much more than just their campuses. They create an ecosystem – attracting not just students, but businesses that want to partner in research and development.

Given the resources they offer, universities are in a position to do potentially great things in terms of city building, with better outcomes when they collaborate.

We've seen many great examples of this in our Collaboration Areas including Camperdown-Ultimo and Randwick in our Eastern City and Liverpool and Greater Penrith in our Western Parkland City, with more to come.

The evolution of health and education precincts follows what the Greater Sydney Region Plan calls a maturity pathway:

A 'cluster' includes a major hospital, university and research institute. The next level is a 'precinct' which has a principal referral hospital, a full-service university with a multi-disciplinary campus, and an increase in medical research institutes and ancillary businesses.

The final level is an 'innovation district', an active ecosystem with health and education assets, medical research institutions, industry tenants, housing, ancillary facilities and services.

These ecosystems extend to creating vibrant and lively new communities and becoming city-shapers in their own right.

We consider this in our planning for Greater Sydney because quality of life factors, such as affordable and desirable housing, demographic diversity, convenient commuting on efficient transport services, local shops and restaurants and cultural and green amenities all attract and keep talent.

As I mentioned earlier, there is a social equity element too, with studies in Canada suggesting that universities located in metropolitan areas improve access to educational opportunities for young people and students from lower-income backgrounds.

These students are often limited in their ability to travel significant distances through financial constraints, personal commitments and family responsibilities. They need and want education options within a 30-minute commute.

At the Commission, we're working closely with our university partners to support and grow the essential role these institutions play in the city ecosystem.

For Greater Sydney to remain an internationally competitive city, we need to nurture and retain the brightest minds in our metropolis. Universities are breeding grounds for knowledge, collaboration and innovation – all the qualities that make a successful city thrive.

Access to quality education can offer opportunities, opening minds and opening doors. When we embrace and enhance the synergies between universities and cities, we are actively shaping a more equitable Greater Sydney for future generations to enjoy.

In *Campus-City Relations: Past, Present and Future* (2018), den Heijer and Magdaniel presented an international analysis of 39 major campuses and found:

‘...the ways in which campuses and cities relate to each other become important because they collectively shape the particular dynamics related to innovation, society, and the economy by bringing in and retaining talent and by creating and applying knowledge for socioeconomic improvement of cities and regions.’

Significantly, the investments our universities are making are key pillars in the establishment of the Western Parkland City as one of Australia's pre-eminent learning centres and a powerful first step in increasing equity and opportunity across Greater Sydney.

Universities are playing a crucial role in the development of the metropolis of three cities, facilitating creative, innovative ‘growth’ city competitiveness on a global stage, with smart, healthy, inspiring and highly-connected environments.

Lucy Turnbull AO is Chief Commissioner at the Greater Sydney Commission and recipient of an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Western Sydney University. This article was originally part of The Daily Telegraph's Bradfield Oration.



*Business needs
to keep pace with
universities*

DR ANDY MARKS

Consulting group EY reckons in its new report (The Australian, May 2) that Australia's universities must 'deconstruct the higher education value chain' to avoid obsolescence.

Thanks, guys, we'll get right to it. Just as soon as we're done contributing \$140 billion in research value-adding to gross domestic product and \$28 billion in exports.

According to EY, our failure to 'collaborate with business on innovation' is the reason for Australia's last place on the OECD ranking of industry-research partnerships.

Perhaps we could stand outside the banking royal commission and hand out business cards to corporates who are just clamouring to innovate?

Disruption, says EY, is at the heart of a changing value proposition universities must face. I agree. But it's wrong to assume universities are passive subjects of disruption. We're the primary drivers of it.

At Western Sydney University we are obsessed with disruptive degree reform. We have to be. We encompass one of the largest unskilled and rapidly transitioning labour markets in the country.

Across our region we're contending with degree attainment gaps of up to 40 per cent compared with the rest of Greater Sydney, and a government that evidently thinks that gap is fine.

In this setting, disrupting teaching and research models isn't a strategy or something that occurs at the edges.

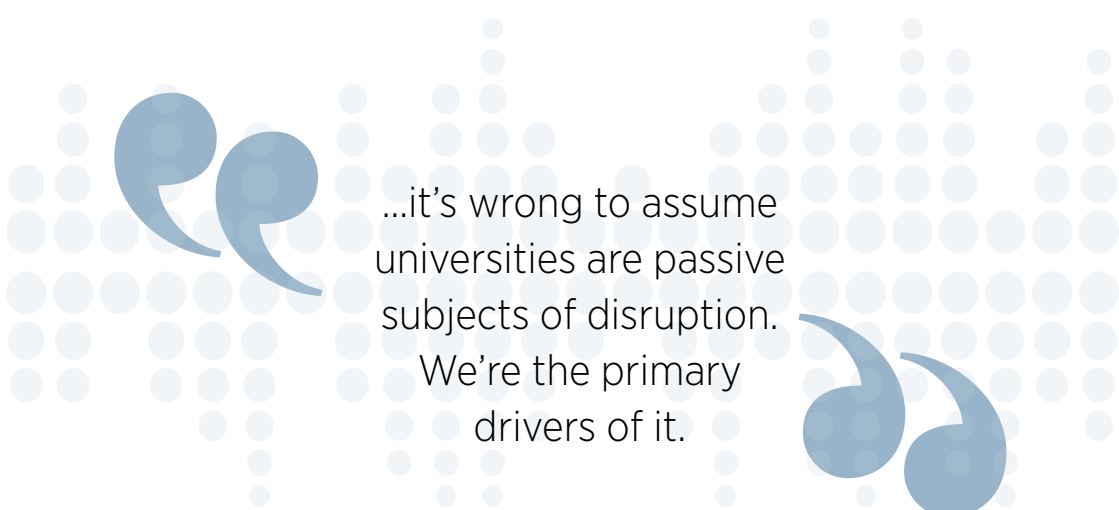
It's core business.

This year, we're launching Start-up/Scale-up, a program that reconceives the curriculum and the learning experience for aspiring start-ups, or people running or working in small and medium-sized enterprises. This new offering delivers pretty much everything on the EY 'to do' list: modularity for micro-credentials, co-creation and co-delivery with industry partners, work-integrated learning opportunities. It's even partly taught out of the university's start-up incubator.

The way universities teach also is changing. Lecture theatres, where theories and concepts were presented to students in abstract form, are giving way to 'flipped' modes of collaborative learning. In this setting, students present concepts back to their peers and lecturers as they learn.

WSU believes the interactive model replicates and refashions contemporary working environments, the end result being that business needs to keep pace with graduate expectations, just as much as students need to meet those of business.

The idea of what constitutes a campus is another frontier. The University of Tasmania, University of Newcastle and Western Sydney University are in the throes of establishing vertical campuses in



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CBDs. The aim is to diffuse perceived and actual barriers between universities, business and the community. These measures are actively breaking the industry collaboration impasse.

EY is right to urge a rethink in the way the labour market contends with emerging technologies. But to portray universities as static in the face of this challenge is not only inaccurate; it fails to address the collaborative vacuum they decry.

You can't, as EY asserts, 'future proof' in the face of disruption. But you can – as universities are doing – engage it and shape it in the national interest. For that to succeed, however, we need government, business, and even professional services firms to recognise the opportunity and work together.

Dr Andy Marks is Assistant Vice-Chancellor at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Australian on 8 May 2018 (www.theaustralian.com.au).



Our cities need a governance revolution

DR TIM WILLIAMS

Of the many virtues of the recent Infrastructure Australia (IA) report on cities, one has not been stressed by largely positive commentators. IA supports a governance revolution in and indeed for Australian cities. It points out something that will not be a surprise to regular readers of The Fifth Estate: our capital cities are not just badly governed. They are not governed.

At the metropolitan level our cities are orphans of public policy. While myriad separate state and federal agencies operate within the city limits, no one body is responsible for or accountable to Sydney as a whole for what is happening in – or more precisely to – our city.

If you wonder what the consequences of siloed governance models are, look out the window. Not just at Sydney Harbour, whose unparalleled beauty puts us all to sleep. Go and see what has been done to Haberfield, or Wakehurst Parkway in the Northern Beaches, and is being done to Alexandria or the Bankstown to Sydenham corridor today, and have a think about how little influence the communities and indeed councils of Sydney have over such city-misshaping activities.

In a very real sense Sydney is a fiction in the way that London or New York or even now Auckland are not, because there is no Sydney equivalent of the Greater London Authority, the New York mayor or even the one big council for New Zealand's only metropolis.

Sydney remains a loose archipelago of islands of competing sovereignty with its 31 councils and who knows how many state government agencies all having their piece of the action.

While London has 31 councils it also has a clear hierarchy with the elected pan-London mayoralty at its pinnacle bringing not just coherence and integration to city planning and transport, but also a platform for an all-of-London conversation about the city's priorities and options – and indeed providing a voice for all of London in dealing with or seeking support from central government.

It's the lack of that platform, that voice, that accountability and that unified 'all of city' strength that we miss so badly in Greater Sydney and indeed most Australian cities: Canberra and the ACT being the exception that proves the rule.

To be clear, in my view the problem with Australian cities is not that there are too many councils – though I would reduce their number further while giving them more powers and resources. The problem is that state governments are, whatever their intentions and values, too big, remote, siloed and unaccountable to the inhabitants of our cities.

The relationship between such governments, their agencies and local councils is also poorly structured and operationalised, with the latter often being treated at best as the poor relation and at worst being viewed much as teachers view problem students. Frankly there is a lack of respect for local government or a recognition of the partnership role they can and must play for a city to be liveable. This is despite the fact that some of the best city leadership come from local government.

Our governance problem is not a people problem as there are great, passionate and highly skilled people working in all tiers of government. I often find myself pointing out to my private sector friends how much talent and leadership there is in the public sector in Sydney – and how some of them wouldn't last five minutes in the politically complex environment in which public servants can work.

The problem is structural and constitutional: essentially, state government is too powerful at a metropolitan level and local government is not powerful enough. Silos and poorly integrated tiers of government do not a great city make. Sydney thus has momentum but little coherence. It feels like Topsy who you will remember just 'grewed'.

GREATER SYDNEY COMMISSION NEEDS TO BE STRENGTHENED

This is why the emergence of the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) has been so important – and why it needs to be supported and indeed strengthened – but needs to also be understood as only the first step in the governance revolution our cities need.

Yes, that means all Australian cities can benefit from having a GSC-style initiative to promote vital cross-government collaboration and that land use and transport integration which we have so obviously lacked.

We are seeing some of the benefits of this approach in the way particularly Transport for NSW is embracing not just mobility but also 'place' in its new approach to Sydney's transport future.

We may be on the edge of a genuine move towards land use and transport integration although the proof of the pudding remains as always in the eating, particularly in terms of government processes for selecting infrastructure. These currently favour transport modes that worsen the sprawl of Sydney against the best intentions of urban planning.

But we are, I believe, beginning to see via the GSC and a supportive Department for Planning and Environment, a much stronger alignment between planning for Sydney as a whole and local government-led spatial planning for their areas. Additionally, the GSC has helped bring the Western Sydney City Deal to fruition, at the heart of which is greater coordination between all tiers of government around a common strategy for that part of the city. Council leadership and collaboration in that deal has, by the way, been outstanding.

A DEMOCRATIC DEFICIT

However, while the GSC is a big step forward, it should be seen as improving government coordination across Sydney but not yet accountability to Sydneysiders. There remains a democratic deficit. This has to be addressed if we are going to achieve the social license to grow the city to eight million which by IA's calculations will be no later than 2046.

At the moment there is deep community concern about, and indeed opposition to, the extent and nature of the city's growth. This is because it is difficult to ignore the degree to which Sydneysiders

feel 'done to' not 'done with' in terms of the current approach to growing Sydney. Some bad quality development across Sydney has reinforced this tendency as has high-handedness and poor accountability around controversial infrastructure projects with rationales that remain mysterious because the public was never engaged in an open and evidence-based dialogue about their need.

TWO INITIATIVES FOR A BETTER CITY

In the long run the only way to address the democratic deficit in Sydney is to opt for metropolitan scale self-government. Whatever the constitutional barriers and institutional jealousies that currently prevent this obvious reform, I am optimistic that we shall see movement towards it because Sydney will simply not be able to manage sustainably a city of eight million or secure that community buy-in to such growth on a business as usual approach to city governance. To get there I suggest two initiatives, both achievable and transformative.

One is to inaugurate a pan-Sydney Forum of all the council leaders or mayors across the metropolitan area. London has its cross-party version called 'London Councils' and it is a formidable partner for and sometimes feared opponent of the London mayor or indeed the UK government with its own strategies and objectives for London's future.

While I strongly support the existence and role of the various regional organisations of councils in Sydney (ROCs) in bringing councils together, the current state-wide Local Government Association simply does not have and probably cannot have enough focus on the needs of the state's capital. We need our own Sydney Councils group to balance the might and help shape the actions of state government action in Sydney.

The journey to metropolitan self-government could also involve the GSC coming under at first the influence of a unified 'Sydney Councils' group, but over time it would come under the aegis of a Greater Sydney Council that would also have under its control Sydney Transport, managing both rail and road assets and other key metropolitan services.

To those who argue this is utopian I ask: what's the alternative? One is surely needed given the inability of the current governance model to ensure a liveable city for all its residents now, let alone a city almost twice the size by mid-century.

In seeking this constitutional, governance objective against the defeatism of the naysayers, we should adopt the protestors key slogan in the May '68 uprising in Paris: 'Be realistic: demand the impossible.'

Dr Tim Williams is head of cities and urban renewal at Arup and Adjunct Professor at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Fifth Estate on 13 March 2018 (www.thefifthestate.com.au).



*Vice Chancellor
Barney Glover says
universities must
stand up for facts
and the truth – ‘if
we don’t, who will?’*

PROFESSOR BARNEY GLOVER AO

We live in challenging times. Ours is an era in which evidence, intellectual inquiry and expertise are under sustained attack.

The phrases ‘post truth’ and ‘alternative facts’ have slipped into common use. Agendas have displaced analysis in much of our public debate. And we are all the poorer for it.

I want to deliver a passionate defence of the value of expertise and evidence. I will mount a case for facts as they are grounded in evidence, not as fluid points of convenience employed to cover or distort a proposition.

My plea to you all is this: let’s not deride experts, nor the value of expertise. Because in an era where extremists and polemicists seek to claim more and more of the public square, our need for unbiased, well-researched information has seldom been greater.

We must remind ourselves of how human progress has ever been forged. In this, academics and journalists have common cause. For how are we to fulfil our respective roles in a democracy if we don’t defend the indispensable role of evidence in decision-making?

In Australia and around the world, we’ve seen the emergence of a creeping cynicism – even outright hostility – towards evidence and expertise.

We saw this sentiment in the post-Brexit declaration by British Conservative MP, Michael Gove that ‘the people of this country have had enough of experts.’

And yet – as we strive to cure cancer; save lives from preventable disease; navigate disruption; lift living standards; overcome prejudice, and prevent catastrophic climate change – expertise has never been more important.

The turn that public debate has taken is a challenge to universities. As institutions for the public good, we exist to push the frontiers of knowledge. We enhance human understanding through methodical, collaborative, sustained and robust inquiry.

That doesn’t discount the wisdom of the layperson. And it doesn’t mean universities have all the answers. Far from it. But we are unequivocally the best places to posit the questions.

We are places structurally, intellectually, ethically and intrinsically premised on confronting society’s most complex and confounding problems. We are at the vanguard of specialist knowledge. And we are relentless in its pursuit. We have to be. Because – like the challenges we as institutions immerse ourselves in – the pace of change is unrelenting.

In universities, questioning is continuous, and answers are always provisional. The intensive specialisation, in-depth inquiry and measured analysis universities undertake is not carried-out in service of some ulterior motive or finite agenda.

In the conduct of research the finish-line is very rarely, if ever reached. There's always more to learn, more to discover. The core objectives universities pursue can never be about any other agenda than the truth. There is no other, nor greater reward. So let's not disparage expertise, or the critically important role of evidence and intellectual inquiry.

Instead, let's try to understand its value to our country and its people. And, indeed, to the world.

Universities perform an essential role in society. We must stand up for evidence. Stand up for facts. Stand up for the truth. Because if we don't, who will?

Disruption is drastically refashioning the economy. It is reshaping the way we work, and reimagining the way we engage with each other in our local communities and globally.

In this constantly transforming environment – where major structural shifts in the economy can profoundly dislocate large segments of society – our universities perform a pivotal role.

Universities help us make the very best of disruption, ensuring we are able to 'ride the wave'. And they are the institutions best equipped to buffer us against the fallout. This is particularly important in regions that have relied for decades on large-scale blue-collar industries.

Think Geelong in regional Victoria and Mackay in central Queensland. Look to Elizabeth in the northern suburbs of Adelaide. Wollongong and Newcastle in New South Wales. And Launceston in Tasmania. Onetime manufacturing strongholds in carmaking, steel, timber and sugar.

These communities have been wrenched economically, socially and at the personal level by automation, offshoring and rationalisation. For places like these, universities can be a lifeline.

Internationally, the evidence is in. Former financier, Antoine van Agtmael and journalist, Fred Bakker look at this very scenario in their recent book, 'The Smartest Places on Earth'.

They uncover a transformative pattern in more than 45 formerly struggling regional US and European economies; places they describe as 'rustbelts' turned 'brainbelts'.

Akron, Ohio is one of the most remarkable examples they cite. This midwestern city had four tyre companies disappear practically overnight. The then president of the University of Akron, Luis Proenza, reached out to those affected, rallying them to collaborate and encouraging them to transform.

Van Agtmael tells the story of what happened next. 'What stayed in Akron', he observes, 'was the world class polymer research that has given us things like contact lenses that change colour if you have diabetes, tyres that can drive under all kinds of road conditions and hundreds more inventions.'

Akron, he continues, 'now [has] 1,000 little polymer companies that have more people working for them than the four old tyre companies.'

This kind of transformation, at Akron and beyond, Van Agtmael remarks, is ‘university centric.’

‘Each of these rustbelts becoming brain belts’, he concludes, ‘always have universities.’ In places like those he describes, and many others around the world, universities and their graduates are leading vital processes of renewal within economies experiencing upheaval.

You may be surprised by the extent that this is happening in Australia, too.

Over the past decade, the startup economy has become part of Australia’s strategy for economic diversification and growth. Yet what has not been widely understood is the extent to which universities and their graduates are responsible for that growth.

Now, for the first time, Universities Australia and the survey group Startup Muster have taken a closer look at the data.

‘Startup Smarts: universities and the startup economy’, confirms that universities and their graduates are the driving force in Australia’s startup economy.

It tells us that four-in-five startup founders in this country are university graduates. Many startups, too, have been nurtured into existence by a university incubator, accelerator, mentoring scheme or entrepreneurship course.

There are more than one-hundred of these programs dispersed widely across the country, with many on regional campuses.

They provide support, physical space and direct access to the latest research. They help to grow great Australian ideas into great Australian businesses.

This report confirms just how important the constant evolution, renewal and refining of course offerings at universities is.

We need to ensure that our programs equip our students and graduates for an uncertain future.

By the time today’s kindergarten students finish high school and are considering university study, startups will have created over half-a-million new jobs across the country. And this new sector of the economy – a sector indivisible from our universities – raised \$568 million in 2016; 73% more than the previous year.

By the very nature of the reach of our universities, the benefits are not confined to our cities. We play a vital role to help regional Australians and farmers stake their claim in the startup economy too. The idea of the ‘silicon paddock’ – using technology to take farm-based businesses to the markets of the world – is no longer a concept. It’s a reality.

Technology enables our regional entrepreneurs to stay in our regions; building and running businesses, investing locally without the need for long commutes or city relocations. And this, too, is very important; making sure nobody is left behind.

Comprehending and overcoming the complex problems the world confronts, in my view, requires we defend the role of expertise and intellectual inquiry. That doesn't mean universities are the last word on knowledge. To a large extent, it means rethinking the way knowledge is conveyed beyond university gates.

If universities don't turn their minds to this issue, others will. And their motivations may not always be altruistic.

Take research, for instance. When the facts of a particular field of inquiry are under attack, the natural reaction among researchers might be to tighten-up their retort and hone the theoretical armory.

It is right to be rigorous and methodical in research. But in the broader communication of our research – in the public dialogue beyond 'the lab' – I think universities have to guard against retreating to overly technical language that, perhaps inadvertently, sidelines all but a limited group of specialists.

