2020

VOICES OF LEADERSHIP

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Preface

DR CHRISTOPHER BROWN AM

With a population boom in full flight, hundreds of billions of dollars planned in public and private infrastructure development and planning and governance reform at full tilt, Greater Western Sydney is the most dynamic growth region in Australia. Its swag of marginal seats at the Federal and State level make it the most fluid and influential political sphere in the nation.

Rarely do communities get the chance to influence the physical shape of their own cities but this is one such opportunity for the two million people living between Olympic Park and the Blue Mountains and between the Hawkesbury River and Macarthur region – and another two million that will settle there before 2050. Not since Canberra was built in the 1920s has such a bold urban experiment been attempted in our nation.

The massive injection of funds into regional roads, rail lines, airports, office towers, factories, hospitals, schools, universities stadia, theatres and museums is an obvious response to population growth and to the need for a diversified economy.

However, less attention from governments and capital is being paid to the societal requirements of the Western Parkland City and the Central River City that are being built, and re-built respectively, within this amazing urban renewal project.

Big cities also need big ideas and strong leadership to mould a society, shape a reputation and craft a governance model. I pay tribute to the role of civic and moral leadership that Western Sydney University plays here. Together with its partners in the 'third sector', it is influencing our human architecture and providing intellectual and cultural ballast to the concrete and steel that is building our proud region.

Greater Western Sydney is a complex beast with pockets of extreme disadvantage alongside boom suburbs and exciting innovation precincts. It is younger than its metro counterpart, more ethnically diverse, has deeper social conservatism and a tougher climate so it needs stronger advocates, more measurable outcomes, a greater collaborative culture and deeper intellectual rigour.

As the most significant institution in the region, Western Sydney University has stepped into this breach and it remains our most important voice of leadership – and a vital facilitator of other voices as well.

Dr Christopher Brown AM is the Chairman of the Western Sydney Leadership Dialogue. He is former Pro Chancellor at Western Sydney University, and recipient of an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from the Western Sydney University.

How can we best prepare students for the future of work?

PROFESSOR PETER SHERGOLD AC

In 2012, as Chair of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), I was asked by the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency to reflect, from a personal perspective, on the future of work.[1] Five years later on the basis of my experience as a bureaucratic mandarin, and in the wake of increasing evidence that robotic process automation would soon be able to undertake many administrative tasks, I was asked by the Singapore Civil Service College to assess what was likely to happen to public service employment in the years ahead.[2] And, in 2018, as a university Chancellor I was asked to consider more broadly the prospects for graduates, as Western Sydney University (like many of its counterparts) embarked on a redesign of its curricula and teaching methodologies.

Much of the present excitement or despair about the future of work finds its roots in the prediction of Klaus Schwab, Founder of the World Economic Forum, that we "stand on the brink of a technological revolution that will fundamentally alter the way we live, work and relate to one another."[3] In his enthusiastic view, the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution' will see the lines between the physical, digital and biological spheres become blurred. The fusion of technologies will be characterised by billions of people staying connected remotely through pervasive mobile devices, able to access vast amounts of newly created data, while assisted by capable machines. The adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), Schwab argues, is at an inflection point. The internet of things, fuelled by neural-based machine learning, will move from simple digitisation to a convergence of technologies. The major challenge is not technical but how best to integrate robotic automation into workplace processes, decision-making and culture.

A new wave of disruptive automation is already transforming work. In the last century automation saw repetitive lower-skilled factory labour progressively taken over by mechanical robots. Now it is knowledge-work that is most under challenge. Much of the know-how of professionals will be demystified and their role as gatekeepers to learned expertise undermined. Many occupations which previously required extensive training and the exercise of judgement can already be undertaken faster, better and at lower cost by increasingly capable machine-based systems.

As the technologies of visual recognition and speech translation combine with exponential growth in data processing capability, the workplace is likely to be changed in fundamental ways. It will not just be the relatively routine but often complex tasks of white-collar administration that will become automated.

Professional skills – legal, medical, engineering and financial – will increasingly be undertaken with greater reliability by robots able to access, analyse and interpret big data at an unprecedented speed and scale.

A high proportion of these jobs are the ones that our graduates take up. What will happen to them? How should we best prepare our students?

The challenge is daunting. Indeed, predictions of what '4IR' means for humanity often take a dystopian character. In my research for the Singapore Civil Service I found estimates that robots will take over 830,000 public sector jobs in Britain by 2030.[4] There are similarly extravagant forecasts for other sectors of the economy. A study in 2017 by McKinsey Global Institute estimated that between 400 million and 800 million of today's jobs will be automated by 2030. Between 75 million to 375 million people will need to switch occupational categories.[5] A frequent statistic is that 40% of jobs are at risk of automation in the next 10-20 years. Most are middle class, white-collar, professional occupations. Most are undertaken by university graduates.

Martin Ford fears that the 'rise of the robots' threatens mass unemployment.[6] His book, which won both the *Financial Times* and McKinsey Business Book of the Year Awards, predicts that many 'good jobs' – university-educated jobs – will become obsolete. If correct, such an outcome has terrifying implications. Today's disciplined structures of paid work underpin social order: as jobs disappear, become casualised or deskilled, governance of citizens may become harder. Similarly, Richard and David Susskind predict the decline of professions. In their view, increasingly capable systems will erode the practical expertise of specialists.[7] Doctors, teachers, accountants, architects, consultants, lawyers and many others will no longer have the same status needed in the internet society of the future.

Tim Dunlop is rather more optimistic.[8] In his view, the question is not whether robots will take our jobs but what we will do when that occurs. He believes that a future 'world without work' could turn out to be positive, but only if the state intervenes to ensure that mass unemployment does not result in vastly increased inequality of wealth and power.

It is such concerns that have led to rising interest in the radical concept of a universal basic income. To address the anticipated job losses associated with a 'weightless' or 'gig' economy, it is argued that society will be required to provide all adult individuals with a payment to meet their basic needs, made without any work or activity tests.

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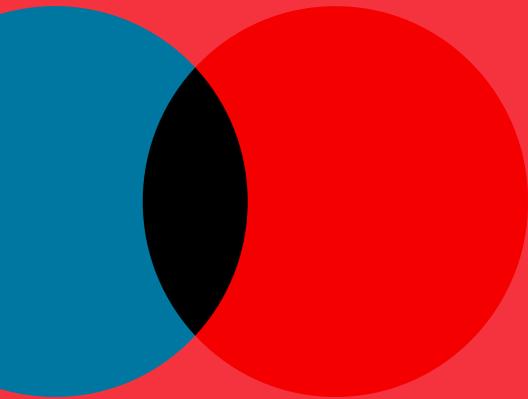
What was a fringe concept, born of academic research, is starting to become mainstream. It can seem, in the world of public discourse, a disarmingly simple idea. It is not. Nor is an it encouraging prospect for universities to imagine their role to be preparing students for welfare life protected by a financial safety net.

Thankfully, some commentators are unpersuaded by such catastrophic forecasts or the need for such radical solutions. They argue that there is a natural human tendency to believe that we live in special times. Similar predictions have failed to eventuate in the past. In the United Kingdom in the 1930's it was the great economist John Maynard Keynes who foresaw a future world of leisure. In Australia in the 1970's it was the historian Ian Turner, and in the 1980's the Minister for Science Barry Jones, who argued that mass redundancy awaited in the near future. *Sleeper Awake* was Jones' clarion cry.[9] But the anticipated societal revolution future has not yet happened.

Nor, perhaps, will it. *The Australian* economist Jeff Borland thinks that future unlikely.[10] Machines will not necessarily take away our graduates' employment prospects. Whilst new technologies will destroy many jobs, an approximately equal number of new ones are likely to emerge. He suggests, on the basis of empirical evidence, that there is a balance of job creation and destruction. In Australia, employment remains strong. Involuntary job loss is only about half what it was two decades ago. The present pace at which workers are moving between jobs in the labour market does not appear to be accelerating.