I don't suggest that research can't benefit or even be improved via a researcher's consciousness of a particular, often very specific audience. Yet researchers who allow this consciousness to dominate the development of their work risk undermining their ability to tread new ground and challenge existing frontiers of knowledge.

Only by crossing borders can we come to something new. How many researchers' discoveries have arisen from a subversion of discipline, practice or establishment? Virtually all, I would suggest.

Crossing borders also means we push other structural boundaries. Within universities, distinct discipline paradigms exist for good reason. They bring focus and in-depth intellectual lineage to a particular field.

But, increasingly, the complex problems we set out to solve don't abide by the same boundaries. These questions demand expertise from many disciplines, working together and approaching the subject matter from different angles.

That is why universities are constantly refining their research and teaching programs and, increasingly, diffusing the borders that kept many of them separate. This is good for universities. It is good for the country. And it is good for our students, many of whom find their way into public service or politics.

These graduates bring a greater understanding of all facets of the complex questions they confront throughout their working lives.

Interdisciplinarity is, I think, a powerful antidote against ideological intransigence and prejudice. Australian universities – particularly in their research – have a growing track-record in this regard.

Many of our very best research institutes are characterised by a fusion of disciplines where, for example, sociologists, political scientists, spatial geographers, and economists collaborate on a common research objective.

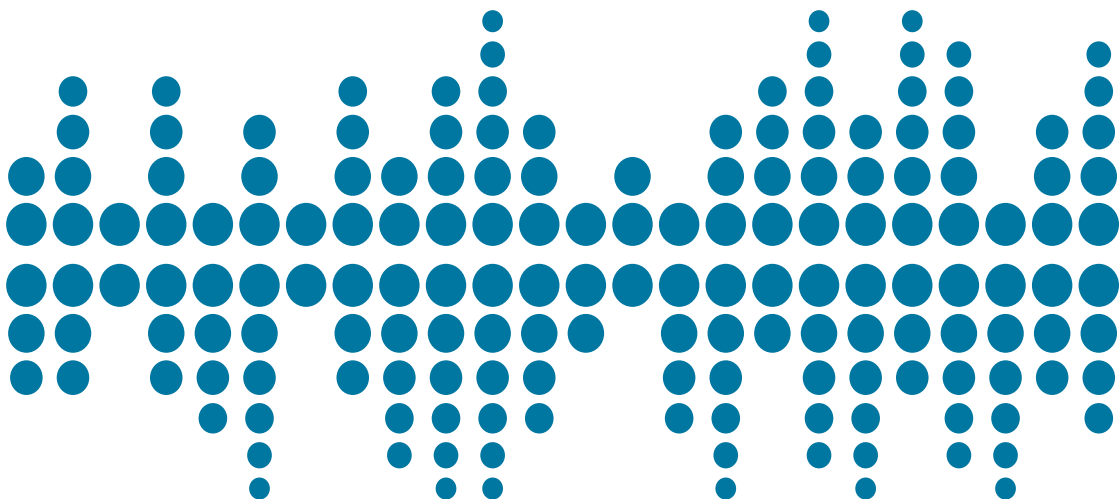
The work that emerges from this research is almost always compelling because it is multi-faceted. It extends itself beyond its constituent research community.

Cross-disciplinarity has also expanded at the teaching level of our universities over the past few decades. But a constrained funding environment can provoke a reduction in options.

We must, however, keep our viewfinder broad, because reductionism doesn't match the expansionist, multi-strand trends emerging in the broader economy. It's a disconnect.

As universities, as a society, we must be mindful of how important it is to ask questions, to follow our curiosity, to challenge boundaries and to never rest with the answers.

Professor Barney Glover AO is Vice-Chancellor and President of Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in *The Conversation* on 1 March 2017 (www.theconversation.com/au) and is an extract from a speech delivered by Professor Glover to the National Press Club on 1 March 2017.





Education & Work



Learning through partnerships

PROFESSOR DENISE KIRKPATRICK

Universities have a long history of partnering with industry, frequently in relation to the research that is the centrepiece of universities. We are starting to see a greater attention to partnering with business and industry beyond research, and beyond development.

At Western Sydney we have a strong focus on building partnerships that relate to teaching and learning, and the curriculum that we ask our students to engage in. In many ways this recognises the changing world of work and acknowledges that we have a responsibility to prepare our students for a future of work that is going to be vastly different from the work of today and the work that their parents did. Western is engaged in a university-wide transformation project – that involves co-creating curriculum and learning with students as partners who are central to what we're doing for the future.

It's also about partnerships with colleagues, partnerships with business and industry, and partnerships with community. The central focus of our transformation is relationships: the relationships we build and the relationships we will continue to develop.

However, we couldn't be a university for the 21st century without having the appropriate use of technologies embedded through everything that we do. Western Sydney University is transforming its curriculum, recognising the role of technologies in learning and that learning takes place everywhere. Our students' learning doesn't only take place within the classroom. It doesn't just take place in internships. It doesn't just take place in clinical sessions. We are expanding our view of learning and where it occurs, to help our students build that into their formal learning and their formal qualifications.

Our curriculum transformation project has been driven by two factors. One was our own concern about ensuring that the University was developing graduates who were ready and prepared for the uncertain future of work. We want future-facing programs and courses that will develop in our students, not only the knowledge that they need, but the sorts of skills and capabilities that will allow them to be successful in the future. Like many universities, our programs have become more and more complex. Rather than providing choice for students, this complexity creates confusion and limits our capacity to offer the type of learning experiences students need. We also set out to simplify our curriculum structures, to make it much easier for students to fit in the sorts of learning experiences they wanted, and for us to be able to offer opportunities for students to engage in learning activities that really will prepare them for the future world of work.

In the last five or so years there have been numerous reports predicting the future of work, frequently describing a dystopian future dominated by automation and artificial intelligence where the jobs of today have disappeared. We know that work contexts are already changing, and the world of work that our students will enter will be vastly different from today and will continue to change. A recent report released by the Institute for the Future suggested that 85 per cent of

the jobs that today's learners will be doing in 2030 won't have been thought of yet. That's a real challenge for a university that intends to prepare students for work of the future.

The changing world of work already means that the definition of 'work ready' that many universities have been working towards, needs to change as well. A recent Dell report identified that 70 per cent of young people are entering jobs at the moment that will be radically affected by automation, and it certainly is the automation of the workplace that's presenting real challenges as we think about what work in the future will look like. What we do know is it stresses the value of being able to continue to learn, to continue to acquire knowledge, and to build knowledge. That's going to be more important in the future than the knowledge that students graduate with.

The University was motivated to explore the disruptive future of work and society, recognising from all of the reports – and our own research – just how much disruption is being caused to the future and current worlds of work by technologies, how much the nature of work is changing the different sorts of knowledge and skills that we and our graduates will need as well, and the need to develop curricula that are more flexible, more agile and more resilient. And we will also (of course) need to produce graduates who are flexible, resilient and adaptive. We see this University-wide curriculum project as a major force for disruption within the University.

We began by drawing on all of the current research, drawing on our own research and instituting a series of University-wide discussions about what the future of work might be, and what it might mean for us. We ran a number of 'Future of Work' forums. These were external University events, co-created with business, industry and community organisations as well as our students. These events included local and international experts, and we used these to identify challenges for the University that related to how we should respond to the future of work, and to set agendas for change. This reinforced for us the importance of focusing on the challenges of the work of the future, and how we would radically transform our curriculum. Of course, this was radical transformation within a regulatory environment and within a very strong environment of professional accreditation and recognition.

Using discussion papers, and a range of activities involving staff, students and our partners we explored the widest range of perspectives possible on what the future of work was going to mean for us. This informed the initial discussions and the subsequent development of pilot projects that have taken our existing curricula and changed them radically. Through all of this we built in connections with our community organisations, our community partners, business and industry, and potential and current employees of our graduates. With our own staff and local innovators, we were able to cultivate the strong community of startups and entrepreneurial spirit in Western Sydney to launch 'LaunchPad', the region's first network of start-up incubators. At the centre of all this is a very strong program that uses our students as partners. Our 21st Century Curriculum project has created curricula that are future-facing, multidisciplinary and research informed.

Professor Denise Kirkpatrick is Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President (Academic) at Western Sydney University. This speech was delivered by Professor Kirkpatrick at the Emerging Trends in Living, Learning and Working Conference on 30 May 2018.



*Improving
education inclusion
for disabled people
in Indonesia*

DR KAREN SOLDATIC AND DR DINA AFRIANTY

December 3 has become a day of action and celebration for furthering the rights of people with disabilities around the world. An Indonesia-Australia collaboration has looked into whether Indonesian schools, including Islamic institutions, open their doors to disabled people.

The Indonesian government has made efforts to promote accessible and inclusive education for people with disabilities. These students depend on government and community commitment to the equality and participation of people with disabilities.

PROGRESS IN ACCESSIBILITY AND INCLUSION

The Indonesian government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in 2011 and introduced disability rights law in 2016. Efforts have been made to promote disability inclusion.

Barriers to schools and universities have been examined. Efforts have been made to redevelop buildings, adding ramps for classroom access. Curriculum in Islamic and secular public education has been redesigned to increase disabled students' participation.

Improvement is also happening outside the education sector. Some local governments are reported to have begun inclusive development planning to build accessible infrastructure.

Despite strong support for disability inclusion across Indonesia, there is still work to do.

CONFERENCE ON DIVERSITY AND DISABILITY INCLUSION

Two Australian institutions, the Institute for Religion, Politics and Society at Australian Catholic University and the Institute for Culture and Society at University of Western Sydney, have been collaborating with the Faculty of Religious Propagation and Communication at State Islamic University (UIN), Jakarta, since 2016. The partnership aims to develop disability inclusion in the Islamic and secular tertiary education sector.

The Diversity and Disability Inclusion in Muslim Societies Conference is a result of this partnership. This conference received support from UIN Jakarta and the Australian government initiative, Program Peduli, managed by The Asia Foundation.

Interest from across Indonesia was extensive. Presenters included disabled activists and civil society advocates.

The conference brought together scholars from different disciplines, including education, social work, psychology, law, policy and religious studies. This interdisciplinary approach was highly visible in the two days of discussion.

Issues presented at the conference included ongoing discrimination, societal perceptions of disability and discriminatory policies. Researchers also presented findings on inclusion practices at

the community level. Most of the 52 papers raised a lack of inclusion in the education sector as a key issue.

The focus on inclusive education in Islamic education is intentional. High-quality education for people with disability is central to gaining high-quality employment. Indonesia's legislation requires people with disability to have equal opportunity of employment.

BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Inclusive education builds the skills and capacities of people with disabilities to be as competitive and valued in the labour market. Their inclusion in higher education also promotes positive community attitudes, participation and social inclusion.

Discussions at the conference demonstrated how disability and diversity can be an important pathway towards bridging differences. Disability inclusion promotes dialogue and learning, expanding social understandings of rights, justice and non-discrimination.

ISLAMIC EDUCATION AND DISABILITY

The collaboration between Australian and Indonesian academics examines disability inclusion in Islamic education. This includes Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*), Islamic schools (*madrasah*) and Islamic universities. The academics reviewed Islamic teachings, from verse to hadith, about inclusive practices.

Researchers and Muslim disabled activists at the conference discussed key Islamic teachings that promote inclusion, respect and dignity. Presenters noted the positive support for difference and diversity within Islamic teachings. This included the role of faith as an important source of support for rights in everyday life.

A core issue raised at the conference is that most Indonesians living with disability are in rural areas. This creates many challenges. *Madrasah* and *pesantren* are mostly in rural areas with poor facilities and resources. Rarely are these poor rural schools accessible.

The conference helped share ideas, knowledge and expertise from across Indonesia. Advocates and activists presented their experiences to show new ways of including disability in Indonesia.

Combined, the personal experiences and research highlight the key role of government policy in promoting inclusion of people with disabilities, especially in education. Presenters and participants emphasised the importance of education inclusion in changing social attitudes to disability.

Conference participants agreed to continue this important collaboration. Shared engagement of academic and disability activists will lead to better policy, driven by the voices and concerns of people with disabilities. The conference ended with the establishment of the Australia-Indonesia Disability Research Network to build on the momentum created for social change.

Dr Karen Soldatic is a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University. Dr Dina Afrianty is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Institute for Religion, Politics and Society at Australian Catholic University, and lead author of this article. This article was originally published in The Conversation on 30 November, 2017 (www.theconversation.com/au).



Yet another Gonski sequel and the kids lose out

DR ANDY MARKS

Eight films in, the Rocky franchise shows no signs of flagging with the latest movie in the series set for release this year. With Gonski shaping up for version 3.0, we may just have a contender for Australia's policy Rocky. The Prime Minister's bid to calm anxieties over non-state school funding is pitched as 'final arrangement', but it's hardly a knockout blow. We've strayed too far from the original Gonski for that.

Gonski set down a simple premise: Funding schools on the basis of need.

In playing whack-a-mole with competing sectors – Catholic and independent – the Government has invited market-logic into a social policy space it was never meant to inhabit. Like Rocky, shadow-boxing up the steps of the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the goal of the original Gonski report was special by virtue of its simplicity, its singularity.

It held, anyone from anywhere can compete, can succeed, if they work hard. The original Gonski argued funding should be prioritised towards schools with the 'greatest concentration of disadvantaged students'.

Public schools. Right? Surely not already heavily subsidised Catholic or independent schools. Think again.

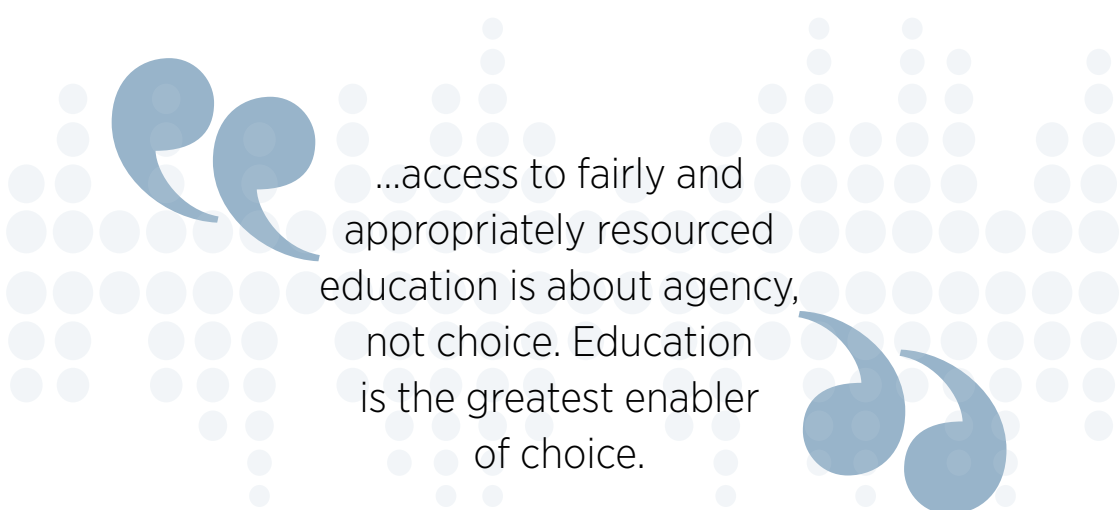
The latest Gonski – call it Gonski 3.0 – walks back those commitments. Even worse, the notion of 'choice', a market-based principle, is being championed, like it has everything to do with need or the fundamental right to a quality education.

The rationale is, children of parents who 'choose' to send them to Catholic or independent schools shouldn't be short-changed, shouldn't be punished.

Choice is an interesting proposition. According to market logic, if a consumer doesn't like a product a particular vendor is selling, they can choose to go elsewhere. Fine, if you're buying a product or service, like a T-shirt, coffee, or let's say, an education. That's your choice.

But choice means something altogether different in schools with no latitude for market logic. For some public schools, choice is a question of whether or not they can afford to offer a music or literary program, whether they can pay for essential maintenance, or provide basic learning materials.

For other schools, choice is about whether a student can squeeze in a few laps at the indoor heated pool or instead spend some time tinkering in an industry standard digital audio-visual editing suite. Hardly a set of comparable circumstances, but there we have it, an additional \$4.6 billion in taxpayer funds have been wheeled in to make 3.0 the defender of choice, something it was never intended to be. Why is any of this a problem?



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Because access to fairly and appropriately resourced education is about agency, not choice. Education is the greatest enabler of choice.

It affords agency to those who, as a result of circumstance, may have limited capacity to act. It can transform lives, generationally. The first Gonski sought to enshrine those principles, Gonski 3.0 renders them second tier commitments.

'All I want to do is go the distance,' says Rocky confronting the challenge before him in the 1976 film. It's a shame the Government can't show the same resolve on needs-based school funding. All it took was a round of robocalls, a by-election loss, and a leadership spill for them to throw in the towel. It doesn't bode well for Gonski 4.0.

Dr Andy Marks is Assistant Vice-Chancellor at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Daily Telegraph on 28 September 2018 (www.dailytelegraph.com.au).



*Birmo's pride and
prejudice show
ARC grants need
new rules*

DR BEN ETHERINGTON

In an early scene of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* Elizabeth Bennett remarks to her suitor Fitzwilliam Darcy:

It is particularly incumbent on those who never change their opinion, to be secure of judging properly at first.

Bennett is probing Darcy to see if his reputation for being overproud is merited.

There was plenty of pride from the former Education Minister Simon Birmingham last week as he doubled down on his decision to veto the award of eleven research grants recommended to him by the Australian Research Council in 2017 and 2018.

'I'm pretty sure most Australian taxpayers preferred their funding to be used for research other than spending \$223,000 on projects like Post orientalist arts of the Strait of Gibraltar', Birmingham tweeted, after the veto was revealed in senate estimates.

On the basis of being 'pretty sure', Birmingham personally struck down \$4.2 million of grants that had been vetted through the ARC's months long peer review processes. All eleven awards were in humanities and creative arts disciplines.

'And never allow yourself to be blinded by prejudice?', we, after Elizabeth Bennett, might ask?

It's a question that seems not to have occurred to Birmingham. But then he has spoken of his 'horror' and boredom when assigned *Pride and Prejudice* in high school. 'It turned me off English,' he told Fairfax. He chose to study for an MBA.

That all blackballed grants were in the arts and humanities leaves little room for doubting Birmingham's prejudices. The revelation has displayed the absurdity of a process that allows the minister to veto grants at the last gasp without even needing either to announce or justify the decision.

Condemnation from universities and learned associations has been immediate and universal. Organisations issuing statements include the sector's peak body Universities Australia, the Group of Eight research intensive universities, the Innovative Research Universities, the Australian Academy of the Humanities, the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, the Australian Academy of Science, the Australian Historical Association, Australian Heads of University English, the University of Melbourne, UNSW the Association of Australian Medical Institutes, and the Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities. The National Alliance for Public Universities has called for the minister to be removed from cabinet and demanded that the funding of the vetoed projects be reinstated.

Applicants who had their grants struck down have asked a number of crucial questions. Did the minister read the rejected applications in full? Why were the vetoes not publicly announced? Why were the blackballed applicants given the same default message of rejection as those who the

ARC did not recommend to the minister? It emerged yesterday that the ARC conveyed to La Trobe that the proposal of one of their vetoed staff was lowly ranked. Did the ARC participate in covering this up?

Clarifications around the process that led to this outcome are important. The public needs to be aware, though, that it is more than clear already that fundamental principles of academic independence and integrity have been breached.

NOT JUST CULTURE WARS

If it is tempting to file this under 'culture wars'; another strike against 'lefty' 'postmodern' academic culture, as was apparently the case with Brendan Nelson's veto of ARC grants back in 2005, it is notable that the grants Birmingham targeted were for subjects as neutral sounding as 'Legal Secularism' and 'The Music of Nature and the Nature of Music'. (Equally, Birmingham signed off on projects titled 'The Oulipo Group and literary invention' and 'Representation of gender and sexual diversity in Australian film and television'.)

Behind this lies something even darker than ideological interference. The arbitrary nature of Birmingham's decisions reveals this to be an attack on the civic space of public research itself. It fits a pattern of disregard for the independence of our public institutions.

On the one side the coalition government has been intent on eroding the revenue base for public institutions like universities through tax cuts to corporations and high income owners. On the other, it has assumed the right to demand ideological fidelity from those institutions. We've seen it in the attempts to intervene in the ABC. We've seen it in the way government figures have worked to ram the Ramsay Centre for Western Civilisation down the throats of public universities. We've seen it in the way the government seeks to clamp down on campus protest under the guise of promoting 'freedom of speech'. And now we've seen a minister unapologetically censoring research on the basis that he's 'pretty sure' he knows what the public at large think ought to be funded.

That Birmingham, a test-tube career politician, should have fallen in with the Coalition's anti-democratic reflex, shows how things have deteriorated.

HOW THE SYSTEM IS SUPPOSED TO WORK

Australians trust universities not because they readily understand the rationale for each of the tens of thousands of research projects being undertaken in Australia's public universities. It is because they know that robust processes are in place to ensure the quality and rigour of research.

The ARC was formed when the Colleges of Advanced Education were converted en masse into universities by the Hawke Labor Government to create the 'unified national system'. The ARC was charged with coordinating and overseeing the distribution of research funds that had previously been allocated directly to universities and was to give 'coordinated independent advice to the minister' about which research projects to fund. In removing decisions about research from

universities, the ARC created a national competitive system, centralised decisions about research and gave the federal minister the ultimate say over which projects go ahead.

Most academics perceive the minister's role to be akin to the governor-general. She or he has ultimate power but it would be folly to exercise it, for it undermines the entire process of specialist peer review (on which, more in a moment) that ensures the system's integrity. Birmingham has become our John Kerr, and the apparent flippancy with which he has been able to exercise his power means that we need to look again at the underlying the legislative settings.

HOW WE CAN BETTER PROTECT ACADEMIC FREEDOM?

In the United Kingdom the mechanism for ensuring that the state's provision of funds for research is kept entirely separate from decisions about how those funds are spent is known as the 'Haldane principle'. There's some dispute about the principle's origins and how it has been enforced. But it's not hard to get your head around. At its heart, the system relies on processes commonly called 'peer review' (procedures which themselves are the focus of continual critical scrutiny). When specialists review and contest each other's work, and where these processes themselves are transparent, it ensures the integrity and innovation of the research. There have been moves recently in the UK to shore up this principle through legislation.

Labor's Kim Carr has spoken of a 'protocol', according to which ministers ought publicly to justify their vetos. This is too weak. We now need to enshrine the equivalent of the Haldane principle in Australian law. The minister's right of veto needs to be removed and the sovereignty of academics over their own research priorities reinforced.

And, for his pride and prejudices, Simon Birmingham has to go.

Dr Ben Etherington is a senior lecturer and member of the Writing and Society Research Centre at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in Crikey on 30 October 2018 (www.crikey.com.au).



Are smartphones the key to improving school results?

DR JOANNE ORLANDO

Many of us remember school as boring. Could smartphones be the antidote to tedious, irrelevant lessons? We all agree kids should not be scrolling through their Instagram feed while sitting in maths lesson. We want kids to be engaged in learning, achieving good results, and developing the skills they need for the workforce today and tomorrow. Australia's dismal 39 out of 41 education ranking suggests this is not happening.

There is no doubt that smartphones can be distracting. Research shows that on average we pick up our phones every 15 mins. For the most part these are 'zombie checks'; the main reasoning behind them is boredom. The more tedious the work the more easily distracted we are, and the more we look to our phone or any other technology for stimulation. Many of us spend our working lives shifting between our device and our real work.

Taking smartphones away from classrooms will cease smartphone distraction, but there is no guarantee it will lead to Aussie kids achieving better standards. Results will only improve if kids are engaged in learning and this happens when they see the relevance in school learning. This relates to what is taught as well as how it is taught.

Our focus on standardised tests is a stark contrast to the digital world we live in. Rote learning, regurgitation of rudimentary facts, and practising taking tests do not lead to skills valued by the current workforce. Young people are well aware of this. What they often do in class is far removed from the lives they lead in 2018 and their foreseeable lives in the future.

Rather than a ban on smartphones let's shift the focus to making learning relevant, and interesting to this generation of young people. Key to this is teachers and students having the opportunity to select from the best resources we have available to us today to support learning. Some days this may mean no technology use at all, and smartphones stay in schoolbags. Other days it may mean using smartphones to create and record music, to develop e-books, to create apps, organise group work, to identify and critique a series of art images, to use Instagram to identify how young artists today apply Picasso's techniques.

While France may declare the success of its smartphone ban, this announcement is premature and does not account for the long-term implications of taking away phones from children. As a first step, imagine the logistical daily nightmare of collecting and handing back phones in a typical high school of 1000 students. How many hours of learning will be lost in a school year because of this.

Care and support of young people is an important consideration in this debate. A key finding from my research with teens about their technology use is that when their phone is confiscated as a punishment or on any adult-decided grounds, they strategically become more secretive in their phone use, because they don't want to risk further confiscation. The more this occurs the more

obsessive young people become about become about keeping this part of their life discrete and unconnected from adults.

From a safety perspective, this means that parents and teachers might not be made aware when things go for kids wrong online. This exacerbates, not alleviates, cybersafety education and management. The default position of never-trust-a-teenager that comes with students being forced to hand over your phone each day is a further nail in the 'never-trust-an-adult' coffin.

Additionally, while we may think an across the board smartphone ban is equitable consider the implications on disadvantaged students living in low SES locations. Many families in such locations are not able to afford to buy kids multiple devices. Often it's just one device and that's a phone. Many schools are now Bring Your Own Device schools, which means that students are required to bring their own device. If smartphones are banned, then what device do these kids access in class? Schools would be required to loan disadvantaged kids a device to use in class. The potential stigma attached to being a kid whose family can't afford a laptop so has to use a school device is important here.

Smartphone use by teens (and adults), is something we all need to keep a healthy check on. A ban on smartphones in schools presents like an effective immediate solution to Australia's education woes. It also ticks the box in terms of addressing our concerns about kids online. However, the long-term implications are less than convincing. An inquiry that genuinely supports this generation of children to develop the knowledge and skills that reflect the era in which they are growing up in is of prime importance. This is the only way to develop a genuine win-win way forward.

Dr Joanne Orlando is a senior lecturer in the School of Education at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Sydney Morning Herald on 17 September 2018 (www.smh.com.au).





*University debt
changes will hurt
female graduates
the most*

DR ANDY MARKS

Make no mistake, the government's proposed lowering of the university debt repayment threshold to \$45,000 will hurt female graduates the most. And the impact will be most felt by women in some of the most essential, yet underpaid professions in the country.

Just over 89 per cent of Australia's nurses are female, with a graduate salary of roughly \$65,000. They are in a frontline occupation, which we are told is facing chronic shortages. Yet they are the first to be gouged in the drive for efficiency.

I wonder how the government's intended threshold tweak makes the roughly 47,000 female students enrolled in university nursing programs feel? They outnumber their male counterparts seven-to-one. And they've just been told they may have to pay back more, sooner.

Look at other essential disciplines like teaching and the story is the same. Nearly 70 per cent of the more than 120,500 university students enrolled in education-related degree programs are women. They earn a graduate salary roughly on par with that of early-career nurses.


Still, the government has no qualms in ignoring the plight of a university-educated woman on \$65,000 a year attempting to save for a deposit on a home, pay rent, or build retirement savings.

It's not as though there aren't sufficient warnings against the perils of similarly blunt approaches to student debt. A recent US report found female college graduates 'hold nearly two-thirds of the outstanding student debt' yet they earn '26 per cent less than their male counterparts'. The result, they incur more interest and take longer to repay.


In the UK, a recent conservative chaired parliamentary review of their student loans system found it to be 'deeply unfair', saddling 'the poorest students' with the 'biggest debts'. The system's interest rate levels, the review found, would see nurses repay more over the course of their careers than financiers and legal professionals.

Australia hasn't quite plummeted those depths. US and UK student loans can attract interest of around 4.5 and 6 per cent respectively, while ours are indexed to the consumer price index. Also, our course fees generally aren't as high. But we'd be wise to note that the inequities the US and UK higher education sectors are contending with didn't happen overnight. They arose via the arguably unanticipated interplay of incremental reforms. That's the creep we're seeing the beginnings of in Australia.

The Turnbull government's proposed threshold changes come on the heels of a December 2017 government 'freeze' on university enrolment funding. This is a measure that has locked in pronounced degree-attainment gaps in profoundly under-skilled areas of Australia. This trend should have a government committed to creating knowledge jobs very worried. Apparently not.



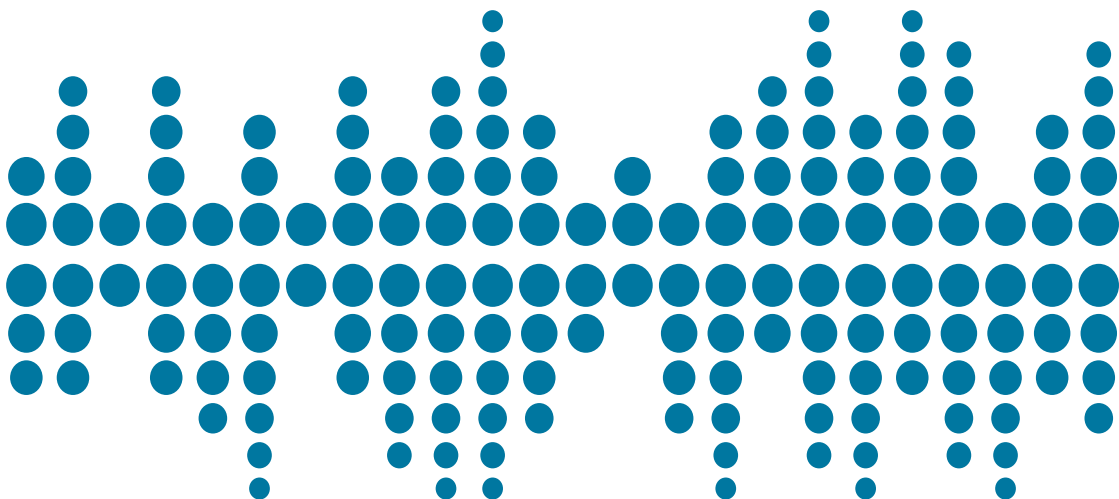
...not one Coalition representative, even the former minister for women, considered the disproportionate impact a lower repayment threshold might have on women.



During the most recent parliamentary session, Tony Abbott threatened to cross the floor to oppose changes to energy policy. In that same week, not one Coalition parliamentarian rose in defence of nursing or teaching graduates. Labor noted the Bill's impact on women in their dissenting report to the Senate committee inquiry. But not one Coalition representative, even the former minister for women, considered the disproportionate impact a lower repayment threshold might have on women.

That's the political value accorded gender inequity, university education and essential professions in this country. Thank goodness our nurses and teachers aren't so short-sighted in choosing how and when they 'cross the floor' to help others.

Dr Andy Marks is Assistant Vice-Chancellor at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Sydney Morning Herald on 2 July 2018 (www.smh.com.au).





Environment & Sustainability



Can property survive the great climate transition?

DR LOUISE CRABTREE

As we become an increasingly urban species, urban resilience is emerging as a big deal. The idea is generating a lot of noise about how to develop or retrofit cities that can deal with the many challenges before us, or consume less energy in the transition to post-carbon economies.

There is ample activity aimed at making this happen, including through designing and building ecocities, and calls such as that of the Transition Towns movement, which suggests substantial changes to our ways of life might be both necessary and inevitable.

In all of this, very little has been said about the elephant in the urban living room – property. Property systems are the codification of our relationship to place and the way in which many of us make a claim to place, including a roof over our heads.

If our cities are to become more resilient and sustainable, our systems of property need to come along for the ride.

STATIC PROPERTY RIGHTS WILL BE TESTED

Western systems of property law assume property is delineated and static: the property holder has invested (often substantial) financial resources to secure a claim to that neatly identified parcel of land and/or buildings. Further, the property owner expects to make a nice economic return on their parcel.

Unfortunately, the future doesn't look neatly delineated or static. Many researchers and practitioners tell us the future might not look like anything we've ever seen. Some say we are reaching a tipping point, after which the rules we have constructed will no longer apply or be of use.

As some property is washed out to sea, much may become too hot to live in, and what remains may be subject to relentless and increasing waves of migration and instability.

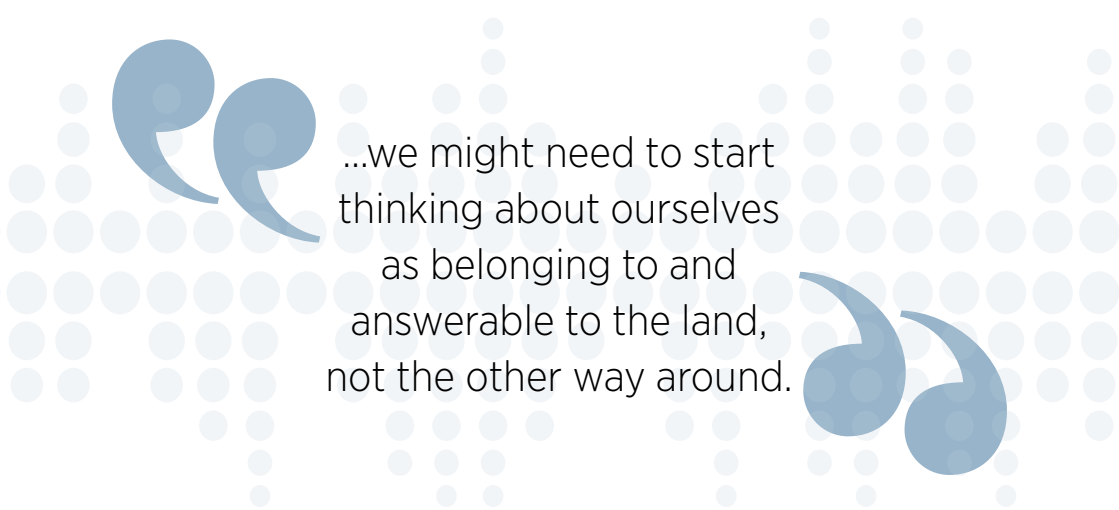
In the face of such calamity, how then might we – as a big, inclusive 'we' – talk about and demonstrate our relationship to place? Will we be able to do that without seeing the emergence of metaphorical or actual fortresses?

MODELS THAT ALLOW FOR CHANGE

These are live questions. There are no easy answers, but there are places where we might start.

Models such as rolling easements offer one way to handle property that is in flux. Rolling easements are a form of property that recognises that the coast is a dynamic landscape and allows for the coastline of wetlands to migrate inland as sea levels rise.

These sound promising in their capacity to balance private and public interests in property, but their potential has not yet been tested in areas of urban development, such as housing.



...we might need to start thinking about ourselves as belonging to and answerable to the land, not the other way around.

Echoing the potential mobility and flexibility of rolling easements are diverse housing tenures that can dislocate the right to reside in place from exclusionary, proprietary title to an individual, speculative housing 'asset'.

Examples include housing co-operatives and community land trusts. So far, these have proven effective in delivering a range of affordable and flexible housing options, but still ultimately rely on an understanding that property is static.

So, how might we conceptualise and identify dynamic models of housing that can change with our cities?

Mobility studies are starting to talk about home as mobile and fluid, while resilience theory is recognising the importance of a sense of place. Resilience theory also tells us that complex systems are best governed by collaborative, flexible, learning mechanisms.

The combination of more fluid understandings of home and more sensitive ideas of place may offer a framework for thinking about how we occupy cities through complex challenges and in the face of uncertainty – including how to accommodate the need for mobility and flexibility.

INDIGENOUS INSPIRATION

Living in colonised landscapes tells us it might be time to rethink which way around the 'ownership' dynamic works in property relationships.

That is, if we are to think about and create property systems that are as dynamic as the landscapes we occupy, we might need to start thinking about ourselves as belonging to and answerable to the land, not the other way around.

We might also need to start thinking about our claims not being static but dependent on the web of relationships we are entwined in, including with non-humans. Some say that First Peoples might have a grasp of property dynamics that is more suited to the times we are entering.

So, making cities green might be the easy part. It remains to be seen whether property law and property systems are up to the task of transition.

Dr Louise Crabtree is Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in *The Conversation* on 13 July 2017 (www.theconversation.com/au).



*Life as an older
renter, and what it
tells us about the
urgent need for
tenancy reform*

DR EMMA POWER

The New South Wales government has introduced a bill to reform the Residential Tenancies Act. This act sets out the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants in private rental accommodation in NSW.

The bill's proposed limit on rent increases to one in every 12 months is essential, as are the proposed minimum standards for rental accommodation. However, my ongoing research with single older women renting in Sydney points to an urgent need for a cap on the value of rent increases and for an end to 'no grounds' eviction. Victoria adopted these measures earlier this month.

Reform is essential. Growing numbers of Australians rent their housing and increasing proportions are expected to rent long-term. This makes it essential that private rental housing meets the need that every person has for a secure and affordable home.

IT'S GETTING HARDER FOR OLDER RENTERS

It is getting harder for older renters to find adequate, appropriate and secure housing. Older women – the focus of my work – are at particular risk. This is due to longer life expectancy, lower incomes across the life course, and less access to benefits like superannuation. Women also experience a greater loss of income and housing standard than men do after relationship breakdown, and are at greater risk of domestic violence.

Their stories point to the role of flaws in the Residential Tenancies Act in compounding housing insecurity.

RISING RENTS ADD TO HARDSHIP

Rising rents were a problem for nearly all women I spoke with. They depleted women's budgets, leaving little money to buy food or pay for utilities. Many relied on local charities for food and help to pay energy bills.

One woman described how she would add protein to her meal by buying a single chicken breast, slicing it thinly and freezing each piece separately to be defrosted over the next week or so. Another relied on vegetables the local greengrocer bundled and discounted before throwing out.

In winter, when heating bills mounted, she relied on a local church with a weekly food pantry. This food, donated by local supermarkets and community members, was frequently past its 'best before' date. As a low-paid community worker living in an area with a significant number of disadvantaged families, she collected food alongside her clients.

Two women coped by moving into their cars. They subsisted on tins of food that they could hide in the car. At night they kept themselves safe by parking in familiar locations.

LIVING WITH SUBSTANDARD CONDITIONS

Rent rises also made it difficult to find appropriate housing. Affordable housing was often substandard. Many had difficulties getting landlords to agree to repairs.

One woman described how her rented unit began leaking. The leak was severe and lasted for nearly two years. In this time she lived with increasing mould and lost access to nearly 40% of her home. She sought repairs from the landlord, but only cautiously, because she was afraid of eviction.

When the leak was eventually fixed her rent went up 20%. That left her with only A\$30 a week after rent, essential bills and transport. She couldn't afford food and relied on local charities until she found cheaper housing in a distant, transport-poor suburb.

Another described a similar leak:

When it rained the water would come straight down into the doorway. And that was the only way you could get into the house [...] it was in the house and even in the bedroom.

Despite this the owner increased the rent. The real estate agent notified her of the increase by letter, but distanced herself from repair requests when confronted in person stating: 'Well, we can't do anything [to fix the property] until the owner says we can.'

The agent helped the landlord to make more money from their investment, while illegally blocking this woman's entitlements to secure and usable property. The impact on her capacity to take care of herself was significant. Living with the leak risked her health. However, challenging the landlord – pushing them to repair the leak – risked eviction.

RETHINK THE VALUE OF RENTAL HOUSING

These stories show the need to rethink how we value and regulate private rental housing. It is time that we recognise the fundamental role that housing plays in our ability to meet basic needs – for shelter, warmth, food and above all a sense of security and home.

When housing is too expensive, unsafe or inadequate, our capacity to meet our care needs deteriorates and our health suffers. For women in my research their capacity to age in place – and even to remain housed – was challenged.

This is not good for tenants or landlords. Although popular wisdom suggests tenants and landlords have different interests, they in fact have very similar concerns: both benefit from secure tenancies and rental properties that are well maintained and cared for.

The proposed amendments to the act are a good starting point.

Restrictions on the number of rent increases in a year are essential. However, the women in my research struggle not just because of the number of rent increases they face. They find themselves in precarious situations because of the size of the increases, which in some cases left them unable to afford necessities like food.

Minimum housing standards are also essential. The women in my research cannot begin to maintain their health or age well at home if their home leaks or does not meet other basic standards.

But perhaps more pressing is the need to end no grounds evictions. For women in my research, repair requests carried the risk of eviction. This left many afraid to ask for repairs. They lived in unhealthy and unsafe housing rather than risk eviction in a market with few affordable options.

Landlords in many areas can readily replace tenants. And an evicted older woman can easily end up living in her car.

Ending no grounds evictions will have no impact on landlords who do the right thing. They will still be able to terminate a lease on reasonable grounds such as renovating or moving into the property. It would, however, help put an end to retaliatory evictions, which in turn would support efforts to maintain minimum housing standards.

Dr Emma Power is Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University. This article was first published in *The Conversation* on 27 September 2018 (www.theconversation.com/au).