Certainly the impact of computer-based technologies, automation and artificial intelligence is complex. Not all tasks within society can be automated: as some administrative and professional skills are undermined, so the demand for human-to- human interpersonal skills that require high levels of emotional intelligence continues to increase. Many diagnostic skills will be lost (or complemented) by robots but the need for care-giving skills is likely to rise. It is evident that the 'tasks' within many graduate jobs are subject to tremendous change. Indeed, Andrew Charlton estimates that about half of Australian's jobs are being transformed from the inside by new technologies and processes.[11]

Our universities produce most of the professionals and executive managers who work in the Australian jobs where task changes are presently greatest – architects, software programmers, speech pathologists, technicians, accountants, retail managers, health professionals and life scientists. Some of the transformation is positive. Registered nurses now spend less time recording patient medical histories and more time looking after patients. Potentially, robotic process automation will

mean that public servants will be able to devote less time to paperwork and record-keeping and more time adding value to citizen service. Of course, even if this more positive scenario eventuates, our students will still find themselves destined for a world in which their professional skills are transformed. It remains an unsettling prospect.

In short, the direction of technological transformation is clear. What is fiercely contested is the scale, speed and consequence of labour market change. At a time of such uncertainty how can universities best respond?

In Australia, there is no shortage of suggestions from outside the academy. Professional consultancy companies proffer a variety of avowed solutions. Nous Group argues that answeres will involve "rethinking the shape of post school education".[12] It recommends separating the cost of research from the funding of teaching places, and recognising a new category of university that exhibits its educational merit by focusing on teaching. Such 'teaching' universities, collaborating with vocational education and industry providers, might create academic excellence by bringing curricula and pedagogy to the design of industry-driven learning packages. Nous suggests that it is time for the Humboldtian concept of the nexus between teaching and research to be broken. Academia does need not to be research-based in order to deliver higher education.

EY (Ernst and Young) have tried to imagine how a university of the future could best respond to 'the Transformative Age'.[13] They present four scenarios but believe that two are most likely : the emergence of 'commercial' universities offering work-integrated learning and close collaboration with industry; and 'disruptor' universities that meet the preference of continuing learners for on-demand micro-certification skills as technology disrupts their chosen profession. EY also envisages the possible emergence of the 'virtual' university which will integrate higher and vocational education, prioritising training and employability outcomes as humans begin to be replaced by machines. Such an institution would cater to lifelong learning needs by unbundling course structures and delivering education much more flexibly and increasingly online.

KPMG have also sought to reimagine tertiary education.[14] It posits that Australia needs to discard an unstable and outdated distinction between higher education and VET and move from a binary system to an ecosystem. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on teaching, with innovation directed to courses focused on practice and the workplace.

Other key institutions have taken up a similar reprise. The Productivity Commission, in its provocative report on *Shifting the Dial*, has examined how universities can become more resilient to the shock of new technologies.[15] The Commission argues that goals will only be achieved by maximising the public benefits of research and improving the incentive for research collaboration and commercialisation with industry. Given that it will not be too long before the university sector becomes the key vehicle for skills formation in the economy, there needs to be a much stronger focus on helping students prepare for the acceleration of automation. Universities, which have become central to greater human capital development, need to improve the value and relevance of the skills and knowledge taught to students, not just during their undergraduate degrees but throughout their working lives.

The Business Council of Australia (BCA) strikes a similar tone. Its recent report, *Future-Proof*, starts from the proposition that whilst nobody know exactly how the world of work is changing, "we can be sure that almost every single job will be different; some sectors will be severely disrupted".[16] To produce resilient students, they call for a tertiary system that puts the learner in charge by providing a capped Lifelong Skills Account, with workers able to dip in and out of short, accredited modules to upskill and retrain throughout their lives.

In short, beyond academia there seems to be a broad consensus emerging that Australia needs more teaching-based universities which are better integrated into a holistic tertiary education system. Vocational and higher education need to be firmly integrated if providers are to become more agile and adaptive in meeting the changes requirements of 'Industry 4.0.'

I remain uncertain about fundamental aspects of this emerging consensus. It is not that I am a vehement critic of the so-called 'neoliberal university.' Whilst I strongly subscribe to "the role of universities as guardians and producers of knowledge for the common wealth and public benefit,"[17] I see no irreconcilable conflict with also preparing students for the labour market. Universities do have key role "in securing the future labour supply by fostering knowledge, analytic thinking, broad capabilities and technical skills in our young people."[18]

Indeed, I am strongly attracted to the creation of a single tertiary sector in which people, over a lifetime, have the opportunity to create the educational portfolio that they believe best prepares them for the changing tasks of a changing career in a changing economy. Universities should be a key part of this, from post-doctoral research to micro-learning, delivered face-to-face and/or digitally. Students, wherever they are in their life journey, should be at the centre of what we do.

Helping them to acquire and adapt the skills they need for their careers is a crucial component of that commitment.

I also believe in the merit of academic institutions building closer collaborations with business and civil society organisations. There is a benefit to jointly-funded research, particularly when it contributes directly to the creation of purposeful public impact. To the extent that partnerships with the private sector contribute to innovation, universities and academics should benefit commercially from the intellectual property created by staff.

Yet I remain unpersuaded by much of the literature on how universities should best adapt their education to change. In part, no doubt, this is because I believe that universities have more than an instrumentalist purpose. Much blue-sky research in physics or astronomy is not undertaken with any obvious practical purpose in mind, but the application of scientific, mathematical and technological skills are just as valuable as the more practical expertise taught in medicine, dentistry or engineering. And in the liberal arts and humanities, research on 'Post-orientalist arts of the Straits of Gibraltar' (to take a recent controversial example) may not seem to have immediate benefit to the 'national interest' but the scholarship, research and interpretation involved – particularly if those disciplines can be conveyed to students – almost certainly does contribute to intellectual curiosity and analytical acumen.

There are other problems to tailoring higher education too exclusively to professional requirements. Even if one accepts that much university teaching should have a utilitarian objective, it is uncertain that framing it to the perceived needs of employers is the most sensible approach to addressing the uncertainties of technological revolution.

Indeed, I have concerns about the increased influence of professional associations on university curricula, often wielded by virtue of the registration requirements that they set. It is useful, if sometimes burdensome, to allow professional bodies to ensure themselves that the academic program content is current, technically accurate and taught by qualified staff. But, given their explicit role is to protect and preserve existing professional competencies, they may not be best-placed to imagine (let alone embrace) a future in which these traditional skills are undermined by technological disruption. Their goals are likely to be premised on an understanding of the competencies required today rather than a considered assessment of what expertise might be necessary in ten years' time.

So, what to do? I am increasingly persuaded that the best way to respond to the impact of cognitive technology on professional skills is to place greater emphasis on critical thinking: on conceptual and analytical capabilities; the capacity to synthesise and interpret differing arguments; the ability to solve complex problems; the facility to assess the provenance and reliability of evidence (a task which has become significantly more challenging in the digital age); and the aptitude to reason ethically. Many of these skills are born of academic scholarship. They need to be taught alongside technical competences if our mission is to prepare students for a fast-changing future. They are central to cognitive flexibility and the exercise of creativity.

Pedagogy is also important. Emotional intelligence needs to underpin teaching method. For a future world it is already apparent that successful application of intellectual attributes will depend on students learning how to work as part of a team, to negotiate, to coordinate and to co-design. They need the training to facilitate collective decisions. Our students are now much less likely to live their working lives in large, hierarchical corporations. They need to be trained for mobility across less structured workplace environments and for the responsible exercise of autonomy.

Perhaps universities need to go back to the future. Enterprise skills are important. But if all that our students gain from us are specific vocational and professional competencies, we will fail to instil in them the intellectual resilience that they require for change. Many of our graduates will shift their careers. Many more will discover that their careers transform from within. Their success will depend not on a credential but on the intellectual skills they can display in a future world that we still see only through a glass, darkly.

Professor Peter Shergold AC is Chancellor at Western Sydney University. This article was originally delivered at the 'What Should Universities Be?' conference.