*Why Britain's rural
residents have a
much brighter
future than people
living in regional
Australia*

PROFESSOR PHILLIP O'NEILL

We were in London last month and took the opportunity to head into the countryside for a couple of days. We took the train to Portsmouth and alighted at Arundel in West Sussex. Arundel is a pretty market town with a castle and Catholic cathedral.

A citizen's right to walk the paths across private farms saw us lunching in the fields, perched on a hill looking north. In the foreground is the next township, Amberley. We can't see London, 100 kilometres distant. But we can see the train from London, one every 30 minutes right through the day. As we eat, we watch the train snake down the Arun valley. The train brings locals back from their appointments in London that morning, cyclists for an afternoon ride through forested lanes, and idle folk like us – all appreciative of a regular, dependable train that has serviced this part of regional Britain since 1841.

The Arun valley isn't wealthy, but it doesn't struggle. Its agricultural base is solid and there remain good local butchers, bakers and cheese makers. Tourism tops up this economy.

It's obvious that the railway is critical for the resilience of the Arun valley. So are European trading regulations that make small scale agriculture viable meaning traditional family farms survive. Protected ancient walking rights draw visitors to Arundel from all over Europe.


Britain might not have the greatest welfare system in the world but its protection of the countryside means the residents of Arundel and Amberley have a future they can look forward to.

And then there is regional Australia.

Recently the Australian Bureau of Statistics released a report on income inequality in Australia. Beneath layers of spreadsheets there are two key findings. One is that the income divide between the big east coast cities – Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane – and the rest of Australia is becoming more pronounced. This is worrying. The average household in Sydney, for example, is said to have received (at the time of the 2016 census) \$2495 per week in private income. This compares with about \$1900 for the average household in Adelaide, Hobart and regional NSW.

The second finding, by contrast, is that Australia's welfare system is doing its job, by and large. Where people are short of a quid in their pay packets, they have access to government support to ensure a reasonable standard of living. Australia's income redistribution system seems to be working, at least on paper. The bottom 10 per cent of households in Australia earns only \$161 a week in private income, says the ABS. But this is boosted to an equivalent of \$687 per week after Centrelink payments and access to education, health and other benefits are taken into account.

But therein lies a major problem. Australian governments – federal and state – have pretty much abandoned a direct interest in supporting regional economies.



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The family in the countryside, down on luck, can get a weekly deposit from Centrelink into its account, but it can't catch a local train anywhere, or get a job at a local abattoir, mill or cannery. Moreover, when this family leaves the district the welfare cheque disappears as well, and a house once lived in lies empty. Our countryside is being depopulated, and our towns abandoned, while our big cities choke on their growth.

Regional policy in Australia needs to be much more than a Centrelink office.

Professor Phillip O'Neill is Director of the Centre for Western Sydney at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Herald on 8 July 2018 (www.theherald.com.au).



*Growing cities
face challenges of
keeping the masses
moving up, down
and across*

**DR ANDREA CONNOR AND
PROFESSOR DONALD MCNEILL**

Cities worldwide face the problems and possibilities of ‘volume’: the stacking and moving of people and things within booming central business districts. We see this especially around mass public transport hubs.

As cities grow, they also become more vertical. They are expanding underground through rail corridors and above ground into the tall buildings that shape city skylines. Cities are deep as well as wide.

The urban geographer Stephen Graham describes cities as both ‘vertically stacked’ and ‘vertically sprawled’, laced together by vertical and horizontal transport systems.

People flow in large cities is not only about how people move horizontally on rail and road networks into and out of city centres. It also includes vertical transport systems. These are the elevators, escalators and moving sidewalks that commuters use every day to get from the underground to the surface street level.

Major transport hubs are where many vertical and horizontal transport systems converge. It’s here that people flows are most dense.

But many large cities face the twin challenges of ageing infrastructure and increased volumes of people flowing through transport hubs. Problems of congestion, overcrowding, delays and even lockouts are becoming more common.

Governments are increasingly looking for ways to squeeze more capacity out of existing infrastructure networks.

CAN WE INCREASE CAPACITY BY CHANGING BEHAVIOUR?

For the last three years, Transport for London (TfL) has been running standing-only escalator trials. The aim is to see if changing commuter behaviour might increase ‘throughput’ of people and reduce delays.

London has some of the deepest underground stations in the world. This means the Tube system is heavily reliant on vertical transport such as escalators. But a long-standing convention means people only stand on the right side and allow others to walk up on the left.

In a trial at Holborn Station, one of London’s deepest at 23 metres, commuters were asked to stand on both sides during morning rush hour.

The results of the trials showed that changing commuter behaviour could improve throughput by increasing capacity by as much as 30% at peak times. But this works only in Tube stations with very tall escalators. At stations with escalators less than 18 metres high, like Canary Wharf, the trials found the opposite – standing would only increase congestion across the network.

The difference is down to human behaviour. People are simply less willing to walk up very tall escalators. This means a standing-only policy across the network won't improve people flow uniformly and could even make congestion worse.

IS PEOPLE MOVEMENT DATA A SOLUTION?

With the introduction of ticketless transport cards it's now possible to gather more data about people flow through busy transport hubs as we tap on and off.

Tracking commuters' in-station journeys through their Wi-Fi-enabled devices, such as smart phones, can also offer a detailed picture of movement between platforms, congestion and delays.

Transport for London has already conducted its first Wi-Fi tracking trial in the London Underground.

Issues of privacy loom large in harvesting mobile data from individual devices. Still, there's enormous potential to use this data to resolve issues of overcrowding and inform commuters about delays and congestion en route.

Governments are also increasingly turning to consultancy firms that specialise in simulation modelling of people flow. That's everything from check-in queues and processing at terminals, to route tracking and passenger flow on escalators.

Using data analytics, people movement specialists identify movement patterns, count footfall and analyse commuter behaviour. In existing infrastructure, they look to achieve 'efficiencies' through changes to scheduling and routing, and assessing the directional flow of commuters.

Construction and engineering companies are also beginning to employ people movement specialists during the design phase of large infrastructure projects.

Beijing's Daxing airport, due for completion in 2020, will be the largest transport hub in China. It's also the first major infrastructure project to use crowd simulation and analysis software during the design process to test anticipated volume against capacity.

The advice of people movement specialists can have significant impacts on physical infrastructure. This involves aspects such as the width of platforms, number and placement of gates, and the layout and positioning of vertical transport, such as escalators.

MOVEMENT ANALYTICS IS BECOMING BIG BUSINESS

People movement analytics is becoming big business, especially where financialisation of public assets is increasing. This means infrastructure is being developed through complex public-private partnership models. As a result, transport hubs are now also commercial spaces for retail, leisure and business activities.

Commuters are no longer only in transit when they make their way through these spaces. They are potential consumers as they move through the retail concourse in many of these developments.

In an era of 'digital disruption', which is particularly affecting the retail sector, information about commuter mobility has potential commercial value. The application of data analytics to people flow and its use by the people movement industry to achieve 'efficiencies' needs careful scrutiny to ensure benefits beyond commercial gain.

At the same time, mobility data may well help our increasingly vertical cities to keep flowing up, down and across.

Dr Andrea Connor is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University. Donald McNeill is Professor of Urban and Cultural Geography at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Conversation on 4 June 2018 (www.theconversation.com/au).



*How people can
best make the
transition to cool
future cities*

DR ABBY MELICK LOPES

It is difficult to remember when we are in the midst of winter, but keeping cool in summer is a big issue for some communities. And the problem is likely to get worse as our summer heatwaves grow longer and hotter.

When we have access to comfort we tend to be able to forget about how hot it is. When we don't, the heat affects how we feel, what we do, and where we go. It can have severe impacts on our health and wellbeing. Liveability depends, at least in part, on thermal comfort.

Demographic research shows the very young, the very old and those with limited mobility, dexterity and/or economic means are some of those most vulnerable to heat stress. However, it is not only who you are, but where you live that is important.

People living in 'hotspots' such as Western Sydney, where we conducted our research, have little access to shade, outdoor shelter or public drinking water. And they are coping with summer land surface temperatures into the mid-40s and beyond. This is far hotter than in the coastal suburbs.

When you live in a home that lacks passive cooling features or air conditioning, and don't have the means of transport to get you to cool refuges such as the mall, swimming pool or river, you have little choice but to stay put.

DIVIDING PEOPLE AND ENVIRONMENTS

We spoke to three groups identified as 'vulnerable' to heat stress because of where they lived in Western Sydney.

These groups demonstrated very different approaches to keeping cool in summer. They ranged from highly resilient strategies of home adaptation in a group of elderly St Marys home owners to a group of young mothers in public housing in Cranebrook. The latter group said they and their kids coped with the heat by remaining as still as possible. That meant no walking or bike riding, and no outdoor play after mid-morning on hot days.

A group of carers and clients at the Nepean Area Disabilities Organisation explained that their wellbeing in summer was completely dependent on easy access to air conditioning and cooling refuges. Otherwise they just didn't leave home.

So, extreme heat divides people from the environment and from each other.

The people we spoke to – all longstanding residents of Western Sydney – described watching in consternation as new urban development rapidly transforms their suburbs. Said one carer:

All this multi-development – high-density units – we are all going to be in a hot dome. The heat is just going to sit on top of us. We need housing, but they are not thinking about how to do it.

These communities were thinking about how to stay cool. Some people shared memories of sitting in the river on hot days, plentiful shaded outdoor seating and drinking fountains. Such features made it much easier to get out and about without having to feel like a mall loiterer or resorting to expensive bottled water while waiting for the train.

IDEAS FOR COOL FUTURE CITIES

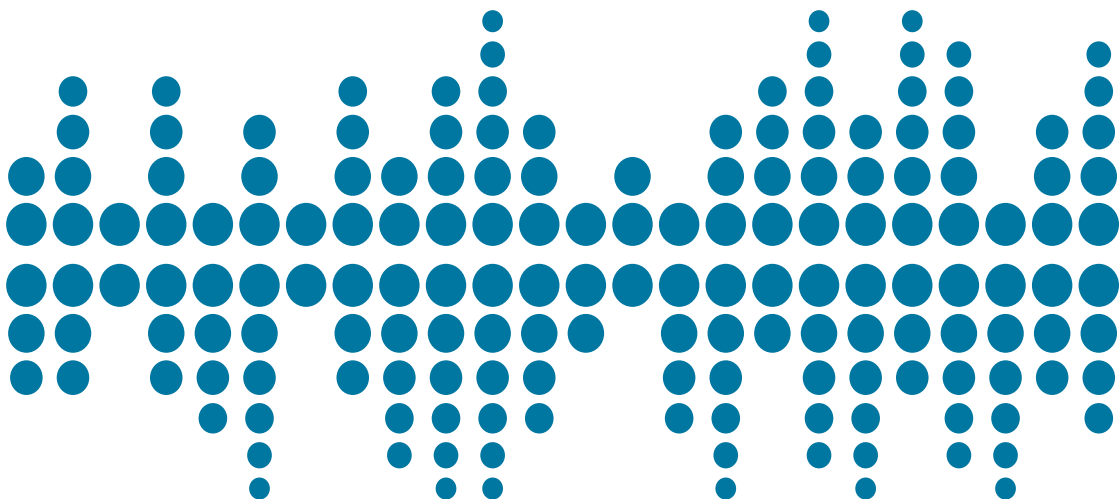
Many people in our research had aspirations for a cool future city that didn't just hark back to a time when basic public amenities were an everyday, taken-for-granted reality. They had ideas for new ways of sharing public space and resources. These range from car parks that transform into twilight playgrounds and local parks with outdoor cooking facilities that extend beyond the barbecue, to neighbourhood skill-share workshops.

Cooling is a community issue. Planting trees is not enough. We need new ways of living well in a climate-changed future. We need to ditch the 'hot box' and involve people in the design of the material and social environments in which they will live, with criteria of comfort, neighbourliness and affordability.

With the rapid densification of our cities, what kind of legacies are we building for future generations?

Dr Abby Mellick Lopes is Senior Lecturer in Design at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in *The Conversation* on 13 July 2017 (www.theconversation.com/au).







Health & Wellbeing



*Empowerment
shows there's more
to health than
absence of disease*

PROFESSOR ANNEMARIE HENNESSY AM

In research laboratories across the country, innovative medical researchers are working vigorously towards developing better treatments and a better understanding of hundreds of diseases.

The potential of this work to have a significant impact on how we design and deliver health services can seem a little overwhelming. But to harness that potential, I know there needs to be a shift in how we define disease and how we translate research into real-world solutions.

We need to ensure that when scientific breakthroughs and advances are ready for patients, they are welcomed into a system driven by a holistic and personalised approach to health. To facilitate such a system, we need to start thinking of health not just as the absence of disease but as empowered individuals living in actively supportive, engaged and thriving communities.

To consider health in such a holistic way forces us also to think of treatment and health delivery in a holistic way – to match robust science with personalised and effective treatment delivery that responds to community needs and to invest equally in prevention.

Work that we do outside the lab allows us to better understand what are sometimes described as the social determinants of health and a region's diversity, and in doing so deliver better health outcomes for a community.

Together, these approaches allow us to develop the best health policies and models of care needed for the future.

For example, when I first came to southwestern Sydney, there was a high rate of mothers with seizures after birth. Instead of looking to a new treatment or drug development to address this problem, our first port of call was to think about how to define the problem.

To answer this initial question, I gathered a team that included all sorts of clinicians and scientists, including midwives, nurses and doctors, working together with our researchers.

With expert input and a collaborative approach, we discovered that a solution could be found in ensuring a mother's blood pressure was under control in the lead-up to giving birth. Now, just because we had identified a solution, it didn't mean the entire problem was solved. This solution still had to be implemented.

For this to happen, we had to 'treat the system' and identify and work with all areas that were involved in providing medical care and support for a mother and a baby, and then engage them in the implementation and adoption of that approach. It was a slow and measured change – but now southwestern Sydney has the lowest rates of seizure in mothers in Australia. As this example highlights, sometimes redefining the problem – with a multidisciplinary team – and undertaking essential research is an excellent beginning. We then can influence the solutions and translate the results to a better health outcome.

Consideration of the holistic and personalised care of a patient also is vital as, no matter how good the drug development, the right treatments need to be given the right patient at the right time. Beyond this, it is important that the adoption of a personalised care approach doesn't diminish the level of care a patient gets – even when care is personalised, a patient should still have access to the latest, multi-million-dollar drug if that is what is required.

Bridging the gap between drug development and drug delivery is one specific example of disease prevention and treatment relying on partnerships, and critically working in these partnerships without losing sight of the patient at the centre of that care.

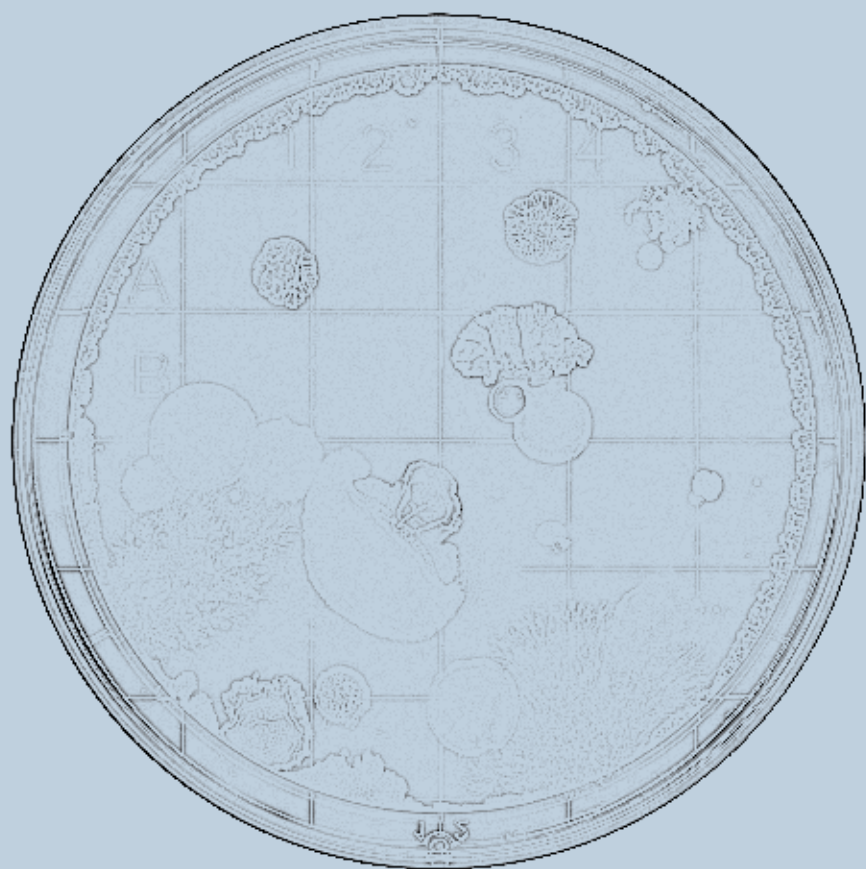
A good example of partnership with a hospital would see a team being able to work with researchers to determine what is needed for a particular patient, and it being delivered efficiently.

At Western Sydney University, the researchers and clinicians in the school of medicine have the privilege of working, for example, with our partners at the school of nursing and midwifery for a better understanding of patient care from those who are interacting with them the most.

There is a saying that goes 'you don't want to rescue from the fire', and in the context of health this means that prevention is always better than cure. And while we have become very good at 'rescuing from the fire' and addressing both physiological and systematic problems within the health system – this shift in our approach to research integrated care, one that incorporates partnerships, and a holistic and personalised approach to medicine, could not only lead to better health outcomes but also the prevention of disease in the first place.

Our quest for that holy grail, as researchers and clinicians, continues to be vigorously pursued.

Professor Annemarie Hennessy AM is Dean of the School of Medicine at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Australia on 31 October 2018 (www.theaustralian.com.au).





*We need to talk
about violence – to
men and boys*

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR MICHAEL SALTER

At least 62 women have been killed this year from violence, according to the Counting Dead Women project run by the feminist organisation Destroy The Joint. Eight more women have been murdered at this point in 2018 compared with 2017.

The people charged with their deaths include their husbands, ex-partners, sons, relatives, acquaintances, strangers. Sometimes their own children and grandchildren were killed with them.

These murders are the tip of the iceberg of men's violence against women. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports that one in three Australian women has experienced physical violence since the age of 15, and one in five Australian women has experienced sexual violence.

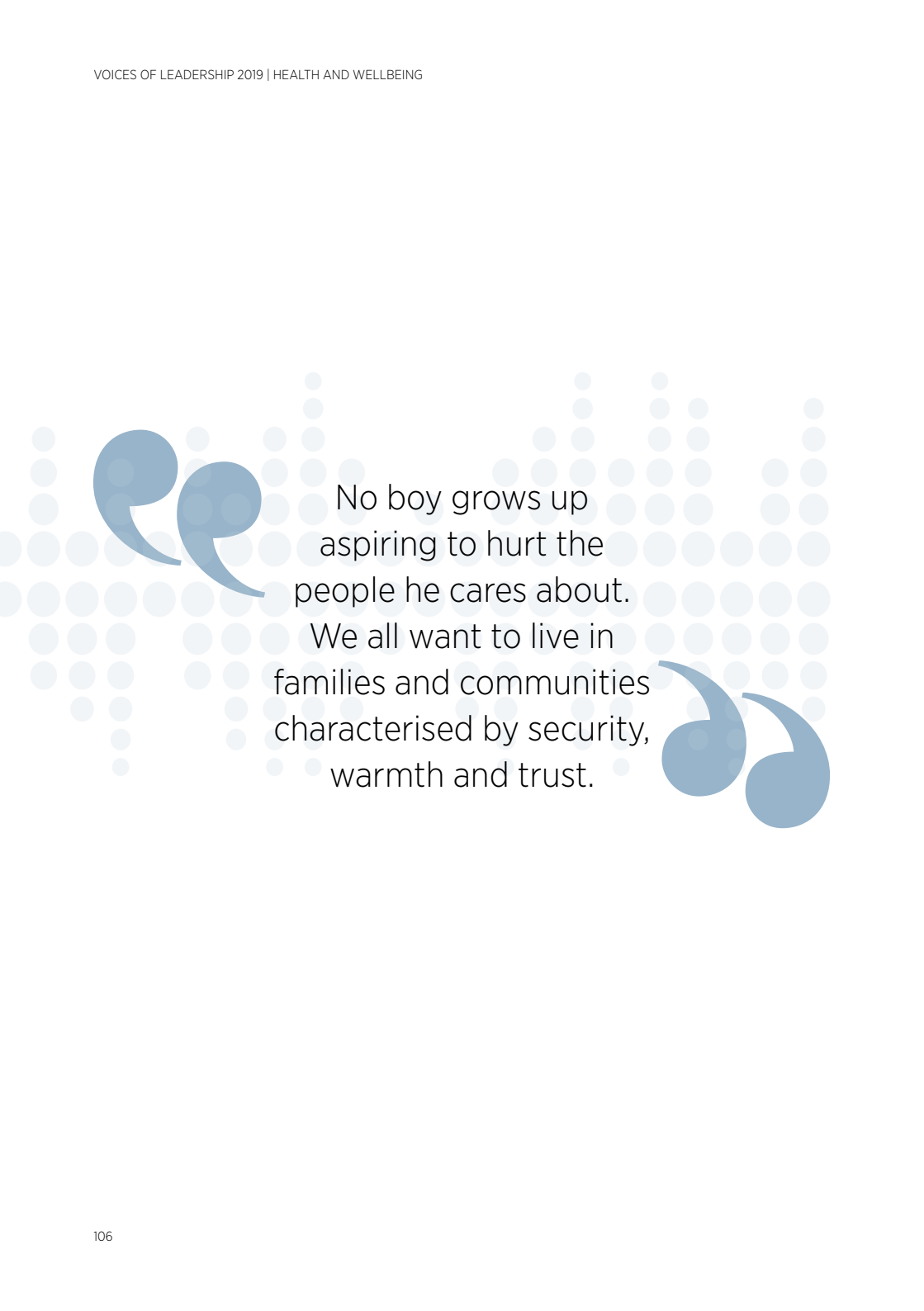
We have now passed the one-year anniversary of the #MeToo movement, which has highlighted the prevalence of sexual harassment in women's working lives. Over half of Australian women – about 5 million – have been sexually harassed. Faced with figures like this, it is no surprise that White Ribbon Day elicits a mixture of enthusiasm and scepticism. The White Ribbon campaign aims to mobilise men and boys against violence against women and to promote gender equality and healthy relationships.