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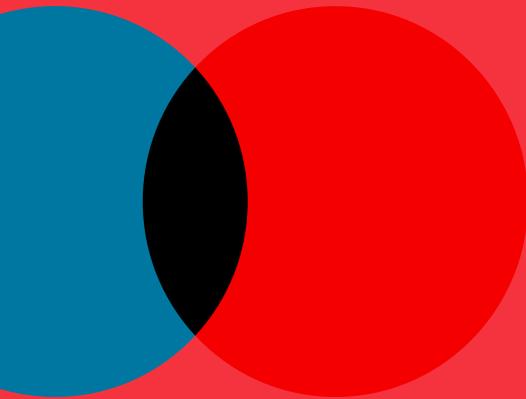
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Airport draws attention away from uni growth hub

PROFESSOR BARNEY GLOVER AO AND DR MICHAEL SPENCE AC

Sydney's west is the site of Australia's highest and most ethnically diverse population growth. It's also Australia's third largest and fastest growing economy.

But when it comes to western Sydney, the national conversation seemingly starts and finishes with the new airport to open at Badgerys Creek in the city's south west in 2026. This ignores the considerable economic output and growth potential the region already has in its Greater Parramatta and the Olympic Peninsula sub-region.

This more centrally located slice of western Sydney is the site of the country's most immediate and beneficial socioeconomic transformation, delivering employment, investment and industry growth already at a far greater scale than the much anticipated Western Sydney Airport.

Universities are central to this surge in activity. If harnessed by industry and government, the gains universities are making here will drive the success of Greater Sydney, new airport included, and the nation. And it starts, like all great cities, with better transport and governance.

Our institutions – the University of Sydney and Western Sydney University – have embedded histories across this area. The original Westmead Hospital was designed and built by a committee chaired by the vice-chancellor of the University of Sydney, and its creation involved about 200 academic staff.

This hospital and the region it supports is about to be transformed again into a centre of international excellence. The University of Sydney will invest $500 million to develop a major comprehensive campus at Westmead Hospital and surrounds. It is projected to attract 6000 students and 300 staff by 2030. Western Sydney University's own Westmead redevelopment will attract 2500 students by 2021, in addition to the 22,000 already at its Parramatta campuses.

A further $3 billion has been committed to the development of a multidisciplinary Westmead health, research and education precinct by the NSW government and the private sector and means in this location alone student numbers will grow to more than 30,000 over the next two decades.

In Parramatta, Western Sydney University attracted $220 million in industry-partnered investment to establish the 14-storey Peter Shergold Building in 2017. A collaboration between Western Sydney University and UNSW Sydney, will see the emergence of a nearly 30,000sqm, 19 storey Engineering Innovation hub opposite Parramatta Station to align with record infrastructure investment occurring across the region by 2050.

This sustained commitment on the part of our universities has had a clear impact on the region: about 30 per cent of the population in this region holds a university degree, compared to less than 20 per cent for the rest of Sydney. Since 2011, there has been a 7.1 per cent increase in the proportion of tertiary qualification holders within the region, far outstripping the rest of Sydney (3.4 per cent), NSW (3 per cent) or Australia (4.3 per cent).

We argue that Australia's true knowledge economy is not situated in our capital cities but here at the heart of the Greater West. This is a global advantage. Universities are doing our part in realising that advantage but we can't do it alone. For knowledge-job momentum to continue, two pre-conditions are required.

Without question, transport is a critical success factor for every major economic centre. The $20 billion plus Sydney West Metro and $2 billion Parramatta Light Rail project will play a crucial role in unlocking the region's potential. Rapidly delivering both stages one and two of the Light Rail is imperative to keeping up the area's demonstrable economic growth.

A co-ordination entity would mean policy, planning and investment decisions can be taken in an effective manner.

Governance is essential in achieving our goal. The Commonwealth and NSW governments formed a Western City Aerotropolis Authority. But to leverage the Greater Parramatta and Olympic Peninsula's strengths, a co-ordination entity on a similar scale would mean the necessary policy, planning and investment decisions can be taken in an effective manner.

Support for university infrastructure, start-up incubators and accelerators across Greater Parramatta and the Olympic Peninsula on the part of the NSW and Commonwealth governments should also be prioritised just as much as large-scale industry attraction. This is how we develop a knowledge economy into a sustainable ecosystem, which is when the broader societal benefits really start to accrue.

Greater Parramatta and the Olympic Peninsula could be the lynchpin that unlocks Sydney's potential as a sustainable, thriving megacity – and an example for other cities to follow.

Professor Barney Glover AO is Vice-Chancellor and President of Western Sydney University and Dr Michael Spence AC is Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Sydney. This article was originally published in the Australian Financial Review on 11 November 2019.

A safer city for women is a city that is safer for everyone

LUCY TURNBULL AO

In her seminal text, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities,* renowned American urbanist Jane Jacobs said "When we deal with cities we are dealing with life at its most complex and intense. Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody".

Historically, the typical user of urban spaces has been the young, professional, able-bodied white male. In part, because urban planning and design has long been the domain of this demographic.

However, as social norms change and the rigidity of gender roles gradually softens, the typical user and uses of our urban spaces has broadened.

It is imperative our design and planning outcomes do more than respond to existing uses.

Truly inclusive cities and public spaces need to respond to inequalities by creating new opportunities and new behaviours – where women can take up space, participate in public life and feel safe.

Nothing affects a woman's ability to enjoy the city more than not feeling safe. Research indicates that when women are or feel unsafe, they'll quit jobs that require them to work late, stop socialising at night with friends and even limit their access to night classes and further education.

The Community Council for Australia's "Australia We Want – Second Report" in 2019 found that one in two women do not feel safe walking home at night, compared to one in five men.

Another report, "Everyday Sexism" released by the Australia Institute in 2015, said nine in 10 Australian women have experienced street harassment and modified their behaviour in response.

Planners, designers, architects, policy makers and all of us involved in city shaping are well positioned to lead the charge in creating a more equitable built environment.

Because so many of our cities have been designed by men, for men, they reflect the often 'linear' lives that many men live – going from home to work and back again.

There is little accounting for the childcare drop-off, the stop at the grocery store – the unpaid labour traditionally performed by women over many short journeys throughout the day.

We can't change the share of this unpaid work through planning and design, but we can support it.

Making our city more female-friendly brings wider social and productivity benefits. I've long said that a city that works for women, works for everyone.

We want to be a city that attracts the best and brightest female minds and encourages them to share their talents, know-how and work ethic in our industries. We want them to fully participate in the social and cultural opportunities Greater Sydney offers.

We can only achieve this if we are a city where women feel safe, comfortable, and experience high levels of amenity and accessibility.

We should be pushing for our public spaces to be well-lit after dark and creating functional, quality public spaces that prevent social isolation.

A female-friendly city has flow on benefits for our families and those that depend on women, it's a city that is inclusive for all.

Footpaths, buildings and public transport that can accommodate a mother with a pram, in turn can also accommodate a wheelchair, making moving around the city easier for people living with disability.

I know I speak on behalf of everyone at the Greater Sydney Commission when I say that we're privileged to have Plan International Australia and the Committee for Sydney working with us in this space.

Both groups have done considerable groundwork in investigating what makes women of all ages feel unsafe in the city. Thank you for sharing your work and collaborating with us on this journey.

On International Women's Day 2020 I look forward to launching a Charter for Women's Safety in the City.

The Charter will be an important milestone in making Greater Sydney a city where women and girls always feel safe and can fully participate in the social and economic opportunities it offers.

We want to establish a tangible way forward that improves not just physical safety for girls and women but makes them feel safe and capable of going about their lives free from harassment and fear.

Our intention is for concrete commitments that can change thinking and drive the actions of planners and service providers to make Greater Sydney a safer and more inclusive place, where every citizen is able to participate safely and without fear.

Lucy Turnbull AO is Chief Commissioner of the Greater Sydney Commission and recipient of an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from Western Sydney University. This is an excerpt of a speech delivered at the A City for People – Women and Safety in the City symposium.

M4 a symbol of failure we're forced to pay to use

DR ANDY MARKS

They're rebuilding the Berlin Wall. Not in Eastern Europe, but between Parramatta and Wentworthville. At least that's what it looks like.

Along a renovated section of the M4, monolithic concrete slabs are being stacked to fashion a noise barrier that must be more than six metres high. So high, only a determined ibis perched atop a smog addled branch is visible to the driver. As I lurch past it, daily, in snarling traffic I can't resist the chant, "build a wall… build a wall."

The M4 should be walled off. It ought to be hidden. It represents a failure of policy, of planning and imagination. Worse, a failure we're forced to pay for the privilege of using.

Every taxpayer dollar spent on the M4, and roads like it around Australia, is money diverted from investment in public transport. Pointedly, it's funds withheld from the real answer: more jobs closer to where people live.

A Melbourne Institute report reveals Sydneysiders spend an average 71 minutes a day commuting. For most western Sydney residents, that time is greater, and it is predominantly spent in a car, often motionless, staring at a concrete wall. At least the Berlin one had good graffiti: the Brezhnev-Honecker "fraternal kiss"!

The average commute grind around the country's major cities is little better: 65 minutes in Melbourne, 67 in Brisbane, 56 in Adelaide, and 59 in Perth. Nationally, an increase of 23 per cent over the past 15 years.

It sounds obvious but new roads won't fix this. Just as East Berlin couldn't hold back the West's promise of progressive politics, more asphalt won't forestall the need to properly address the real issue. Jobs.

All three levels of government have signed up to answer this question, in western Sydney at least, where they've promised to deliver "200,000 knowledge jobs" by 2038 under a "City Deal". But they're failing in two very important areas.

In the previous NSW parliamentary term, the NSW government spent in excess of $35 million alone on supporting start-ups in the Sydney CBD. Comparatively, just $1 million was invested in western Sydney, effectively abandoning the generational development of a start-up ecosystem for the region with nation's largest concentration of small and medium enterprises.

Federally, the Coalition has, since 2017, frozen funding for university enrolments, locking in degree attainment rates in some areas of western Sydney of less than half

the national average. This is the exact opposite of what a government committed to "knowledge" jobs should be doing.

Breaking down barriers to job creation is the task that deserves the full and urgent attention of our parliamentarians. Not roads. Not a wall.

Dr Andy Marks is Assistant Vice-Chancellor at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Sydney Morning Herald on 30 July 2019.

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DR ANDY MARKS
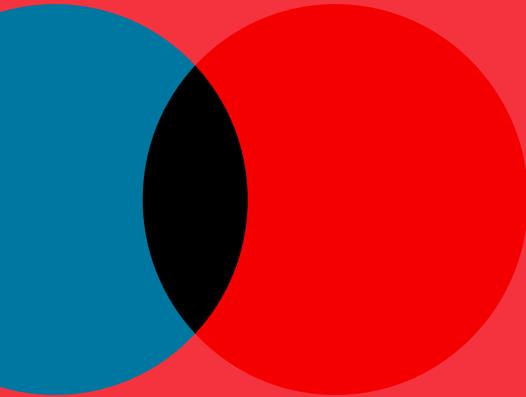
Energy from waste in Western Sydney

DAVID BORGER

Thirty years ago, there was strong public angst when an airport for Western Sydney was first proposed. Now we have a 21st century transport hub under construction that will directly link the west to the world, and ambition for an Aerotropolis that will create jobs and opportunity for thousands of locals.

People have come to see the airport as what it is: a fantastic symbol of our economic and social maturity. Many wonder why, in retrospect, they didn't get on board earlier. Rather than travel from Minchinbury to Mascot people can travel a short distance and be up, up and away on holiday.

I hope we don't have to put up with 30 years of poorly informed oppositionism before Western Sydney becomes the first city in NSW to take a leaf out of clean, green Europe's book and start safely transforming its household waste into energy to power our growing city.

It's time for a reality check.

Because of the quarter acre block and our wide open spaces, we have imagined that we can keep landfilling our rubbish indefinitely. In reality, land is finite and as our cities grow, we cannot afford not to follow cities like Paris, Copenhagen and Dublin in looking for better, more eco-friendly alternatives. At least 492 cities and towns in Europe are living happily alongside waste to energy facilities – reducing their landfills and powering their communities.

Turning useless landfill into green energy that increases the available supply and helps drive household power bills down – what could be smarter? Our local councils have been looking for solutions to the waste crisis and here is one.

The claim that this technology isn't safe and proven does not stand up to scrutiny. The scientific evidence is well and truly in. These facilities are operating to the world's toughest air quality standards across Europe.

The activists worried about impacts on population should have a look at places like Copenhagen where the nearest homes are just 300 metres away. They will see a community that has embraced reusing its rubbish as an energy form to heat their houses and power their schools and hospitals.

My understanding is that the much talked about ash doesn't end up as particulates in the air but is collected and reused as road base – another example of smart European technology that is better for the planet.

It's safe and proven technology, it creates power, it reuses waste and it creates jobs. Three things we need in Western Sydney.

Policy change is important for a mature global city. Just because we're 'down under' doesn't mean we have to be oppositionist to ideas from Europe, which has long been at the forefront of smarter energy use and smarter waste management.

This is the next step to a mature global city that Western Sydney aspires to be. We need to trust that the planning processes in NSW will be rigorous.

We should keep an open mind when it comes to managing our waste in the most effective way possible and recognise that every idea should be given a fair hearing through the planning approval processes – not ruled out by default.

David Borger is Executive Director at the Western Sydney Business Chamber and recipient of an Honorary Fellowship from Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Daily Telegraph on 17 October 2019.

Enough talk about job equality. Just do it, bosses

PROFESSOR PRU GOWARD

I can hardly remember when we did not talk about diversity. Yes, it used to be just about women, but we have moved on now, recognising that inclusivity is more than hiring the sisters of the blokes we have always taken on.

Whatever we mean diversity to be, the truth is we are still not actually doing it. We just love talking about it, whether its pronouncements from the Male Champions of Change or in endless seminars and workshops. The increase in the percentage of female executives, to say nothing of female carpenters, car detailers or painters and decorators, has been glacial.

And that is after not one but two generations of talking about it. The same can probably be said for ethnic representation at leadership levels, and we all know the person from the wrong side of the tracks who made their way to the top – because there are so few of them.

No wonder Ita Buttrose, now ABC chair, is calling for increased diversity of presenters and journalists. Although by the standards of other media outlets, diversity at the ABC looks, ahem, strong on the face of it, there is clearly still further to go. Taking her staff to Bankstown for a "boot camp" was a good idea.

But wait. Diversity is not rocket science. You want more women as executives, board members, construction hands, Telstra technicians or air traffic controllers? You want more ethnicity? You want more kids from public schools? Do what the books say: first, you measure what you have so there is a benchmark. What gets measured gets done. Then you do it.

If the chief executive or board chair wants more women in the team, they should say so. Make it an instruction. Ditto race; make sure the number of freckle-faces around the room reflects the community you're serving. Ditto disabilities, notwithstanding a job's physical requirements. Ditto – and here is a big unmentionable elephant in the room – class.

(I love the way Australians tell the world there's no class system here. Of course there is. Only its rules are so strict and masonic, you cannot quite put your finger on why, for instance, everyone in the organisation lives in the inner west and sends their child to a uniform-wearing selective high school because they don't believe in elites.)

So the boss gives the instruction, the HR department (another culture of sub-dominant females who do the hard grind while the blokes get the glory) develops a strategic three-year plan to implement it; develop the systems, the transparency, the dashboards, the recruitment strategy, the changes needed in internal

communications, team meeting frameworks and other aspects of company practice and culture. There are, of course, always the toilets. I would love a roll of three-ply for every boss, particularly in smaller firms, who told me they could not employ women because they did not have the toilet facilities.

I digress. After all this well-researched and carefully managed implementation, the line managers are held to account for their hiring profiles in their performance contracts. Lo and behold, by the end of the second year, the numbers tell the story. There are more women, there are more people of other ethnicities, there are people who went to different schools and grew up in another tribe, and the company is a happier place with a rising share price.