At the grassroots, there is tremendous energy and interest in bringing violence against women to an end. At the same time, the grief and frustration caused by an epidemic of gendered violence can give rise to understandable feelings of hopelessness and pessimism. How, exactly, can men and boys prevent violence against women?

There are now well-articulated strategies explaining what men and boys can do to support prevention efforts. We can be conscious of the privileges that accrue to men in a sexist society; challenge misogynist behaviour; let go of gender stereotypes; intervene when you see a friend or stranger acting inappropriately; share the load of housework and child-rearing; champion gender equality at home, at work and in the community.

Prevention organisations such as Our Watch, White Ribbon and VicHealth are driving programs that aim to give men and boys the skills to create equitable relationships, communities and institutions. If we want to engage men and boys in this work, then we need a clear answer to a more fundamental question, namely: Why? Why should men and boys take action to prevent violence against women?

Simply telling men and boys that we have a 'responsibility' to end violence can be heard in many different, and not necessarily constructive, ways. For some men, the call to responsibility harks back to a sexist chivalry in which men are duty-bound to protect the 'weaker sex' or to 'respect' women as paragons of moral purity. These attitudes only reinforce the gender inequality that drives violence against women.



No boy grows up
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For others, this message generates a sense of guilt or collective shame that they reject with a turn to anti-feminist 'men's rights' discourse. Refusing to acknowledge the burden of men's violence on women, and instead insisting that men are the 'real victims' (of women, of feminism, of society), is one way of assuaging guilt. Guilt and shame are poor motivators for change.

A few years ago, I was speaking to an Aboriginal educator about his work with men's groups. I asked him how he got men to engage with the issue of violence against women. He said that he started every workshop by asking the men, 'What kind of father do you want to be? What kind of husband? What kind of man do you want to be?'

He went on to make a comment that has always stayed with me. I return to it again and again in my anti-violence work. He said, 'I've seen the hardest, hardest, most brutal-looking men reduced to tears in that very moment because everybody, I think, wants to be good.'

No boy grows up aspiring to hurt the people he cares about. We all want to live in families and communities characterised by security, warmth and trust. However, violence destroys these relationships.

Violence is not a strategy in which men win and women lose. With violence, everybody loses. The reason men and boys need to help prevent violence against women is very simple. For as long as this violence persists, it will continue to eat away at the relationships that sustain us and make our lives meaningful.

To end violence against women, we need to work with people where they are at: in communities and institutions where change is needed, and even wanted, but hasn't yet taken place.

This is challenging work, because it means engaging respectfully with diverse groups who have a range of views about gender relations and equality. However, it is by bringing men and boys into the conversation that we can understand what they want out of their lives, show how violence is an obstacle to achieving those dreams, and find non-violent solutions.

The best way that men can help prevent gendered violence is to collaborate with women to build families and communities we are proud to be part of: where violence and inequality has no place, and everyone wins.

Michael Salter is Associate Professor of Criminology at the School of Social Sciences and Psychology at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Sydney Morning Herald on 23 November 2018 (www.smh.com.au).



*Men can help
women deal with
their PMS*

PROFESSOR JANE USSHER

Many women experience a range of physical and emotional symptoms before they menstruate. This premenstrual stress, also commonly known as PMS, is often manifested by tension or anger in their relationships. Some women may feel so angry at their partner that they want to leave them.

In a study recently published in the journal PLoS ONE, we found a woman's partner can help decrease PMS symptoms, rather than exacerbating them. Our study showed couples counselling reduced symptoms of moderate to severe premenstrual symptoms and improved relationship satisfaction.

RELATIONSHIP PROBLEMS

Around 40% of women report moderate to severe premenstrual stress in the three to four days before their period. The most common symptoms are irritability, anger and depression, sometimes accompanied by tiredness, back pain and headaches.

These symptoms result from a combination of hormonal changes and life stress. Their severity is influenced by the coping strategies women adopt and their relationship context. Women who acknowledge premenstrual change, engage in self-care and ask for support are less likely to experience extreme premenstrual stress.

When we interview women who experience PMS, it's common to hear they are dissatisfied by elements of their relationship – whether it is the emotional support they receive at home, or the dishes left in the sink at the end of the day.

For women who suffer from moderate to severe premenstrual stress, these issues can be left to simmer for three weeks of every month, when they are able to be repressed or ignored. But during that one week, when women feel more sensitive or vulnerable, it can all become too much.

The pent-up anger and resentment finally reach boiling point and women feel they are no longer in control. This can lead to significant distress and relationship tension.

HOW THERAPY HELPS

We already know that one-on-one therapy can reduce symptoms of premenstrual stress. The focus is on helping the woman understand the origins of her symptoms and develop coping strategies. These might include taking time-out for self-care, avoiding conflict, expressing needs for support, and reducing life stress.

While medical treatment, such as antidepressant SSRIs (selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors), can be used to help women deal with premenstrual stress, psychological therapy is more effective in the long term. It also works in a self-help version, where women read about coping with PMS in a written manual, rather than talking to a therapist.

While therapy for premenstrual stress considers relationship issues, partners have generally not been directly involved in the sessions. This is a serious omission. Many men say they don't understand PMS. They want to support their partner but don't know what to do.

Others may avoid their partners when they have symptoms, which makes the woman feel rejected and makes the premenstrual stress worse.

Women in lesbian relationships have reported greater premenstrual support and understanding from their partner. This kind of support is associated with reduced symptoms and improved coping. Male partners who are supportive can have a similar positive effect.

COUPLES THERAPY EVEN BETTER

In our latest study, we compared the impacts of one-on-one and couples therapy for premenstrual distress with a control group of people on the wait list for therapy. The results indicate couple-based therapy was the most effective in improving relationships and alleviating premenstrual distress.

The study, which lasted for three years, involved 83 women who suffered from moderate to severe PMS. They were randomly divided into three groups: a one-on-one therapy group, a couples therapy group and a waiting list group. Most (95%) were in heterosexual relationships.

Women in the two therapy groups reported lower premenstrual symptoms, emotional reactions and premenstrual distress, in comparison to the wait-list control group. This confirms therapy is effective, regardless of the type.

However, the women in the couples therapy group had significantly better behavioural coping strategies than those in the one-on-one therapy and wait-list control groups. In the couples therapy group, 58% of women reported increased self-care and coping. This compared to 26% in the one-on-one, and 9% in the wait-list group.

Most women in the couples therapy group (57%) reported an improved relationship with their partner. This was compared with 26% in the one-on-one therapy group and 5% of the wait-list reporting improvement.

In the couples therapy group, 84% of women reported increased partner awareness and understanding of PMS, compared with 39% in the one-on-one therapy group and 19% in the wait-list group.

MEN CAN BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Following therapy sessions, women report they are less likely to 'lose control' when expressing their feelings during times of PMS. They have increased awareness of the potential for relationship

conflict; describe relationship tension as less problematic; and are more likely to talk to their partner about PMS and ask for support.

These improvements were evident in both therapy groups in our study. This suggests that even if women do therapy without their partner, it can still have a positive impact. The women will still learn self-care and coping strategies, develop a better understanding of PMS, and go home and tell their partner about the experiences in therapy.

However, the results of this study clearly indicate that the greatest positive impact is seen when a woman's partner participates in the therapy sessions as well. So men may feel maligned by being 'blamed' for PMS. But they can be part of the solution, rather than the cause of the problem.

Professor Jane Ussher is Professor of Women's Health Psychology at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in *The Conversation* on 1 May 2017 (www.theconversation.com/au).



The beauty myth 3.0

HELEN BARCHAM

Every work morning, as I wait to board my bus from Parramatta station to the Western Sydney University campus, I find myself meditating on the in-your-face advertisement plastered on the window of the beauty clinic across the street.

The advertisement is not remarkable in the context of today's advertising culture, but it is nevertheless alluring. It features several attractive, happy and confident-seeming women (and one man) alongside the text, 'What's your You Ness?'

This image exemplifies beautifully the paradox of today's beauty industry.

The clinic promises to respect and amplify women's 'youness' – which they define as 'what makes you, well... you'. And yet, this promise is sold to women through a smorgasbord of products and services that, paradoxically, orient women's bodies and psyches towards embodying the cultural 'beauty' ideal.

According to its website, the clinic promises to hit 'reverse on sagging skin' through skin tightening treatments; 'leave others to guess' about one's age through cosmetic injectables; and promises women they'll be 'ready at a moment's notice' through laser hair removal. Ultimately, the promotion of these beauty regimes tells us that youthful or youth-like, thin and hairless bodies are the cultural ideal to which women should aspire. 'Youness', then, is a false economy, re-routed to 'sameness'.

PAIN AND SUFFERING IS THE PRICE TO PAY FOR LOOKING AND FEELING GOOD

In order to acquire the happiness and confidence of the models in the advertisements, women are, ironically, first required to endure pain and suffering in the form of endless laser treatments, surgical needles, chemical peels, injections, and take-home creams, among other body work.

Pain and suffering, we are told in today's therapeutic society, is a necessary requirement of actively 'looking after oneself'. As the adage goes, 'no pain, no gain'.

This suffering is no mere coincidence or by-product, but a politically organised normalising apparatus, strategically pressed upon women to render them 'passive... controllable and near completely docile' according to its critics. It assembles them as masochists who will spend endless time, money and energy pursuing the beautiful life.

TECHNOLOGIES OF THE SELF

With the rapid advancement of technology and its insinuation into everyday life, the beauty industry is able to create new solutions as quickly as it's able to create new flaws. The terms of reference for looking and feeling beautiful are constantly being modified and refashioned.

The impermanence and elusiveness of the 'goal posts' helps inscribe women deeper into the self-perpetuating cycle of affective and aesthetic labour. Perfection, then, becomes ontologically untenable. Only failure to achieve perfection is real. And, with 'failed bodies', come new cycles of pain and suffering.

Today's beauty regimes – some of which are legally required to be overseen by doctors and nurses – are conveniently available at most local shopping centres through 'shop now and pay later' arrangements. The industry is determined to broaden the pool of consumers and present the cultural ideal as within arms-reach of all.

The industry wants to naturalise beauty regimes so that its power and influence is camouflaged in everyday life.

CHARISMATIC CAPITALISM

The beauty industry's endorsement of cultural ideals of perfect womanhood are hardly new. But the way in which it has co-opted a discourse of care is. It is refashioning itself from being an industry long-accused of serving patriarchal ends to an altruistic force helping women to 'be the best versions of themselves'.

This refashioning helps it to remain culturally relevant while disguising the gendered normalisation that underpins it.

Take, for example, charismatic Australian 'wellness coach' Ashy Bines, who boasts a Facebook community of close to four million people, most of whom are women. Her business model appears to lean heavily on helping women get thinner through diet supplements, fitness and meal regimes, and memberships of her 'Transformation Centre'. These selling pursuits are funnelled through the language of care and female empowerment.

For example, her manifesto states that she is fostering 'a community of positive and proactive women who strive to be their best'. This benevolent statement is coupled with 'inspirational' images of female solidarity and empowerment.

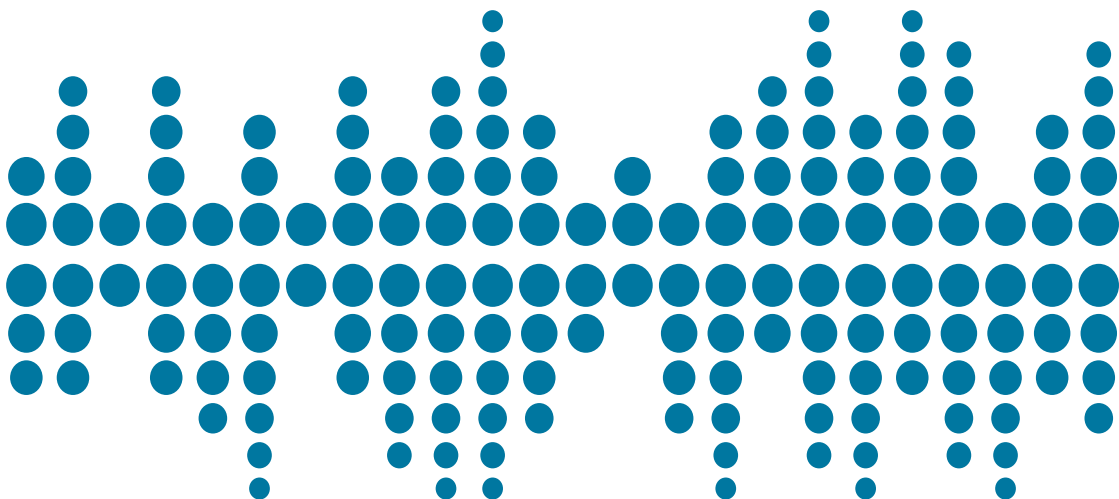
Through this discourse of care, Bines is presented as an expert putting her genuine care for the health and happiness of the women she serves first. But through this articulation, she strategically distances herself from the wider beauty industry and seeks to evade associated claims of profiting and monetizing women's insecurities.

Her business model incorporates what we might call 'charismatic capitalism'. This concept includes techniques whereby selling masquerades as altruistic service and profit orientation is submerged. This kind of selling helps many in the beauty industry transform selling into nurturing functions such as 'teaching' and 'sharing', which helps to obscure and conceal the repressive gendered body-policing that sits at the core of their offerings.

For many women, it's becoming increasingly difficult to untangle products and services that might enable them to ethically self-care from an industry that thrives on promoting culturally limited ideals around beauty and desirability.

But, as political theorist Claudia Leeb reminds us, suffering is the physical moment when the negative conditions of capitalism are both felt and exposed. And precisely the moment when transformative agency becomes necessary and possible.

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Society & Culture



Generations of knowledge

AUNTY MAE ROBINSON

Being a University of Western Sydney Aboriginal Councillor and Elder on Campus is such an important role. I talk to the young Aboriginal people and they ask me things, lecturers will also come and ask questions. We carry our own cultural knowledge. I've walked the history of Aboriginal life, and been through the history of an Aboriginal person living in Australia and I'm passing that on. That's what I like about what the University of Western Sydney is doing, bringing the knowledge of Aboriginal people to the learning space. I like seeing young men and women not only just learning but having the knowledge of Aboriginal history, Australian history, and they're all equal.

My mob is very matriarchal, where I come from. My mum is from the south coast and comes from Batemans Bay. Her mob is Yuin, which is an important part of who I am, and my dad is Kamilaroi, that's inland.

My mum was one of the Stolen Generation. She was placed into Cootamundra girls' home, and from there she went out to work. She worked at Toomelah Aboriginal Mission in Moree and that's where she met and married my father. It wasn't a happy marriage and a while later the managers of Toomelah were transferring themselves and took my mother and me with them to Burnt Bridge Mission, and that's where I grew up. I'm also one of those people who got taken away, by the Welfare Department. They stepped into places where they shouldn't have, in my opinion. When I was in primary school, I went to Burnt Bridge public school which was all Aboriginal students. I always tell people I went to a very private school, one hundred percent Aboriginal students. A lot of us from there were very successful at high school: I won a Commonwealth bursary – a Koori girl on a bursary! And yet they took me away from Mum.

My mum divorced and married into the Archibald clan, a very nice gentleman indeed, and a nice man to know as a father. We had a corrugated iron house, Mum and my stepfather, whom I call Dad. Burnt Bridge was a place of change for Aboriginal people around the whole of Macleay Valley because people like Mum and all the ladies at Burnt Bridge formed their own version of the CWA in opposition to the established Country Women's Association in town. We had Burnt Bridge Marching Girls Association and we used to go to those sort of things and we competed. It was a place where people started to change for the better.

Now, Kempsey was different. Country towns could be very racist places and we weren't allowed to go to the swimming pool. These were the sort of things that we had to put up with. If you went to the movies there you got roped off down the front. So the CWA Aboriginal women at Burnt Bridge organised our own movie shows in our own hall and all the Aboriginal people in the area came. That's when they realised in Kempsey that we not only paid a lot of money to see movies we also spent money on food and chips. Within the month, they dropped the rope, they dropped that

big Abo line, right down. The power of the women and men who were in those committees, their courage and cleverness in what they did, was great. All of a sudden, the Kempsey movie theatre, and lots of other places, realised we wouldn't be treated like that anymore.

I enjoyed going to high school when I was taken away to Cootamundra. I got my intermediate certificate while I was there, and I wanted to go into Year 12 but they said I didn't have the capacity to do it. Years later I received an honorary doctorate, so there you are. But the thing is, I was shocked that the teacher said that. Anyway, I got placed working for a doctor and his wife as their nanny and the doctor encouraged me to go to TAFE, which I did, where I learned typing, business principles and bookkeeping. I really did like learning. It was just something that I liked doing. After that I moved home to Kempsey and worked at Nestle. A couple of years later I met a man and married him and we've been together for over fifty years, and have three sons and five grandchildren. My husband is of English descent, I love him because of who he is, he knows he married into a very, very posh clan.

It was when we came back to Sydney that I started to study to be a teacher. I was watching television one day and I saw a mature age student graduating from Sydney Uni. I always wanted to be a teacher, so the next day I said to my husband, 'I want to be a teacher. You'll have to look after the family, I want to go studying'. So that's what I did. I went to Milperra CAE, which is now the University of Western Sydney Bankstown campus, and I graduated as a primary trained teacher. I was the first Aboriginal person to graduate from Milperra College. Dr David Barr, who was the principal of the CAE, sent me a letter and invited me to be on the council of the Milperra CAE, which was the beginning of my long association with the University.

Years ago when I was in primary school at Burnt Bridge I asked this teacher, 'Can Aboriginal people be teachers?' He said, 'Why are you asking?' I said, 'Well, I wouldn't mind being one'. He just turned around to me and said, 'Mavis, you can do whatever you like'. I even said that when I received my honorary doctorate because it was so important to me that I had a teacher who was honest with you. A lot of young Aboriginal men and women who left Burnt Bridge went onto bigger and better things. Some of them have become solicitors, some of them have become lecturers. They just knew that there was something out there, and I still put it down to the teachers. I just find that you have to be an agent of change. I'm not only an Aboriginal person, I'm a female Aboriginal person who has been an agent of change because I believe we need to realise all those potentials in people. Women can change things when they need to – my mother taught me that.

My marriage has not interfered with my culture. It's important to understand that just because we have differences in culture we don't have differences because we are a man and a woman who are very much in love. And love is colour blind. So I have been able to hold positions with the Department of Education, been an Aboriginal education consultant, consultant with disadvantaged schools, consultant in multicultural education. I have helped develop the Aboriginal education policy. I've loved what I've done. I always felt that I wanted to be an agent of change, and I've been able to do that.

Now I'm a University of Western Sydney Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councillor and Elder on Campus. It's such an important role I'm surprised that other cultures haven't done it. I'm an Aboriginal person and I can talk to the young Aboriginal people who are attending. Students come to know me, they come up and ask me things. Lecturers will also come and ask questions. We give that support to the Aboriginal students but we don't have to do it just for Aboriginal people. We carry our own cultural knowledge and which is passed down to us over the years. I've walked the history of Aboriginal life, and to be seventy-one years of age you know that you have been through racism, you know that you have been through the history of an Aboriginal person living in Australia, but you also know that you have to respect others, that respect is shown. I'm passing that on.

There are things that Aboriginals know that we could all learn from. That's what I like about what the University of Western Sydney is doing, what Melissa Williams (Director, Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment and Engagement) is doing, bringing the knowledge of Aboriginal people to the learning space, to the University. I'm not only carrying my knowledge but also carrying who I am, and I'm proud of that. I have developed a connection to UWS. I like seeing young men and women, Australians, not only just learning about being a doctor but learning to be a doctor and working with people of different cultures, not just being a teacher but having knowledge of Aboriginal history, Australian history and they're all equal together.

Aunty Mae (Mavis) Robinson, is a descendant of the Yuin and Kamilaroi people and is a Western Sydney University Aboriginal Councillor and Elder. She is also a recipient of an Honorary Doctorate from Western Sydney University.

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Songlines: our languages matter symposium

PROFESSOR SCOTT HOLMES

The richness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages is widely known – even if, as one academic recently observed in *The Conversation*, most Anglo-Australians would struggle to name one of them. And we rarely hear them spoken. When many of us do encounter Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages it is most likely to be in circumstances that are either popular or ceremonial: on TV or during a Welcome to Country, for instance. These contexts are, for people with no Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background like me, familiar and comfortable.

Recently, Mununjali poet Ellen van Neerven was the target of online abuse after one of her poems, *Mango*, appeared in a HSC exam. The question asked in the exam was ‘Explain how the poem conveys the delight of discovery’. The poem was in English. There was nothing in the poem concerning Aboriginal subject matter. However, students on the HSC Discussion Group Facebook page began to connect their failure to understand the poem with the Aboriginal identity of the author. Van Neerven was contacted with threatening messages; people posted racially offensive images.

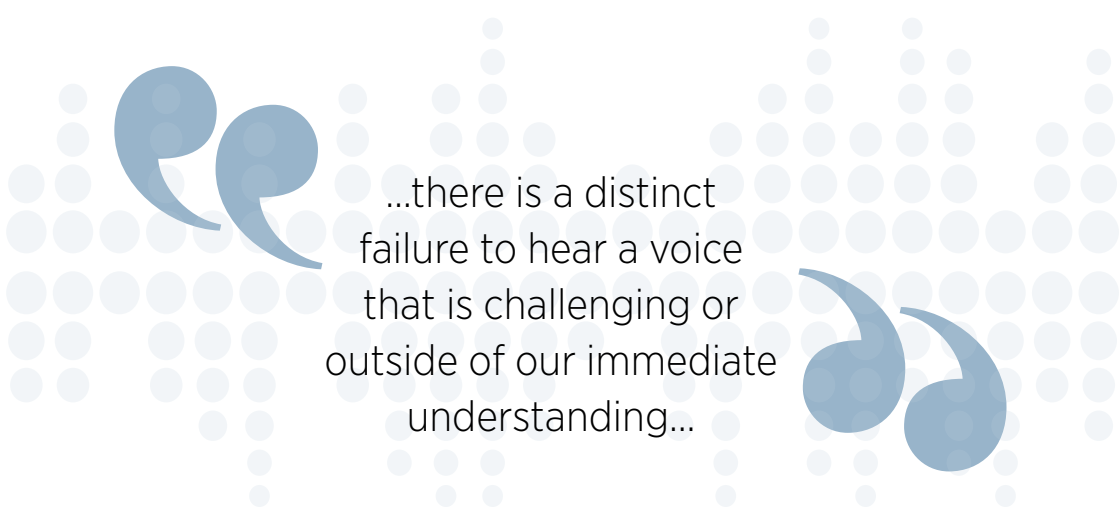
Many of the students involved have come forward since the media outcry saying that they were not motivated by race. It was just a joke. It got out of hand. Those who were upset at the tone of the students’ frustration with the poem, they said, just didn’t get the context.

While von Neerven’s experience was not one directly related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language, it is one in which there is a distinct failure to hear a voice that is challenging or outside of our immediate understanding. The result was too familiar: discomfort and misunderstanding led to a racist reassertion of boundaries rather than an attempt to better understand what challenges us. We reassert context to excuse a failure to understand another’s. Difference is fine – so long as it doesn’t threaten us too much.

I want to take the brief opportunity I have today to introduce one of many contexts for the Symposium: the place of understanding in research.

In research we approach problems from a disciplinary perspective. I am a behavioural economist. I tend to approach a question by asking what people’s goals and aspirations are; what factors drive people to make the choices they make. If I can understand that, then I can come up with answers to questions like what policy framework might support people to improve their business; how will people react if a competitor moved in down the road?

But I know that my approach is just one amongst many. The world doesn’t neatly align with the disciplines through which academics approach it. There are equally useful ways to approach the issues I research both within academia and outside it. Encountering these approaches in different



...there is a distinct
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contexts has resulted in work that has been stimulating for me – even if it has been challenging to move beyond my own context and training.

The purpose of research is close to the question that frustrated those HSC students who reacted to Neerven's poem: to encounter difference and develop new understandings of complex problems; to delight in discovery. Our contexts and disciplinary backgrounds are just starting points for encounters with other contexts and backgrounds.

In research administration we call this interdisciplinary research. Really, it's just listening patiently and trying to understand each other. Research 'with', not 'on', needs to be grounded by the ability to hear one another. It isn't surprising to me that this Symposium of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research captures the broadest range of disciplines of any event hosted by Western Sydney University. Respectful exchange, careful attention, and collaboration are crucial to the best Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research – and exemplified in the papers you will hear today.

Given that the parliament still debates what constitutes competency in English such that one might be allowed to migrate to Australia, it is worthwhile reflecting on the fact that English was imported to Australia. At least 250 languages preceded it. English itself is a grab bag of old and new transfers from other languages, the product of other histories and cultures. Language is a point of cultural intersection at the same time as it can be an instrument used to reinstitute old boundaries and repeat old abuses. It's our job, as academics, to make sure we cross those boundaries.

Professor Scott Holmes is Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor at Western Sydney University. This speech was originally delivered by Professor Holmes at the Our Languages Matter Symposium at Western Sydney University on 23 October 2018.



Powerhouse stoush adds more fuel to cultural fire

DR ANDY MARKS

Plumes of smoke swirling across backyard fences were a common Saturday morning sight across Sydney 30 to 40 years ago. That, and the echo of copious swearing that accompanied failed mower starts.

'Yep. That can go in, mate,' my grandfather would say when I held up almost any object for his final pre-fire inspection. Combustibility was the only entry criteria at the flaming altar of the 44-gallon drum. That, and the prevailing wind direction in relation to my grandmother's washing.

So it was with a tear of nostalgia – just from the smoke mind you – that I encountered the news that western Sydney might, just might be getting a brand new mega incinerator built at Eastern Creek.

Moving the Powerhouse Museum to Parramatta has been called an act of 'cultural vandalism'. Sure, what do we know about art out West. We'd probably burn it, right? Bit risky. Best keep the good china in town, away from the savages.

Building us an incinerator, though. That's different. That's something that could really bring us together.

Dementia meant pop had to go into a home in 1988. No more burn-offs. The same year, the Powerhouse moved into its current Ultimo site. Before that it had been in four or five other locations about town. Quite the traveller. No howls of protest at those moves though.

As a kid growing up in Western Sydney, the biggest act of 'cultural vandalism' was that which was inflicted on the region by the stark absence of arts and cultural institutions. That's changing, mostly on the back of the West's own energy and commitment to local galleries, theatre companies, poetry slam and the digital arts.

Despite the groundswell, Australia's fastest growing and most populous region still attracts only about 5 per cent of state government arts funding and 1 per cent of available federal funds.

Critics of the Powerhouse move or other measures to redress the astounding level of arts investment inequity across Greater Sydney might want to consider the potential going up in smoke out West.

The next generation of some of Australia's most vibrant and internationally engaged artists will rise from the West. If we are to make the most of their wonderful infusion of creativity, then we need to ensure they have more than an incinerator for inspiration.

Dr Andy Marks is Assistant Vice-Chancellor at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Sydney Morning Herald on 16 May 2018 (www.smh.com.au).



*Reimagining
Parramatta: a
place to discover
Australia's many
stories*

DR SARAH BARNES AND DR PHILLIP MAR

There are jackhammers everywhere. A new Parramatta is emerging out of the rubble, seeking to make real its tag line: ‘Australia’s next great city’. Thickets of new residential and commercial towers are rising – testament to the city’s ferocious ambition – overshadowing what remains of the squat, 1970s office blocks built during Parramatta’s previous development boom.

There are many today who loudly proclaim Parramatta’s centrality to the story of Sydney. Mike Baird, when premier of NSW in 2015, called Parramatta nothing less than ‘the infrastructure capital of the world’, its fortunes tied closely to those of the state and the nation. The west is booming, as the New South Wales government releases huge tracts of land in the north-west and south-west of Sydney for development, and developers are cashing in on Parramatta’s rise.

National Australia Bank is setting up its new headquarters at the A\$2 billion development that is Parramatta Square. A new light rail network is on the way. Western Sydney University has completed its A\$220.5 million high-rise campus. A new A\$1 billion health precinct at Westmead is coming.

So, Parramatta is a city on the make. And the numbers tell us why. The NSW government’s population projections show Greater Sydney growing by more than 1.5 million people over the next two decades. The City of Parramatta’s population is forecast to grow by over 75,000 over the next decade alone.

Presented as objective fact, too often it’s forgotten that such numbers are primarily expressions not of a certain future but of a recent past, projected forward in time. Today’s population projections are comprised, to no small extent, by yesterday’s migration policies. They are not an inevitable future, but an intentional one, a story about where we want to go.

Western Sydney attracts a high proportion of Australia’s migrants. Parramatta, in particular, is a city being radically reshaped to meet the volume of demand projected off the back of this recent, record-breaking intake. Between the 2001 and 2016 census dates, the city welcomed almost 20,000 more Indian-born residents and 16,000 Chinese-born arrivals.

Over the same period, the number of Parramatta’s Australian-born grew by just 6,000. Today, the proportion of Parramatta’s population that identifies as Australian by ancestry is just 13%, compared to 23% for Australia as a whole.

Clearly, Parramatta’s A\$10 billion transformation is preparing the city for a future that will be culturally distinct from its past. Australia’s next great city is emerging as a beacon of our nation’s hopeful, cosmopolitan future, built on growth, multiplied. But what kind of city will it be?

WHAT MAKES A CITY

A city, after all, is more than the sum of its speculative real estate investments and projected demand. Cities, as Leonie Sandercock reflected in her essay *Practicing Utopia*, are 'neither organisms nor machines. They are flesh and stone intertwined. They are 'built thought'.'

Surely, to be great a city must capture our imaginations. It must offer, all at once, a place to get lost in and a place in which to belong. In great cities we seek both refuge in the crowd and a sense of connection with something bigger than our selves.

The greatest cities of the world also immerse us in experiential encounters with the archaeology of other eras. They are storied landscapes. Walking through these cities, we quite naturally absorb the daily integration of archaic infrastructures – horse troughs, cobblestones, ceramic piping – with the computationally connected services of our emergent present.

It is through the remnant traces of past eras that we can imagine a sense of physical connection with those who came before us. We hear a lot about the challenges that population growth brings to Australian cities. Mostly, we are conditioned to thinking of these challenges as infrastructural, or monetary.

But as our new, denser urban forms are rapidly realised, with forests of cranes and thickets of high-rise apartments replacing the sleepy suburbs that once represented the Australian dream, we're also going to need to rebuild, as it were, the narratives of place and of belonging that define our cities.

As Robert Hughes once said, delivering a National Trust lecture in 1998 on Australia's forgotten histories:

An urban culture that predicates itself chiefly on an obsession with development is not worth having. A city needs deep memory, without which it becomes merely a stage set.

It is the accumulation of stories and experiences inscribed in built form that gives a place its distinct identity. Such stories are not only for the culturally sensitive: they drive real-estate investment too. When a city is rebuilt from scratch, we risk losing these stories and connections.

Australian cities have never been particularly good at celebrating the stories of people and place that have shaped them over time. Is this still true? More and more, our planners, designers, architects and developers seek to use the resources of the past to cultivate a contemporary sense of place. Decades of urban sprawl and featureless, automobile-dependent suburban landscapes have led to a renewed push for the creation of 'liveable' urban identities that celebrate place and community.

The art of city building is now the art of place-making. In this context, local heritage becomes an asset; an important contributor to both economic and cultural vitality. You can see this in the prices paid for the converted warehouse buildings and sugar mills dotted across the suburban landscape.

So, if it's going to be Australia's next great city, the radical rebuilding of Parramatta is also an opportunity to ask questions about how we make use of the past as a resource for building the future.

PARRAMATTA – A GATHERING PLACE

So often celebrated within historical accounts as the 'cradle of the colony', Parramatta's history has been synonymous with the story of Australia's beginnings as a nation.

This, after all, is where Australia's identity as an agricultural nation was first forged. Having followed Arthur Phillip down the river in search of arable land, it is where early convicts successfully proved not only the economic viability of the fledgling colony, but their worthiness as free citizens. It is likewise in Parramatta that the British government first tested its limits of moral and administrative governance in its new colony through the building of not only the first Government House, but also of prisons, factories, asylums and 'native institutions'.

This heroic story about Parramatta's colonial foundations continues to be told through sites like Experiment Farm, the Parramatta Female Factory and the many other colonial administration buildings that remain. You walk into the Parramatta Heritage Centre and you will learn much about this story. And yet, cleaving to the notion of European founding, somehow standing in for the beginning of time, has in turn obscured other narratives.

Parramatta's founding is a big story, particularly when it helps forge the identity of Australia as a largely Europeanised nation. But the cradle story has also contributed to a certain blindness about the experiences of people in Parramatta since the days of Phillip and his men. It excludes millennia of Aboriginal occupation, their custodianship of the environment and continuing urban presence, as well as the great diversity of people who have arrived here from nations across the globe.

Rich as it is, Parramatta's story requires considerable rethinking and public conversation in order to bring it into a stronger relation with the present. As Australia's next great city appears in view, this dialogue is beginning to happen, and new evidence is being found within the rubble. A cultural plan for the new CBD released by the City of Parramatta in 2017 acknowledges that Parramatta 'always was, always will be, a gathering place'.

An archaeological analysis recently undertaken by Comber Consultants as part of the redevelopment of Parramatta Square has tentatively found the area may have been used as a gathering place for at least some 5,000 years. Such discoveries prompt a reassessment of the nature and experience of early interactions between settlers and Aboriginal peoples.

This gathering place likewise witnessed the ‘Battle of Parramatta’ in 1797, when a hundred Aboriginal warriors led by Pemulwuy arrived in formation down George Street. They were fighting against the many injustices inflicted upon them by the new arrivals. Pemulwuy would be shot, his warriors dispersed.

A RICH HISTORY

The City of Parramatta commissioned us in 2017 to offer an account of Parramatta’s many ‘waves of migration’, a project inspired by this revived notion of Parramatta as a gathering place. We found that not all the convicts who first settled here were European. Africans and Indians were among the first convicts.

The different nationalities caught up in the convict system reflected a number of diverse political struggles being fought at the time of European arrival in Sydney. Political activists from around the world included the Scottish ‘martyrs’ of 1794 and 1795, Irish rebels of 1798 and 1803, trade unionists and insurrectionists from Canada, military prisoners from India and rebellious slaves from the West Indies.

In the early years of Parramatta’s settlement there are records of the presence of various Maori, Afro-Americans, Indian, Chinese, Maltese and others. There is a long association in Parramatta with Maori connecting to the colony through trade, shipping, whaling and missionary activity.

Parramatta was also central, we found, to the story of Australia’s embrace of immigration after the second world war. The formation of a federal department for immigration after the war, and massive growth of European migration from the late 1940s through the 1960s, would alter the fabric of Australian life in decisive ways.

Parramatta, where experiments in European food production were first tried and tested, is also where our early experiments in migrant support took place. It was here that many new arrivals from war-torn Europe first settled. An American naval base hospital, established in Granville Park in 1942, was used after 1945 as one of the first hostels for migrants. Other migrant hostels were located in nearby Ermington, Dundas and Villawood to accommodate displaced persons and recent migrants.

We saw that over the 20th century processes of ‘chain migration’ would shape Parramatta fundamentally. Chain migration – the term used to describe how migrants follow others from their town to a new host destination – was most strongly practised by Lebanese and Greek communities.

We learned of the significance of two women from the Lebanese village of Kfarsghab, Rosie Broheen and Zahra Youssef Assad Rizk, who were among the first to have settled in Parramatta, after arriving in Australia in the late 1890s. Since their arrival, families from the Kfarsghab village continued to migrate to Parramatta, a process that intensified as part of the post-war wave of migration to Sydney. Chain migration was actively supported by Australian migration policy at this time, which placed strong emphasis on family reunion.

By 2008, an estimated 10,000 people in Parramatta could trace their ancestry to the village of Kfarsghab. Indeed, the importance of Parramatta to this community was commemorated when the main street of the village in Lebanon was renamed Parramatta Road. Another Lebanese village of importance to Parramatta is the Maronite village of Hadchit in northern Lebanon. There are now about 500 Hadchiti households in areas such as Westmead and Harris Park.

We found great gaps in knowledge about the continued presence of Aboriginal people after the initial years of contact (gaps that are beginning to be filled). One woman we spoke to said she was sick of hearing about 'her culture' being thousands of years old while not being listened to in the present.

And so, while we did gather together diverse stories of migration and movement in and around Parramatta – sometimes free movements, some under adverse circumstances – what was ever-present was the invisibility of lives not previously deemed of any real importance to the evolving story of Parramatta and its role in accommodating different ideas about Australia's place in the world.

KEEPING PLACE

In commissioning our research, the City of Parramatta Council has sought to fill some of the gaps in its historical knowledge of migration impacts on the city. It plans to acknowledge and celebrate these many experiences – of both gathering and dispersal – through interpretive artworks within new developments like Parramatta Square. There are hopes for a 'Keeping Place' that acknowledges stories of Indigenous lives, including their dispossession.

Through ongoing practices of interpretation, documentation and story-telling, as well as continuing dialogue about the most appropriate future uses of significant historical sites such as Parramatta Park and the Parramatta Female Factory, we hope Australia's next great city can also be a place where new cultural imaginaries of place can be celebrated. Looking beyond the exaggerated localism of much local history and the 'foundational narrative' of colonial beginnings, Parramatta is a place where many different versions of becoming Australian can be cultivated and explored.

Dr Sarah Barnes is Engaged Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University. Dr Phillip Mar is Research Associate at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in *The Conversation* on 30 July 2018 (www.theconversation.com/au).



Confronting the return of race politics

DR TIM SOUTPHOMMASANE

I am honoured to be with you this evening, and can think of no more fitting place to give what is my final address before I conclude my term as Race Discrimination Commissioner. Because, as I reflect on the state of our race relations and our society's efforts to combat racism, it is clear that so much of that bears the imprint of the Whitlam Government. It is equally clear that much of the future chapters of Australian multiculturalism and racial equality will be written here in Western Sydney.

I am a proud son of Sydney's west. When my family moved here from France in 1985, it was in the southwest suburbs of Sydney where we settled. My childhood was spent growing up in Canley Vale and Bonnyrigg Heights. I went to school in Canley Vale and Glenfield.

And the western Sydney I grew up in was the land of Whitlam. I studied at the E.G. Whitlam Library in Cabramatta. My local swimming pool was at the Whitlam Leisure Centre in Liverpool. My junior Mt Pritchard cricket team played at Whitlam Park in Heckenberg. In a part of Sydney that was, and remains, the heartland of multicultural Australia, it was only appropriate that the children of migrants would grow up familiar with the prime minister whose government laid the foundations for racial equality.