Yes, I was joking. That was a fairytale. Bosses much prefer general exhortations, the celebration of special days and pet minority group employees to getting it done. They even like the special drinks with the in-house women's group. But they will always want hiring flexibility – because when you advertise a job, while there might be a good group of competent women, don't you always want to be able to take that brilliant man who outshines them all? There's always a reason, in my experience, not to do it.

Does this make quotas the answer? Only if the organisation does not trust its line managers to do as instructed or if it can't be bothered to give them guidance on how to go about implementing diversity. In truth, quotas are heavy-handed tools. Essentially, they are imposed on, rather than embraced by, an unwilling or incompetent management. Better for the senior leadership team to take the management on a diversity journey. (Sacking the management is another option.)

It is simply time to hold corporate leaders to account; if they want diversity they need to order it done. Toilets don't cost much.

I am not one for shares but if anyone reading this owns them, why not turn up at the next shareholders' meeting and demand to see the diversity plan? At least the chief executive who has the bottle to admit there is not one will know better than to turn up at the next glamorous diversity cocktail event.

Or maybe that is another fairytale.

Pru Goward is a former Liberal NSW government minister and former sex discrimination commissioner. She is a Professor of Social Interventions and Policy at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Sydney Morning Herald on 17 October 2019.

Why Morrison's preferred M-word is migrant rather than multicultural

PROFESSOR TIM SOUTPHOMMASANE
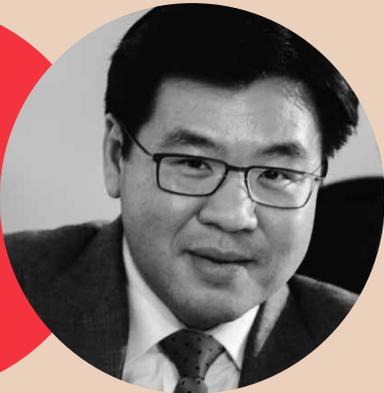
Not everyone is a fan of multiculturalism. That includes the current Prime Minister. At least, that's one conclusion you can draw from his aversion to the word. This week, Scott Morrison announced that local councils would be compelled to hold citizenship ceremonies on January 26. Australia Day should be reserved for conferring citizenship to migrants, given that "Australia is the most successful migrant country on earth".

It's a fine sentiment in one respect. While there is disagreement about whether January 26 is the right date for Australia Day, few would dispute the nation's historic success with immigration.

But Morrison's favoured choice of words – his distancing from multiculturalism - represents a departure from predecessor Malcolm Turnbull. As PM, Turnbull was fond of describing us as "the most successful multicultural society in the world". He spoke often about the value of "mutual respect".

This isn't about splitting hairs. As I'll explain, there's an important difference between saying we're a migrant country and saying that we're also a multicultural society.

It's not surprising that Morrison is no multicultural enthusiast. He represents an electorate in the Sutherland Shire, not known for being a beacon of diversity. Back in 2011, the Herald reported that Morrison urged his Coalition colleagues to adopt an anti-Muslim strategy to capitalise on fears about terrorism - a strategy rebuffed by the shadow cabinet. As a former hardline immigration minister, Morrison isn't someone associated with cosmopolitan values.

To be fair, those on the Australian centre-right of politics tend to be suspicious of diversity. But it wasn't always like this. Malcolm Fraser was an ardent supporter of multiculturalism when he was PM.

Only from the 1980s did conservative hostility to multiculturalism harden. Historian Geoffrey Blainey, who sparked a debate about Asian immigration, regarded it as leading to a "nation of tribes". John Howard held similar views. During his decade in office, Howard avoided using the word multicultural, believing that Australian culture is singular.

It's hard to see how any national culture could ever be one-dimensional. But for Howard there was a cultural unity in Gallipoli, Don Bradman and white picket fences. Howard's view became centre-right orthodoxy. While Turnbull didn't share it, Morrison does.

And has for some time. Back in 2013, as shadow minister for immigration, Morrison called for "a new post-multiculturalism agenda". He acknowledged his personal reluctance to use the term multiculturalism because it "runs the risk of fuelling division and polarising the debate".

Quoting at length the 19th century NSW premier Henry Parkes, Morrison argued that "Australians share a special kinship". History buffs will know that Parkes appealed in the 1890s to the "crimson thread of kinship" when he called for the colonies to federate. Parkes sought to define a new Australian nation by white British blood.

Morrison's attitude to multiculturalism and identity has now come to the fore. Earlier this month, he responded to the far-right rally in St Kilda by condemning "ugly racial protests". If he believed in multiculturalism, he probably would have come out stronger in naming the racist hatred of white supremacists. He wouldn't have left it open for some to think he was going soft on neo-Nazi extremists.

The overwhelming revulsion at white supremacists on the beach shows the Australian public isn't so conflicted. Multiculturalism has become a central feature of the national identity. Year after year, the Scanlon Foundation's survey on social cohesion finds that about 85 per cent of us agree that multiculturalism is good for the country. That's about as close to unanimous as you can get (and roughly 25 percentage points higher than the number who voted yes for marriage equality).

If anything, now should be the time for political leaders to reinforce the success of our diverse society. There's a need to counter the alarming growth of far-right nationalism and creeping normalisation of racism.

Which brings me back to the question: what's the difference between us being a successful migrant nation and a successful multicultural society? To say a place is a migrant country doesn't really say much about how migrants are accepted. A country could demand, for instance, that migrants discard all their cultural baggage and speak only English once they get here. You can take in migrants but insist on assimilation. That's what we had in the years immediately following World War II.

Declaring that our society is multicultural signals something different. It says that our country isn't threatened by diversity, but is confident enough to celebrate it. This isn't about cultural relativism. At no time has a policy of multiculturalism sanctioned anything that runs counter to individual rights, the rule of law and democracy.

The idea of multiculturalism simply says that there isn't only one way someone can be authentically Australian. It says that everyone shouldn't just be treated equally, but also be comfortable in their own skin. It says that being Australian shouldn't prevent anyone from also being free to express their cultural heritage and identity.

Now why would such freedom and liberty be so threatening?

Tim Soutphommasane is Professor of Practice at The University of Sydney and recipient of an Honorary Doctorate from Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Sydney Morning Herald on 19 January 2019.

What the bid to unseat Josh Frydenberg reveals about white, self-defined progressives

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR ALANA LENTIN

In response to the news that a challenge has been mounted against Treasurer Josh Frydenberg's eligibility to sit in the Australian parliament under section 44 of the constitution, "the rules" have been cited, as have double standards.

One of the arguments goes if Labor and Greens parliamentarians were forced to resign their seats because they were found to be dual nationals, it is hypocritical of the government to shield "their man".

I have long been critical of the tendency of both sides of Australian politics to mobilise the history of the Holocaust as a defence against criticism of its racist migration policies, the punitive asylum detention regime in particular.

It is not lost on me that Josh Frydenberg happily defends his government's policy of locking up those who seek asylum by boat on Manus Island and Nauru and keeping countless others in limbo "on shore" while claiming special status because his mother fled the Nazis and the Hungarian fascists to come to Australia.

As Malcolm Turnbull put it when he was prime minister, to legally challenge Frydenberg over his eligibility represents a failure to think "a little deeper about the history of the Holocaust".

In response, the anti-LNP Twitterati, which has made Josh Frydenberg its bete noir, retorts that "making it about religion" is cynical, the mounting of a #strawman. Nevertheless, the facts are, as Turnbull put it, that Frydenberg's mother, Erica Strauss, was born in the Budapest Ghetto in 1943, and although she herself survived the Holocaust, coming to Australia as a refugee in 1950, other family members did not.

Neglecting this, the case in favour of stripping Frydenberg of his parliamentary seat rests on the narrow legality: the fact that his mother possessed a Hungarian passport between 1943 and 1948.

The rules cannot be broken, even if – some acquiesce – they may need to be revisited.