The 1980s were an interesting time for a family from an Asian background to arrive in this country. That decade saw the first challenges to Australia's official multiculturalism and non-discriminatory immigration policy. A national debate about Asian immigration had erupted. Prominent historian Geoffrey Blainey warned that migrants were conducting a colonisation of the country, which would result in us fracturing into a 'nation of tribes'. Following Blainey, then federal opposition leader John Howard argued that the levels of Asian immigration could not be absorbed by Australian society.

Then came the 1990s. Pauline Hanson was elected to the federal parliament as the Member for Oxley. Her message: Australia was in danger of being swamped by Asians. In Hanson's words, these were people who 'have their own culture and religion, form ghettos and do not assimilate'.

I recall my family speaking about those debates. These were debates that cut to the core of who we were. As migrants, my family and I came to this country with a desire to be part of Australia – not to colonise it. Within three years of arriving here, we had all naturalised as citizens. We were proud to be Australians. But clearly there were times when we were made to feel we may not belong, when we were told by some that they would never accept us as truly Australian.

Our society got through those debates of the 1980s and 1990s. Twenty years ago, in 1988, the Asian immigration debate was resolved when the Commonwealth Parliament affirmed Australia's commitment to a racially non-discriminatory immigration program – with a number of Liberal members crossing the floor to support it. As for Hansonism, the threat it posed seemed to disappear when Pauline Hanson's One Nation party famously imploded.

Australia today has good reason to boast that it is one of the most successful multicultural societies in the world. And yet, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Our public discourse rehearses many of those concerns that we seemed to have dealt with two and three decades ago. We are again grappling with questions about race, immigration and multiculturalism.

Tonight, I would like to reflect on these public debates and the resurgent threats posed by racism. The story of our multiculturalism is one of success. But while we can be proud of our multiculturalism, the success is not yet complete. As citizens, we have every reason to remain vigilant.

THE RETURN OF RACE POLITICS

We must remain vigilant because race politics is back. I take no pleasure in saying this but, right now, it feels like there has never been a more exciting time to be a dog-whistling politician or race-baiting commentator in Australia. Five years ago, I wouldn't have said it was likely that we would see the resurgence of far-right politics. I wouldn't have expected that the biggest threats to racial harmony would come from within our parliaments and from sections of our media. Yet here we are.

In one sense, race and racism have never gone away. This is the paradox of our multiculturalism: for all we have been transformed into a diverse and vibrant nation, racism remains alive in our society, and not only as a vestige of an old bigotry and chauvinism.

Maybe it's too much to expect that racism could ever be purged. Prejudice and discrimination are like the permanent stains of our humanity, inconvenient reminders of our incurable imperfection.

Here are the facts on what racism looks like in Australia. According to the Scanlon Foundation's Mapping Social Cohesion Survey in 2017, about 20 per cent of people have experienced discrimination during the past 12 months.

We know that those from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds experience racism at much higher rates. Reconciliation Australia's Barometer survey of 2016 found that 46 per cent of Indigenous people experienced racism during the past six months. Moreover, Indigenous people encounter institutional racism in a way very different to other groups – what many would describe as a legacy of colonial racism.

We know that those from non-English speaking backgrounds also experience racial or religious discrimination at higher rates. The Scanlon Foundation's research highlights that 77 per cent of people from African backgrounds say they have experienced discrimination. About 34 per cent of those from a non-English-speaking background have experienced discrimination.

That racism continues with such prevalence is enough to cause concern. More concerning is the mixing of race and politics. It is clear that politicians are enthusiastically seeking debates about immigration, multiculturalism and crime. This is dangerous territory. When politicians resort to using race in advancing their agendas, they inevitably excite racial anxiety and stir up social division. They end up damaging our racial tolerance and multicultural harmony.

Just as there was in the 1980s and 1990s, there is panic about migrants and minorities. Since the start of this year, media and political concern about a so-called African gangs crisis in Melbourne has grown feverish. According to some, Melburnians are now afraid to go out for dinner because of rampant African youth crime. Last month, the Prime Minister declared there was 'real concern' about 'Sudanese gangs'. The Liberal state opposition in Victoria has distributed pamphlets claiming it would 'stop gangs hunting in packs', featuring a shadowy photograph of hooded dark-skinned youths.

There is a return, too, of old debates about multiculturalism. In a speech last month in London, Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs Alan Tudge warned that Australia was veering towards a 'European separatist multicultural model'. Other ministers have spoken about an allegedly growing phenomenon of 'ghettoisation' of Australian suburbs. Against this backdrop of concerns, the Government has indicated it will seek to introduce new English language requirements for permanent residency and citizenship – and possibly also a new 'values' test for those seeking permanent residency.

Immigration is indeed back as a subject of political contest. And it's not just about the number of migrants; it's also what kind of migrants we are taking in. Earlier this year, Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton proposed that white South African farmers deserve 'special attention' for fast-tracked humanitarian visas because of their alleged persecution. Last month, former Prime Minister Tony Abbott questioned whether we should accept any migrants at all from Africa, suggesting they are 'difficult to integrate'. And just last week, News Corp columnist Andrew Bolt argued that we are seeing a 'tidal wave of immigration' overwhelming Australia – that Jews, Indians and Chinese were forming ethnic 'colonies' across the country. Clearly, we are seeing a challenge to the non-discriminatory immigration program that Australia has conducted since the end of the White Australia policy.

The spectre of history never lurks far away from our public debates. Consider the debate about foreign influence. Notable commentators have suggested there is a 'silent invasion' of Australia being conducted by China, with the Chinese party-state planting 'fifth column' operatives within our public institutions. It goes without saying that we must protect our democratic institutions from foreign interference. This should give no excuse, though, for some to re-run old fears about the Yellow Peril. Making things worse, some are now charging anyone raising concerns about racism as pushing a 'weaponised narrative' about Australian racism that has been ordered by Beijing.

PUBLIC DEBATES AND EVERYDAY LIVES

Public debates help to set the tone for society. What happens in our politics can shape what we experience in our daily lives. At the moment, some groups in our society stand more vulnerable than ever to racism.

A few weeks ago, I received a letter from a woman in Sydney, who got racially abused in her local cafe. Another customer came around and told her to go back to China, declaring that, 'all Chinese

are Communists'. Last month, while holding a stall in Redfern, Jenny Leong, a Greens MP in the NSW Parliament, was harangued by a woman who said, 'You are taking over. I know your plan. We are all now second-class citizens because you Chinese are taking over.'

These are some of the effects of debates about a 'silent invasion' by the Chinese Communist Party. We shouldn't be surprised that some people may vent racial hostility at people of Chinese backgrounds, if they are being told there is a threat from Communist China.

There is also the more insidious impact, the powerful chilling effect that debates can have on Chinese-Australian citizens. Many fear speaking out in public debates, lest they get smeared as agents of the Chinese Communist Party. If we're not more careful, we may end up demanding that Chinese Australians work many times harder than others to demonstrate their loyalty to this country. We may end up with what can only be described as a form of racial discrimination, justified as concern about national sovereignty.

Consider as well the effects of talk about African gangs. I know there is much hurt and dismay being felt by African-Australians – in particular, Sudanese-Australians. Some Sudanese-Australian community leaders have spoken about how they are living with a sense of shame and rejection. In one recent article in the Guardian Australia, Father Daniel Gai Aleu, an Anglican minister in Sunshine, in Melbourne's west, said, 'I can say I'm an Australian but my colour only betrays me.' Pastor Nathan Kuku, who leads a congregation in nearby Albion said, 'we feel like we don't have any back-up in this country'. Well, it would feel that way when you have even the Prime Minister singling out your community.

The consequences are all too real. Within Sudanese-Australian communities, there are many people who are fearful about leaving their homes, and who are sheltering from society. And it affects Australians who have other African backgrounds, too. Young African-Australians in Melbourne have told me of occasions when they have walked to sporting events together as a group, only to be stopped in the street because members of the public have called police fearing they were marauding gang members.

Such experiences aren't new or even unique. The kind of racial profiling I've described exists for other groups in our society. In my work, I've heard regularly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about experiences of being stopped in stores or subjected to searches, or being denied service by businesses or by taxis. Australians from Arab and Middle-Eastern backgrounds, and from Asian backgrounds, have also had to contend with the sting of racial stereotyping. In the time when I was growing up as a teenager, talk about Asian gangs and so-called Asian ghettos in the suburbs made many young Asian-Australians feel disgraced and humiliated. It made many question their place in this country.

This is how racism works. It creates doubts and divisions, and it drives its targets into retreat. Where the seeds of racism are planted in political speech, they will bear bitter fruit in society.

It's not just politics that is behind this. Alongside the politicisation of racial fear, we are also seeing the monetisation of racism. Sections of a fracturing media industry, under the strain of technological disruption, seem to be using racism as part of their business model. Faced with competition from a proliferation of news and entertainment sources, some media outlets are using racial controversies to grab attention – as a means of clinging on to their audiences.

You see this, for example, in the way some media outlets regularly fawn upon far-right political commentators from North America. These avatars of white nationalism are typically lauded as 'alt-right showmen' or 'alt-right provocateurs'. They are fawned upon and given sympathetic platforms to spread their messages of hate and division. With this kind of licence, it is no surprise to find far-right groups being emboldened like never before.

It's got to the point where commentators on national television can tell people to go back to where they came from on air, and not experience any sanction from their network. Commentators can entertain fantasies on radio about running over a Muslim writer, with barely a slap on the wrist. Commentators with histories of inciting racism and of running foul of laws against racial discrimination have the audacity to label anti-racist speech as forms of 'race-baiting'.

And just last night, we had Sky News – through host Adam Giles – give a platform to the avowed neo-Nazi and convicted violent criminal, Blair Cottrell. This is the same Blair Cottrell who has called for every classroom in Australia to be adorned with a portrait of Adolf Hitler; the same Blair Cottrell who has been convicted of arson, stalking and aggravated burglary; the same Blair Cottrell who has been convicted of breaking the Victorian Racial and Religious Tolerance Act. Even for Sky News, it was a shameful low. Perhaps this is where things are heading: Why bother with importing racist commentators when you can just put a neo-Nazi thug on air?

We need to restore some standards in our public debates. We need to restore some proportion and perspective.

Take multiculturalism. There is simply no compelling evidence that Australian multiculturalism is in danger of veering towards ethnic separatism. The evidence shows that we continue to conduct integration extremely well. The children of migrants, on average, outperform the children of Australian-born parents on education and employment. Our social mobility remains high by international standards. Many of those areas which people slander as ethnic ghettos are dynamic and vibrant communities, where no one single ethnic or racial group predominates, and where property prices have been on the rise – hardly signs of ghettos.

On the so-called Sudanese crime crisis in Melbourne, if we turn to the facts, we know that in Victoria Sudanese-born people aren't the only ones over-represented in crime statistics. It is also the case that those born in Australia and in New Zealand are also over-represented in Victorian crime statistics.

But why, then, all the attention on crimes committed by those from Sudanese backgrounds, but so little on Australian- or New Zealand-born offenders? And if we are to focus on the ethnicity or backgrounds of offenders, why was there not uproar about the backgrounds of those who caused a violent brawl at a recent AFL match in Geelong? Where was the focus on the racial backgrounds of all those who have committed, in recent years, cowardly one-punch attacks? Where was the commentary about the ethnic or racial backgrounds of notorious murderers such as Adrian Bayley, Roger Rogerson and Carl Williams? Why is there one standard around ethnicity and crime being applied to some groups, but not applied to others?

SETTING A STANDARD ON RACISM

Some would say a sense of proportion will prove elusive, given we are living in what seems to be a 'post-truth' world. It is now a case of choose your own reality.

There must be no relativism, however, when it concerns racism. We must hold the line. We must maintain our standards.

It is the Racial Discrimination Act that has set those standards for more than four decades. The Act would turn out to be the final legislative act of the Whitlam Government, coming into effect of 31 October 1975 – a week or so before the Dismissal.

When the Act was introduced, Whitlam described it as a 'historic measure', symbolic of his Government's philosophy. It was, of course, during the years of his Government that the last remnants of the White Australia policy were abolished. The idea of multiculturalism emerged as official government policy, with Al Grassby's advocacy for an enlarged 'family of the nation'. Although Whitlam recognised the difficulty of legislating for social change, he nonetheless made clear that the new Act would serve to 'set standards for the future, and build a climate of maturity, of goodwill, of cooperation and understanding at all levels of society'.

The idea of a Racial Discrimination Act was not universally welcomed at the time. The second reading speeches on the Racial Discrimination Bill of 1975 saw extended debate about the wisdom of outlawing racial discrimination. Queensland Nationals Senator Glen Sheil argued the bill would have 'the most dangerous effect' of creating 'an official race relations industry with a staff of dedicated anti-racists' intent on persecuting white Australians. Another Queenslander, Liberal senator Ian Wood, argued 'it is a lot of utter nonsense and rubbish to bring such a Bill before this Parliament', since 'racialism in this country probably is practiced less than it is in the big majority of countries'. Shadow Attorney-General Ivor Greenwood declared, 'We in Australia have been singularly free of racial discrimination', and warned there was 'a tendency for laws of this kind ... to be used as a source of provocation, a focal point for professional agitators who wanted to stir trouble'.

The denial of racism's existence, the charge that anti-racism stirs up division: these strains are still with us, more than 40 years on from those debates. The reactionary ghosts of Sheil, Wood and Greenwood still haunt, for example, our parliamentary chambers. It was only a few months ago

that Liberal National Senator Ian MacDonald would echo his Queensland predecessors in declaring it 'very difficult to find any but very rare cases of racism in Australia'. Others, such as Attorney-General Christian Porter, have indicated a discomfort with efforts against racial discrimination, instead preferring a focus on the happier concern of 'harmony'.

Fortunately, such views haven't prevailed. Back in 1975, the Racial Discrimination Bill passed – with notable support from some Opposition senators including Fred Chaney and Neville Bonner. The Liberal Coalition Government of Malcolm Fraser never moved to repeal the new Racial Discrimination Act; its steadfast approach to resettling refugees from southeast Asia spoke volumes about the leadership it was prepared to exercise on race.

There were perhaps some early lessons from all this about how the Racial Discrimination Act could only work with some measure of bipartisan support. Indeed, on issues of race, we have only been able to achieve progress when there is some recognition that what is at stake – the harmony, stability and justness of Australian society – is too important to be relegated to a matter of partisan contest. While there may always be some philosophical differences about the nuances of what racial equality must mean, the basic principle must remain the same: the law sets a standard, and rightly so.

And for most of the 43 years of the Racial Discrimination Act's existence, the Act has done its job. It has been, in effect, the legislative expression of Australian multiculturalism. It has given Australians, of all backgrounds, a means of holding racial discrimination to account.

While not perfect, it has proven to be a powerful instrument of justice. It has become an important part of Australia's human rights architecture. As demonstrated by the Mabo case, the Act underpinned the development of native title. Earlier this year, it helped deliver to the people of Palm Island a landmark settlement with the Queensland Government, including an apology for systemic racial discrimination and a payment of \$30 million.

Let it never be said that the Racial Discrimination Act is a toothless tiger.

FREE SPEECH, 18C AND IDENTITY POLITICS

That seems to be a point that opponents and critics of the Act know only too well. Were the legislation so completely impotent and ineffectual, it would not have become such a target of ideological politics in recent years.

These past five years, we have seen heated contests over section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act, which makes it unlawful to do an act that is reasonably likely to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate someone because of their race. On two occasions in 2014 and 2017, the federal government – under both Tony Abbott and Malcolm Turnbull – moved to amend the Act, cheered on by prominent sections of the media and the Institute of Public Affairs.

On both occasions, the push failed. The Abbott government in August 2014 abandoned its attempt to repeal section 18C after a widespread backlash to then Attorney-General George Brandis's suggestion that 'people have a right to be bigots'. The Turnbull government in 2016 moved to have a parliamentary committee inquire into free speech and the Racial Discrimination Act. In March 2017, a government Bill to amend section 18C was introduced in the Senate – and there it was defeated.


In these debates, we have seen an outpouring of support for the Racial Discrimination Act. First Australians, ethnic communities, civil society advocates – all were united in defending the Act. Labor and Greens have been unwavering in their stance, too. And while the Government's policy has been to change the Act, we have seen a number of Liberal parliamentarians express vocal and important support for keeping the Act as it is. Again, we have seen how the endurance of the Racial Discrimination Act depends on some measure of bipartisan support.

While they have brought out support for racial equality in a way rarely seen, the debates about 18C have nonetheless been difficult for people who experience racism. They have opened the door to prejudice, intolerance and hatred. When I took on my role in 2013, I never imagined that the Attorney-General of Australia would, on the Senate floor, defend a right to bigotry. I never imagined that the cause of free speech would become defined by a desire to inflict racial vilification on others.

I also didn't anticipate that I would end up being so caught up in a central way in the second political attack on 18C in 2016-17. Some have argued that in my role as Commissioner I improperly touted for, or solicited, complaints under the Racial Discrimination Act against the late cartoonist Bill Leak.

That is simply not true. Yes, I did make it clear that people who were racially offended about material could lodge a complaint. But it is part of my role as Commissioner to promote public understanding and acceptance of the Act. This includes informing people about the option they have to make a complaint under the law, if they believe they have experienced racial hatred. It would be a very odd situation if someone in my position were unable to speak about the complaint process under the Act.

As I've said, the debates have been intense. This is because the push to change 18C has been driven by ideological passions, and by a certain form of identity politics. Those who rail against section 18C tend to see things in a certain way: the Racial Discrimination Act is regarded as an example of political correctness gone mad, and of a multicultural identity politics aligned with 'cultural Marxism'. The critics of 18C believe public debates have supposedly been stifled because people fear that speaking frankly will lead them to be branded as racist by progressives intent on 'virtue signalling'. They believe that certain ethnic and racial minorities are afforded greater protections under anti-discrimination law than members of 'mainstream Australians'. They believe that the real racism today is something they call 'reverse racism'.



Complaints about anti-racism stifling free speech are about a resentment of minorities being able to speak up. They're the complaints of snowflakes who can't hack it when people challenge racism.

Let's, for a moment, consider this idea that political correctness has shut down debates about race. It is hard to see how debates have been shut down when The Australian has devoted hundreds of thousands of words to attacking the Racial Discrimination Act; when there are regular beat-ups on race in the Herald Sun and the Daily Telegraph; when nocturnal panels on Sky News endlessly berate multicultural political correctness; when Pauline Hanson makes regular appearances on Sunrise and Today; and when we are seeing a resurgent race politics in our national debate. From broadsheet to tabloid newspapers, from breakfast to nighttime viewing on television, and from backbenchers to the most senior members of government, there's plenty of race-baiting happening.

As for identity politics, who is it exactly that is practising identity politics? Isn't it a form of identity politics, when it's argued that the cause of repealing section 18C is in the service of a 'mainstream Australia' that is being stifled by ethnic and racial minorities? When the language of 'mainstream Australia' or 'middle Australian values' is used as code for something racial? Doesn't it reflect a form of identity politics when people argue that 'cultural Marxism' is undermining Western civilisation?

Let's be clear: of course, it does. It reflects an identity politics that is aimed at securing the privileges of some and at keeping others in their place. We're talking about an identity politics that is about reinforcing a hierarchy of voice and power in Australian society. Complaints about anti-racism stifling free speech are about a resentment of minorities being able to speak up. They're the complaints of snowflakes who can't hack it when people challenge racism.

The views of the actual mainstream Australia on race and free speech are different. The vast majority of Australians recognise that the Racial Discrimination Act exists as an expression of our society's values and aspirations. They understand that one person's freedom shouldn't come at the expense of another person's freedom. They understand that free speech shouldn't be an excuse to vent racial hatred or hostility.

When in March 2014 Fairfax Media and Nielsen polled people about section 18C, a whopping 88 per cent said they believed it should remain unlawful to offend, insult or humiliate people on the basis of their race or ethnicity. In March 2017, at the time a Bill about changing 18C was being debated in parliament, a Fairfax-Ipsos poll asking the same question found a resounding response of 78 per cent. Academic research has found similar numbers. For all the clamour about changing section 18C, there has consistently been an overwhelming majority of Australians who believe the Racial Discrimination Act should stay in its current form.

This is no minor detail. There are very few propositions that are supported by about 80 per cent of Australians. A similar proportion support a non-discriminatory immigration program, with similar levels of support for multiculturalism. Not that you would guess any of this from our public commentary on free speech, immigration and multiculturalism, characterised as it has been by unfounded panics about political correctness, and migrants forming 'ethnic colonies'.