But what are the rules in the case of Josh Frydenberg's eligibility under section 44, and what does the insistence on applying them to him "fairly" mean for how white, self-defined "progressives" in Australia understand antisemitism?

It is curious that some of those welcoming Frydenberg's potential demise have accused me of picking and choosing to whom the rules apply depending on who "I like".

In the liberal mind, racism is not about systemic discrimination enacted by the state and perpetuated by the dominant culture, but something nebulously to do with in-groups and out-groups.

In Australia, the same cult of fairness that insists 200 years of colonial domination can be redressed by giving everyone a "fair go", upholds "the rules" as the ultimate arbiters of that fair treatment. The rules, from this perspective, are not seen as the nationalist instruments that they are in practice, used not to distribute fairness but to delineate those who understand them from those who do not, for whom they were not written.

Antisemitism against white European Jews, undoubtedly a form of racism, nevertheless differs from that experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, black and brown people, migrants and refugees. While these groups are racialised as powerless and invisible within white dominated societies, antisemitism is a racism that envisions itself as "punching up".

No matter the actual power held by individual Jews, antisemitism construes Jews as having the upper hand over the "ordinary" person.

The interests of Jews are equated with the interests of capital and the state. Since the birth of the Zionist project and the construction of the State of Israel on land belonging to indigenous Palestinians, Jewishness has also been associated with violent ethno-nationalism and colonialism. The interests of Jews and those of Israel are often conflated, thus erasing anti-Zionist Jews such as myself and countless others acting among Jews both to undo Zionism and expose racism in all its forms, as the Never Again is Now movement in the United States amply demonstrates.

Conveniently putting this aside, the dominant message regarding Frydenberg's section 44 dispute is, as one Twitter user put it to me, that one cannot have "two masters", or a dual allegiance to more than one state.

It is clear that Frydenberg's "master" has never been nor will it ever be Hungary, the state which so nearly ended the life of his mother as an infant and from which she was forced to flee, a state which is currently enacting fascistic anti-migrant and anti-Roma policies, and in which antisemitism is rampant again.

The unspoken "other master" then is Israel.

Indeed, it has been stated that Israel's right of return for Jews also contributes to Frydenberg's ineligibility, although neither he nor his parents have ever been citizens.

Yet, the belief that Jews always hold the interests of other Jews, and by association the Jewish state, over those of their country of citizenship is an evergreen trope of antisemitism. Anti-nationalist, diaspora Jews are not helped in combatting this by Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu, who claims to be the leader of world Jewry, despite the fact that greater numbers of young Jews outside of Israel are openly eschewing the Zionist project.

But these facts are ignored by those for whom antisemitism trips so easily off the tongue. To mention antisemitism is always to weaponise, to mobilise strawmen, and to align with the 1%.

There is one thing that those determined to nail Frydenberg have understood about me and other leftwing Jews. We are anti-nationalist; we have *no* master, never mind two.

Mobilising old antisemitic tropes to bring down a political enemy by using rules established by a white colonial nation-state does not contribute to the fight against racism, no matter what we think about Frydenberg's role in maintaining Australia's border regime.

The long fight against racism and fascism may do well to remember the lesson taught to Frantz Fanon by his teacher: '"When you hear someone insulting the Jews pay attention; he is talking about you."

Those fighting to unseat Josh Frydenberg are not our allies in the fight to undo racial-colonial nationalism in Australia.

Alana Lentin is Associate Professor in Cultural and Social Analysis at the Institute for Culture and Society and the School of Humanities and Communication Arts at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Guardian on 7 August 2019.

Most migrants on bridging visas aren't 'scammers', they're well within their rights

DR SHANTHI ROBERTSON AND HENRY SHERRELL

Recent articles in the media have raised concerns about the rapid rise in migrants living and working in Australia on bridging visas, whose numbers have more than doubled in the last four years.

A bridging visa is granted to anyone who makes a visa application from within Australia. This form of visa comes into effect if the visa someone already holds expires while they're in the country.

As of March 31, there were 229,242 people in Australia who held a bridging visa, the highest-ever figure in Australian history. A significant portion of bridging visa applicants are skilled and family migrants, often partners of Australian permanent residents and citizens.

But living on a bridging visa is a form of migration limbo as the Department of Home Affairs does not disclose how long any individual case may take to process. Migrants do not know if their application will be approved tomorrow, or if they will be waiting on a bridging visa for another year or more.

What's more, employers and labour recruiters, especially in the horticultural industry, are taking advantage of these migrants as cheap temporary labour.

Evidence is emerging that increasing numbers of migrants arriving on tourist visas are applying for humanitarian or protection visas once they're in the country.

This is the group Kristina Keneally, the Shadow Minister for Home Affairs, refers to as "airplane people". She criticises the Coalition for trumpeting a hard-line approach to offshore detention and "stopping the boats" when asylum seekers are arriving by other means and seeking protection onshore in increasing numbers.

This exploitation of temporary visa pathways is a growing concern and warrants investigation. But associating all bridging visas with "scammers" and "illegal migrants" misses the bigger picture of the role bridging visas play in our changing immigration regime and the inequalities they can create for migrants who are operating completely within the rules of the system.

They meet all the legal criteria for migration and are simply waiting for their applications to be processed by the Department of Home Affairs. For example, while there were 28,000 applicants for onshore asylum visas in 2017-18, there were more than 125,000 people holding a bridging visa and waiting for their permanent visa application to be finalised.

Perhaps the primary reason for the so-called "blowout" in bridging visas – as quoted in an ABC article – is simply because more legitimate applications for skilled and family migration are now made in Australia and waiting times for visa processing have increased.

Compare permanent partner visas in 2009-10 and 2017-18. There were about 53,000 applicants for partner visas in 2009-10. And there were 27,000 people waiting in the queue in June 2010.

Eight years later, there were 54,000 applicants for partner visas, but with fewer places available (39,800) and more than 80,000 people waiting in the queue.

This means if you applied for a partner visa in June 2010, you were looking at about a six to eight month wait. And by June 2018, this had become around a two-year wait.

A consequence of under-resourcing in the Department of Home Affairs is that the time migrants spend living on bridging visas is increasing as the time taken to process a visa application grows. What's more, waiting times for sponsored skilled work visas like the Employer Nomination Scheme can take up to 19 months.

These long waits create significant barriers to the economic and social inclusion of these migrants.

One of the most significant issues is the stigma around bridging visas in the employment market. Although many of these migrants have in-demand skills, local work experience, and the strong desire to work, many Australian employers refuse to hire workers on bridging visas, leading to deskilling, exploitation and financial stress.

Long waits on bridging visas can create specific vulnerabilities for women on partner visas, making them highly dependent on their partners, and often unable to access adequate support in situations of domestic abuse.

In research conducted on the experiences of migrants on the "staggered pathway" from temporariness to permanence, migrants report being denied mobile phone contracts, personal loans or rental accommodation because of their bridging visas.

Travel restrictions placed on some bridging visas also prevent migrants from travelling home to care for family members or attend family events.

Transparent and faster processing would mitigate many of the issues with bridging visas, whether for those exploiting the system or for those legitimate migrants stuck in the indefinite wait.

Minimising time spent on bridging visas means onshore migrants can participate fully in both the economy and the community.

Dr Shanthi Robertson is Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University and Henry Sherrell is a researcher at Australian National University. This article was originally published in The Conversation on 7 August 2019.

Australia's art institutions don't reflect our diversity: it's time to change that

PROFESSOR JAMES ARVANITAKIS

For most of us, it is easy to pass judgement on others while finding it difficult to reflect on ourselves.

Diversity Arts Australia recently undertook a research project, Shifting the Balance, with the assistance of Western Sydney University and BYP Group. We investigated representation of culturally and/or linguistically diverse (CALD) Australians in leadership positions within our major arts, screen and cultural organisations.

The focus was on CALD rather than other measures because we wanted to reflect the Australian Human Rights Commission's classification of cultural backgrounds. Where participants self-identified as First Nations people we recorded this data but we did not include it in this report (we aim to expand the focus in collaboration at a future date).