Clearly, the true middle ground of our society on such issues doesn't resemble much of our media and political debates. Those who object to 18C and the Racial Discrimination Act frequently call

upon an image of an Australian mainstream that has limited tolerance for political correctness on race. Yet it is they and their version of identity politics that are out of step with contemporary Australia.

PATRIOTIC RESPONSIBILITY

Debates about the Racial Discrimination Act and racism are unlikely to disappear. There is just too much ideological zeal, cultural anger and racial resentment for the noise to die down.

In recent months, the Attorney-General has flagged he wishes for the office of Race Discrimination Commissioner to be renamed or redefined – that it should be called the Community Relations Commissioner, or something similar. Such a change can't happen through ministerial direction or through administrative tweaking. The title and function of the Race Discrimination Commissioner are set by legislation. If they are to change, it will require a change to the Racial Discrimination Act.

There is simply no good reason for such a change. But we must be on guard. We are seeing challenges right now both to diversity and to independent institutions in our public culture. Whether it is the concentration of media outlets, or whether it is the calls to privatise the ABC, Australian democracy is threatened by a reduction in the number of voices that can speak truth to power. On matters of race, there will be some who would prefer there not to be independent advocates for racial equality who are empowered to speak out, without fear or favour.

To those who may be entertaining yet another debate about racial discrimination, I say this: we have a Racial Discrimination Act for a simple reason. It's because our society rejects racism and racial discrimination. And it's only right that the statutory officer under the Racial Discrimination Act is called the Race Discrimination Commissioner – as it has been since 1986. We've got little chance of fighting racism, if we can't even name it. You can't eliminate racism through positive thinking or repetitions of the word 'harmony'.

But if there is to be another move to change the Act, I know that fair-minded Australians and many communities are ready to defend the Act – as they did in 2013 and 2014, and as they did again in 2016 and 2017. As I reflect on the past five years, I can say there has been no prouder achievement than to have stood alongside so many Australians in fighting off those two attempts to change section 18C. Standing together, we have sent a powerful message that the Australian community believes the RDA must be here to stay.

I'm proud, too, of what we've achieved under the National Anti-Racism Strategy. We've had more than 400 organisations during the past five years involved as supporters of our Racism. It Stops with Me campaign; our public awareness videos last year received 1.6 million views on social media. We've conducted anti-racism work relating to employment, schools, early childhood, local government, and sport. And I'm proud to have started a conversation about the representation of cultural diversity in Australian leadership, through our Leading for Change research reports and the Leadership Council on Cultural Diversity that was established in 2016.

However, it's the work with our communities that has been most important to me, and I thank all those who strive with dedication and determination to make Australia a better place. I've seen it among the community leaders and advocates I've met across the suburbs of our capital cities to those in regional towns and centres – from Bankstown to Bendigo, Logan to Liverpool, Hobart to Hervey Bay.

I've seen it in communities like Bendigo, which came together in responding to nasty anti-Islam protests. I've seen it in places like Eltham, in Melbourne's northeast, where residents formed a group to help newly resettled Syrian and Iraqi refugees with learning English, driving on Melbourne roads, and finding jobs.

I've seen the power of anti-racism among citizens who have courageously stood up against hatred and bigotry, sometimes even putting their own safety on the line. I've seen it through those communities that have fought back against systemic racial discrimination – like Palm Island in Queensland. I've seen it in the young anti-racism advocates I've met who are coming together to build a better Australia. I've seen it in people like Alpha Cheng, who lost his father Curtis to an act of terrorism here in Parramatta, but has become an advocate for inclusion and compassion – doing so with a grace and strength, which remind us of what it means to be moved by the better angels of our nature.

We must always appeal to our better angels if we're to do better on race. The sobering reality is that many in our society struggle with even talking about racism. The real political correctness on this doesn't come from the Racial Discrimination Act but from a parochial fragility. It's a fragility that explains why when racism is called out, the real offence in some people's eyes is not that an act of discrimination occurred, but rather that someone was subjected to being called racist. People should look at it another way: if you don't want to be called racist, you can start by not doing something racist.

Sadly, social change can't ever be that simple. There are just too many ways for people to deny, dismiss or deflect any challenge to us to do better on racial equality and multiculturalism. Perhaps most potently, people respond to racism in Australia by pointing out that racism is worse in other countries, as though that means we must stop talking about the issue. This is a powerful way of saying that identifying racism amounts to an act of national disloyalty. It tarnishes anyone who raises racism as an ingrate who doesn't know the value of living in The Best Country on Earth.

Let me conclude on what it means to be anti-racist. This is a commitment that reflects the highest form of patriotism – the desire to see our country live up to its very best. There have been times during the past five years when I have reflected on my own sense of patriotism. Many times I have questioned whether Australia has gone backwards on race, because of the pandering to prejudice in public debates.

But my patriotism remains, and the first principles remain the same. We reject racism because it is an assault on our values and our fellow citizens. We reject racism because it diminishes our nation.

That is why we fight racism. It's because we think so highly of our nation in the first place. It's because we want to see our country do better. It's because we are committed to equality. And it's because we have a responsibility to uphold our values.

This speech was delivered by Dr Tim Soutphommasane on 6 August 2018 at Western Sydney University's Whitlam Institute. This was Dr Soutphommasane's final speech as Race Discrimination Commissioner. Dr Soutphommasane is recipient of an Honorary Doctorate from Western Sydney University.



*Why racism is so
hard to define and
even harder to
understand*

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ALANA LENTIN

Today, what can be defined as racism and what cannot has become a matter for debate. Every racist caught in the act, whether it be wrongly accusing a black child of sexual assault or running over and killing a mosque-goer, claims not to be racist.

Eric Kaufmann, a prominent professor at a London university, has claimed that 'racial self-interest is not racism'. He is joined by others who see talking about race as 'unhelpful', be that from a left-wing perspective that privileges class, or from a conservative one that ridicules 'identity politics'.

Black people, Indigenous people, people of colour, Muslims and Jews regularly report being lectured to on racism – and what constitutes racism – by people who have never experienced it.

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

As Cheryl Harris explained in her landmark 1993 article, 'Whiteness as Property', white people in settler colonial countries such as the US and Australia have benefited directly from being white. This has endowed them with the birthright of neither being owned (as in the case of enslaved people) nor 'in the way' (as in the case of Indigenous peoples whose lands were coveted).

Many denials of racism come from feelings of discomfort over this fact, a state referred to as 'white fragility'. When attention is drawn to white people's racial privilege, or the assumptions and structures that prop up racist beliefs are challenged, white people tend to respond with anger and a refusal to engage in the discussion.

LeRon Barton has written that viral videos of police shootings of black people are the 'new lynching postcard' – a reference to postcards that were sent depicting lynching scenes – and that white people in the US choose not to know the depth of America's problem of institutionalised racist violence.

Likewise, many Australians are only now becoming aware of the plight of detainees in Australia's offshore detention camps, after more than five years.

Not seeing racism is integral to what the philosopher Charles Mills has called 'white ignorance.' This is not real ignorance, but a wilful one that allows those unaffected by racism to maintain their 'innocence' and ultimately protects their privilege, as the academic Gloria Wekker has powerfully argued.

This refusal to acknowledge or engage in discussions about racism creates a dangerous situation of racial illiteracy. Not only does it mean that racialised people are expected to bear the belittling of their experiences, but ultimately that we are all worse off in the face of open white supremacy in Australia and across the Global North.

Neither our schooling nor our media equip us to understand what race and racism are. We have only been told that racism is wrong. And when people feel accused of wrongdoing, they go into denial mode.

But this is unproductive. We need to move away from a moral understanding of racism, which sees it as a problem of 'bad' individuals, and towards a systemic one, which grounds our understanding in the history of European colonialism. And to do that, we need to examine what race is.

Or rather, what race does.

SO WHAT DOES RACE DO?

As the late academic José Esteban Muñoz argues, because it is impossible to adequately theorise race as any one thing, we are better served by looking at what race does. What functions does race perform? How does it continue to reproduce the idea of a natural social hierarchy?

The main problem we face in understanding race is the fixation on the biological. In fact, as Stuart Hall explains, race – a modern phenomenon that developed within the context of European colonial domination – unfurls in three stages: the religious, the cultural and the biological.

Ideas of inherent racial difference between human beings took shape during the Spanish inquisition when the notion of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) was used to justify the mass expulsion or forced conversion of Jews and Muslims to Catholicism.


This idea then influenced Spanish invaders' attitudes to the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, whose very humanity they questioned on the basis of their different spiritual beliefs.

It was mainly religious men such as Sepulveda and De Las Casas who were concerned with the question of Indigenous peoples' humanity. However, race became tethered to culture in the context of European anti-Semitism in the 19th and 20th centuries and the 'civilising mission' enacted by colonisers to bring 'progress' to Indigenous peoples in Africa, the Americas and Asia.


The biological understanding of race, or the idea that, as Hall puts it, a people's intellectual abilities, character or temperament is linked to their 'genetic code', came last.

The inference of race in human biology solidified the taxonomical systems devised and used by European anthropologists since the early 18th century. If race was indeed written into the body, the organisation of the world's people, which previously had used geography as its primary means of hierarchical demarcation, could no longer be denied.

This idea enabled such policies as the forced assimilation of Aboriginal peoples through 'breeding' and sterilisation - practices that, as Dorothy Roberts notes, are still used in the US against poor black, Latina and First Nations women.



We need to move away from a moral understanding of racism, which sees it as a problem of ‘bad’ individuals, and towards a systemic one, which grounds our understanding in the history of European colonialism. And to do that, we need to examine what race is.



In contemporary times, the focus has turned to debunking the idea of race as a biological category. However, this narrow focus has led us to ignore the myriad other ways race takes effect.

It is important to note that biological ideas of race continue to frame the work of many geneticists and medical practitioners, and that assumptions of links between intelligence and race have not faded away and have an impact on policy-making. However, we do not need to believe in biological differences between human groups for race to still have an impact.

Indeed, the notion that race is purely about biology is at the core of the strident claim that Islamophobia cannot be racism because, as it is said, 'Islam is not a race'.

At the same time, commentators such as the British journalist David Aaronovitch, have claimed that anti-Semitism is racism because Jews can be qualified as a racial group. This demonstrates the confusion and ideological grandstanding at play when discussing race.

In fact, though distinct, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia take very similar forms. Each is based on associating all members of the religion and often the religion itself with negative assumptions about the degree of control they have in society. Clearly, then, both are forms of racism.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR RACISM?

Race is not singular. Rather, it weaves together ideas from biology, culture, nationalism and religion to make inferences about whole populations. It is first and foremost a technique for the management of human difference that has been used by states, governments and institutions, such as the police, education, healthcare and welfare, to organise and demarcate between people.

Race can be in play even when it is disavowed because, over the course of modernity, it came to structure the relationship between Europeanness and non-Europeanness, which is often, but not always, equatable to whiteness and non-whiteness.

Racism cannot be 'anti-white' because it does not describe feelings of animosity or hostility; it is not a synonym for prejudice. Ideas of race gave rise to racist ideologies, such as the idea that Europe is the pinnacle of progress and civilisation. This legitimated the invasion and domination of the majority of the world's peoples, the enslavement of Africans, the theft of land, the assimilation and appropriation of Indigenous cultures and the erasure of local knowledges.

Racism is systemic. While it manifests in individual attitudes and behaviours, it is not produced by them. That is the primary reason it is so difficult to eradicate. The other is its ability to constantly adapt to changing circumstances.

For example, the removal of Aboriginal children from their families at unprecedented rates today does not require the openly racist language of blood quantum and improvement. Nevertheless, both the motivations for their removal – a systemic belief in the inherent inferiority of Aboriginal family structures – and the effects on children and families are the same.

Race is mobile and ever-changing. But ultimately, it serves to maintain white supremacy, at both a local and global level.

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Developing data rights for all Australians

**PROFESSOR JAMES ARVANITAKIS, DR JAMES MEESE AND
DR PUNIT JAGASIA**

Australians are heavy users of social media platforms. However, they are also increasingly concerned about the use of their digital data. Recent research shows that Australians care about their privacy online and often take steps to limit the amount of data they share with companies.

The recent Facebook-Cambridge Analytica scandal has shown that people have little control over how social media platforms handle their data, raising an important question: how do we protect Australian consumers in a data-driven economy?

This question becomes particularly pressing once we consider the growing presence of household devices with Internet connectivity and the way our lives are confronted with ubiquitous computing (also known as the Internet of Things). The amount of data collected from people's everyday interactions our private sphere is almost impossible to imagine and growing everyday.

One response to this data privacy challenge is to try and intervene in the current model of data collection and targeting that operates on commercial social platforms and across the Internet. This is what the European Union (EU) has attempted with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which is applicable from the end of May 2018.

The GDPR gives every EU citizen a suite of new rights associated with their data and also requires companies to adhere to a series of new regulations focused on data privacy.

In contrast, data access and availability has captured the policy conversation in Australia.

However, it is still unclear what standard of access is suitable for consumers, exactly what benefits access will bring and just how important access is in reshaping the power imbalance between consumers and companies.

These challenges are at the core of a new project being undertaken by the authors (and funded by the Australian Communications Consumer Action Network). Our aim is to explore how a range of social media, telecommunications and personal device companies (such as fitness devices) are managing the privacy and data of Australian consumers, and assesses the broader costs and benefits associated with these policies.

The first phase of the project is to conduct an audit of data access policies and processes across these sectors to see what sort of data Australian consumers can access. Initial findings show that companies across these sectors present a wide variety of access options and provide consumers with varying levels of access to their own data.

Even though we are only in the early of part of Phase 1, important insights are already emerging. We have found that some companies do not always volunteer information about data access, the ability to transfer data to other services is often limited and other companies are unclear about exactly what data can be provided to consumers. On the whole, it appears to be a confusing area for consumers to navigate.

This also means that unless organisations take a more user-centric and ethical perspective, there is always the risk that some legislative changes will be introduced that serve only to make it appear the government is acting. Such knee jerk reactions are likely to serve no-one: that is, failing to protect the consumer while adding bureaucratic burdens on organisations.

In the second phase we will undertake a public campaign to raise awareness of these avenues. The popularity of a recent Guardian column on how to access data collected by Facebook and Google suggests that many consumers are not aware of how to access their data, or exactly what sort of data such companies and their third party suppliers collect.

Finally, the project will assess the claim that data access is an inherent positive for the Australian economy and users. This claim was advanced by the Productivity Commission in their March 2017 report on Data Availability and Use.

It highlighted a range of social and economic opportunities associated with data. The Commission argued that 'data access and use can enable new products and services that transform everyday life, drive efficiency and safety, create productivity gains and allow better decision making'.

One key recommendation to come out of the report was to introduce a Comprehensive Right for Consumers allowing them to get a copy of their data, make edits or corrections to their data and most importantly get data holders to give them access to their data or transfer it to another third party on the consumers' behalf.

The Australian Government has supported this recommendation and will introduce a Consumer Data Right. This right will first roll out across the financial sector under the name Open Banking before being introduced to the energy and telecommunications sectors.

There are benefits and risks associated with this approach. Open Banking may lead to cheaper home loans and support better budgeting but will also increase the 'degree of risk associated with customer banking data'.

Considering the different strategies adopted by the European Union and Australia, it is an apt time to examine the strengths and limitations of the Australian approach and what other structures might need to be in place to support ongoing consumer protection in a data-centric economy.

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*Sydney has an
insatiable appetite
for culture but
won't share
the spoils*

DR ANDY MARKS

‘And finally, monsieur, a wafer-thin mint?’ Recent consternation over Sydney’s arts and culture glut brings to mind the restaurant scene from Monty Python’s *The Meaning of Life*, when John Cleese’s maître d’ ploys an insatiable Mr Creosote – aka Terry Jones – with all the fare he can stomach until he literally explodes.

Sydney’s cultural appetite, it seems, knows no bounds. But don’t dare suggest the harbour city has had enough, or worse, could share the bounty.

Take the Vivid festival. Overcrowding, we hear, has made it ‘impossible’. How dreadful. Basking in the glow of all that culture has never been so gruelling. Meanwhile, in large areas of western Sydney, the closest we get to a light show is a mosquito sparking the insect zapper at the local chicken shop.

Entirely reasonable suggestions that Vivid be ‘less frequent’ or, heaven forbid, be held ‘elsewhere some of the time’ are refused. The Tourism Minister responds that this is a job for the crowd control experts.

Would it be so bad if Vivid were held in, say, Campbelltown, Liverpool, Penrith or Blacktown every other year? Isn’t that what creating a vibrant 30-minute city is all about, prioritising access to cultural events as highly as jobs and services?

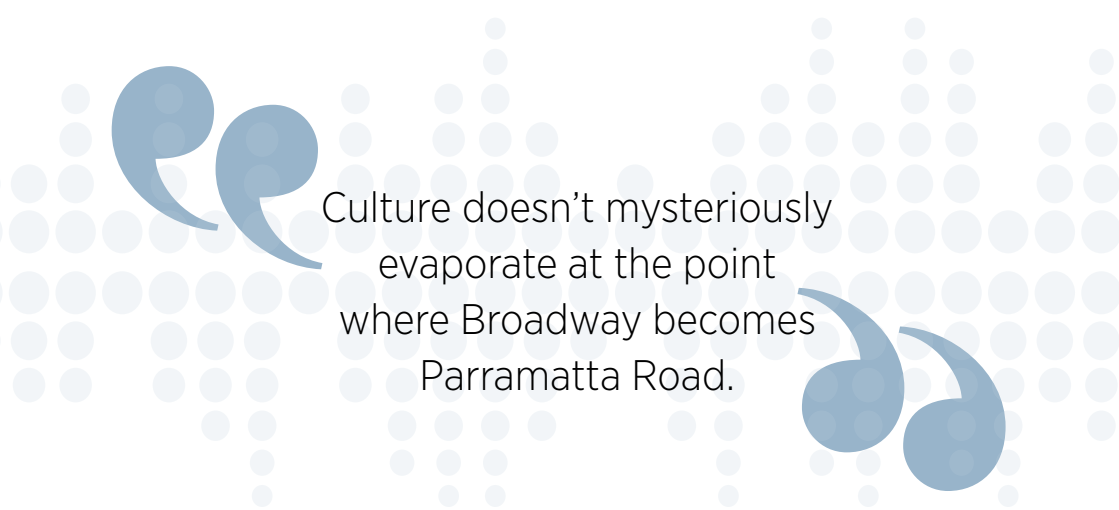
Most of Vivid’s visitors trek for more than half-an-hour into the Sydney CBD for the privilege of being crowd controlled. Yet Parramatta – which the Greater Sydney Commission has anointed as Sydney’s centre – is far more accessible to a higher number of Sydneysiders. The success out west of night-time events like Winterlights, Parramasala, Tropfest and Loy Krathong proves that.

Culture doesn’t mysteriously evaporate at the point where Broadway becomes Parramatta Road. Nor should arts and cultural institutions be necessarily wedded to one spot. The Powerhouse, for instance, moved between three locations before settling at Ultimo and pending relocation to Parramatta.

Changing the nature and location of our encounters with arts and culture is critical if we are to extend their capacity to enliven and shape our cities.

In *The Shock of the New*, Robert Hughes observed that the opening of the Eiffel Tower in Paris in the late 1800s marked a pronounced ‘change’ in ‘the conditions for seeing. It wasn’t the view of the tower from the ground that counted, it was seeing the ground from the tower. Nobody’, he remarked, ‘except a few men in balloons had ever seen it before.’

The tower, Hughes ventured, marked a ‘pivot in human consciousness’. It gave a ‘mass audience’ the opportunity to ‘see what you and I take for granted’



Culture doesn't mysteriously evaporate at the point where Broadway becomes Parramatta Road.

Moving Vivid, or indeed, the Powerhouse, to western Sydney isn't a 'pivot' of the scale Hughes describes, but it is important we stay focused on the possibilities a move presents. Cities and those that live within them can only grow through changing their way of seeing. Globally, cultural institutions and arts festivals have become successful through bold challenges to staid perceptions.

For example, Park City, on the outskirts of Salt Lake City, was in decline in the 1980s due to industry wind-downs. Now host to the Sundance Film Festival, Park City contributes an average of \$530 million a year to the Utah economy.

When we look to redress structural inequity in the arts, or even just capacity constraints, look first at the possibilities a changed view can bring. Otherwise, Sydney, 'how would you like [your culture] served? All, uh, mixed up together in a bucket?'

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This collection of articles and speeches foregrounds Western Sydney University's ongoing commitment to engaging with its community in various fora to collectively theorise and problem-solve. They move beyond the 'deficit analysis' and highlight the University's role as a compelling thought leader.

DAVID BORGER

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