We began with an analysis of the publicly available biographical information about board chairs and members, CEOs, creative directors, senior executives and award panel judges from 200 major cultural organisations, awards and government bodies. These findings were then returned to these organisations to confirm or review the data.

We made it clear the information would be non-identifiable – our aim, after all, is to identify issues, not attack organisations.

It did not take long for some of our funders to call us about concerns that had been raised with them regarding our research.

A number of organisations and individuals told us they would not participate. We were accused of not understanding the complexity of the organisations or, indeed, diversity.

One respondent explained to us that, because their spouse was ethnically Chinese, they did not see themselves as "Anglo-Australian". Privately, I was even told by one potential funder that migrant populations did not prioritise "the arts" - so such research was a waste of time.

This sort of sensitivity demonstrates exactly why we need this research: many Australians are not aware of how far their misunderstanding of lack of diversity extends.

Despite such reactions, we made the decision to persist with the research. When organisations refused to participate, we thanked them for their consideration, removed them from our database and replaced them with alternative ones.

The findings were staggering. Despite public commitments to diversity, leaders, directors and board members of Australia's major cultural bodies are overwhelmingly from non-migrant backgrounds.

Less than half of our nation's museums, music and opera companies, screen organisations and theatre companies have any representatives from diverse cultural or linguistic heritage among their leadership teams.

Less than 10% of artistic directors come from culturally diverse backgrounds.

The literary and publishing industry had the highest CALD representation among leaders, 14%. This figure in theatre, dance and stage was just 5% – mirroring numbers found by the Australian Human Rights Commission when looking at the broader corporate sector.

Australia's arts sector sees itself – and is seen by others – as progressive and inclusive. So understanding why it falls short in actual representation is complex.

England's primary art funding body, Arts Council England, has released an annual diversity report since 2016. In the introduction to this year's report, chair Nicholas Serota noted "in some respects there are improvements; in others we are still treading water".

Writing on this for the Guardian, Clive Nwonka, a fellow at the London School of Economics, argued that:

> *A combination of industries placing economic interests over social interests, resistance and disinterest from stakeholders, and poorly conceptualised initiatives left diversity in the wilderness. […] The sector became littered with the corpses of failed diversity schemes.*

While it is difficult to compare the experience of different nations, the response from our research shows similar resistance in some sections of the community.

Australia has a history of separating "ethnic art" from the mainstream arts community. Non-English language companies peaked in the late 1980s, with

companies such as the Greek-language Filiki Players in Melbourne and the Italian-language Doppio Teatro in Adelaide.

Despite almost 50% of Australians having at least one parent born overseas, this separation between "mainstream" and "ethnic" art has continued.

Through many symposium and discussion forums, we confirmed many artists and creatives felt major organisations often saw diversity as the domain of minor organisations.

This bias is likely to be unconscious. Recognition of such bias within orchestras saw the introduction of "blind auditions", which have increased the representation of female musicians in top orchestras from 5% in 1970 to over 30% today.

The arts are there to tell the stories that capture the rich tapestry of our nation – and to do this, we must seek out artists and artistic leaders that reflect this diversity.

The cultural and screen sectors must set targets, design, and implement diversity inclusion plans. These should not be undertaken via a tick-the box-training session, but progressive and ongoing strategies that are embedded into the organisation.

We need strong arts policy (Australia doesn't have a national arts policy at all) with diversity at its core.

As in the UK, funding bodies must tie funding to meeting minimum diversity targets, ensuring organisations reflect on what it means to tell an Australian story.

The arts act as a mirror to who we are. If the arts community simply reflects on Australia of a bygone era we fail to acknowledge our complexity, exclude most Australians and lack authenticity.

Finally, while 22 organisations refused to participate in our research, and many did not respond, we must remember 49% did send through their data - giving us the potential for an arts and screen community that really reflects Australia.

James Arvanitakis is Professor in Cultural and Social Analysis at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Conversation on 27 August 2019.

" The arts act as a mirror to who we are. If the arts community simply reflects on Australia of a bygone era we fail to acknowledge our complexity, exclude most Australians and lack authenticity. "

PROFESSOR JAMES ARVANITAKIS
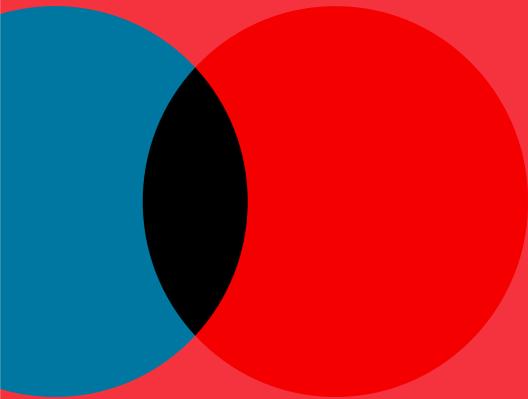
Our culture affects the way we look after ourselves. It should shape the health care we receive, too

DR CLARICE TANG AND DR SABRINA GUPTA

For South Asians, there's a distinct difference between "rice with curry" and "curry with rice". When we spoke to Indian and Sri Lankan migrants with type 2 diabetes and heart disease, they told us the advice they received on ways to reduce the quantity of staples like rice in their diet was difficult to implement.

This was because it doesn't match with their perception of a "proper" meal – that is, a lot of rice and a little bit of curry. Receiving dietary advice not tailored to their cultural needs created a feeling that clinicians didn't understand the social value they placed on traditional foods.

This acted as a barrier to effectively managing their diets, and in turn, their conditions.

While Australia's multiculturalism enhances the fabric of society, the health outcomes of some of Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse groups are poor in comparison to the majority population. We looked at type 2 diabetes and heart disease partly because these conditions are experienced more commonly in migrant groups.

Importantly, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds tend to have lower levels of health literacy than people born in Australia. People with lower health literacy are less likely to access health care, and more likely to mismanage chronic health conditions (for example, by misinterpreting medical advice or medicine dosage instructions, or having a limited sense of severity of disease).

It's imperative to consider cultural and language differences if we want to achieve the best health outcomes for our diverse population.

Providing interpreting services in the patient's language is important, but not the only consideration. Even when someone is well-versed in English, medical terminology or jargon can be hard to comprehend.

In addition, conceptualisations of health and illness and ways of expressing these vary across cultural and language groups.

For example, a common expression for psychosomatic symptoms (where there may be no disease, but physical symptoms such as nausea may be related to mental stress) in either Hindi or Punjabi, is *dil* (heart) *doob* (sinking) *raha hai* (is).

This implies generalised illness, but its direct English translation would be "a sinking heart".

Another example is the use of ice on an acute injury. This is often seen as going against traditional Chinese medicine principles, upsetting the balance between Yin and Yang energies.

So the focus needs to go beyond language and include broader cultural considerations. For health professionals, this can be achieved by establishing trust with the patient and their family. It means being attuned, respectful and responsive to cultural differences in understandings of disease.

Cultural competency is the ability to work effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

Many professionals – not only health professionals – should now be aware of the term, with the recent proliferation of cultural competency training packages. These programs are designed to train staff to become more culturally competent by providing information about various cultures.

While these training packages are a good source of information, whether completing the package is enough to deem a person "culturally competent" is questionable.

Many such packages are delivered within a short time frame, leaving little scope for individual learners to reflect on their practices and develop practical strategies around how they can be more culturally responsive.

And these packages rarely include any follow-up assessments or evaluation to ascertain if their completion actually promotes more culturally responsive clinical practice.

While mandating training is an efficient way to ensure practice improvement and meet accreditation requirements, it can turn people away from being engaged with the learning.

Instead of mandating training, the focus should be on facilitating staff engagement with diverse groups. This might include celebrating cultural diversity by perhaps holding a diversity day in the workplace, where people are encouraged to showcase their cultures through performances, food and traditional outfits.

People need to develop an interest in engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse groups before being motivated to complete training.

Apart from equipping staff with knowledge and skills, we need to create a safe and respectful environment where people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities feel empowered to voice their opinions.

Strong partnerships between government, organisations and communities should see a gradual improvement in the engagement of people from culturally and linguistically diverse communities in health-care activities.

While cultural competency implies a skill that can be perfected, cultural responsiveness suggests provision of culturally appropriate care is an ongoing process involving self reflection and lifelong learning.

So rather than striving to be culturally competent, it may be more realistic to work towards the provision of culturally responsive health services.

Dr Clarice Tang is Senior Lecturer in Physiotherapy at Western Sydney University and Dr Sabrina Gupta is Associate lecturer at La Trobe University. This article was originally published in The Conversation on 13 June 2019.

1 in 3 new mums struggle to get their baby to sleep, but some women have a tougher time

PROFESSOR HANNAH DAHLEN, PROFESSOR VIRGINIA SCHMIED AND PROFESSOR CATHRINE FOWLER

Becoming a parent is a wonderful experience but it can also be incredibly daunting. There is no qualification or test you can take to make sure you're ready; you have to rely on life experience, advice from friends, family and experts, and trial and error.

But while most of the time we get parenting right, some people need more support than others.

Our research, published today in the journal BMJ Open, found that while every baby is different, some factors increase the likelihood new mothers will experience difficulties with early parenting. These include the mother's mental health, birth intervention or emergencies during labour, and lack of support.

More than 30% of new mothers in Australia report severe problems getting their baby to sleep and settle. This often results in exhaustion, and poorer mental and physical health.

Poor physical and mental health during pregnancy and after birth can also have significant short- and longer-term impacts on the health and development of the child. So treatment is vital.

Australia has a unique health system in place to support new parents who struggle to cope and their babies, including residential parenting services – sometimes referred to as "sleep schools" – such as Tresillian in New South Wales and Tweddle Child and Family Health Service in Victoria.

These services provide structured programs to help develop parenting skills. Parents attend and stay in the facility for three to four days and are guided through sleep, settling and feeding skills and strategies.

These services are mostly publicly funded and there are often waiting lists due to high demand.

We studied why some women and their partners end up requiring admission to residential parenting services in the first year after birth.

We looked at all births in NSW over 12 years and randomly analysed 300 medical records from women and babies who had a stay in residential parenting services in NSW. We then did in-depth interviews with women who used the services and focus groups with staff who worked there.

The primary reason women sought support in residential parenting services was for sleep and settling (83%).

Over half had a history of mental health issues.

During their stay, women used a number of services, including social workers (44%), psychologists (52%) and psychiatrists (4.5%).

Intervention in birth can leave women with negative feelings about the birth, leading to struggles with early parenting and depression. This can alter the way women engage with their baby, which can impact on the baby's development.

One in ten women said they had mental health issues related to the birth and many were traumatised by their births, especially where unexpected intervention had occurred, such as a caesarean section, forceps or vacuum, or the baby needing resuscitation or intensive care.

Around one in three babies (36%) admitted to residential parenting services had a history of reflux. We have found a strong link between reflux and intervention in birth, babies being born early and maternal mental health issues, particularly anxiety.

We also found women admitted to the service were more likely to:

- be admitted as a private patient
- be born in Australia
- have had their first baby
- have experienced intervention during the labour and birth (induction, forceps or vacuum birth, caesarean section, epidural and episiotomy)
- have twins
- have a boy
- have a baby who needed to be resuscitated at birth, go to intensive care, or who experienced birth trauma (particularly to the scalp)
- be aged in their 30s
- have little support.

Screening and support for psychological and social vulnerabilities needs to be routine.

Depending on the state or territory, most women in the public sector receive a "psychosocial" assessment from midwives when they first book in for care during pregnancy and again from child and family health services after they have had the baby. This screens for depression, anxiety, childhood abuse, domestic violence, support and stress.

But this is still not done routinely in the private sector where 25% of women give birth. This urgently needs to be prioritised, so all women can receive appropriate support.

Women need support to prepare for birth, which may include having a birth plan and quality childbirth education. This gives couples tools to manage the pain of labour, avoid unnecessary intervention and prepare for parenthood.

They also need health providers they know and trust. Women who have a midwife they know through the pregnancy, birth and postnatal period have fewer interventions, better outcomes and greater satisfaction than those who are allotted whoever is on duty that day.

Relationship-based care gives women the opportunity to discuss what happened afterwards and debrief.

Parents have lost the village it takes to raise a child and increasingly feel isolated and unsupported.

We need to have conversations with parents about how important this village will become and to start putting this support in place before the baby comes. This may be moving closer to your parents, finding a good parenting network, connecting with positive online support networks, and not feeling pressured to go back to work before you're ready.

Sharing the parenting and work arrangements as a couple can also help.

Hannah Dahlen and Virginia Schmied are Professors at the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Western Sydney University, and Cathrine Fowler is Professor at the University of Technology Sydney. This article was originally published in The Conversation on 24 September 2019.

'I didn't want to be homeless with a baby': young women share their stories of homelessness

JACKI MONTGOMERY, DR AILA KHAN AND PROFESSOR LOUISE YOUNG

Increasing numbers of women lack a safe and secure place to call home. But most women who are homeless are "invisible". You don't see these vulnerable women sleeping on the streets – most are forced into "couch-surfing", staying in crisis or temporary accommodation, or sleeping in their cars.

We interviewed past participants in the Vinnies CEO Sleepout and people who have experienced homelessness. The stories of women who are homeless highlight the many forms that homelessness and the attendant vulnerability can take.

The most frequent cause of their homelessness is family violence. From 2015-2017, the number of women hospitalised due to partner assault rose by 23%. In Australia, one woman is killed by a current or previous partner every nine days. A woman is hospitalised because of domestic violence every two hours.

The largest number of homeless women is between the ages of 25 and 34, a number that is increasing year on year.

Our study explores women's homelessness as part of wider study of the immediate and ripple effects of the Vinnies CEO Sleepout – an annual event where CEOs sleep rough for one night to raise funds and awareness.

Female CEOs are particularly likely to respond to the issue of women's homelessness, and to seek to raise others' awareness, once their awareness of it is raised. For example, CEO Jen Driscoll said she was staggered at the proportion of women and children who are homeless and unsafe.

You can't start to tackle an issue more broadly, unless you know what the issue is. It's not just about sleeping rough, it's about everything else that goes along with this path that leads you to the place of being homeless. And having a safe home is just a base-level requirement to being a human.

Priyanka, 31, has been couch-surfing for six months, hiding from her ex-husband. After emigrating from India, he had been unable to find secure work and their relationship deteriorated.

His physical assaults left Priyanka unable to go to work and she lost her job. She now fears for her life.

I just always feel like I'm on high alert. And the stress of not knowing where I'm going to live is huge.

Priyanka tries to hide the shame and embarrassment she feels from couch-surfing. Her Facebook feed tells family back home of a successful, happy life in Sydney.

Coreen, 25, left Gunnedah with her boyfriend for the bright lights of Sydney. He returned home after six months, leaving her isolated and broke. An online job ad she answered "turned out to be a private escort service, and at the time, I didn't feel I had much choice. She let me live there."

Eventually, Coreen left as all the money she made went to pay the rent.

> *I started working at other parlours around Sydney. Because when you work there, sometimes they let you stay there. I started taking drugs. With that kind of work, it got you through your shift.*

Coreen is now off drugs, seven months pregnant and staying at a refuge. Her future is uncertain – she doesn't want to return to sex work and feels she cannot return to Gunnedah.

Kim, 34, had been homeless for a dozen years after being kicked out of home at 18. She slept in cars and on couches and became pregnant with her daughter at 21.

> *Having my daughter saved my life. I didn't care much about myself before that, but I didn't want to be homeless with a baby.*

While living in a refuge, she was assaulted by a male worker. She applied for public housing and was placed on the New South Wales waiting list. With more than 52,000 applicants, the average wait time for a two-bedroom property in Sydney is over 10 years.

To survive, Kim endured a series of abusive relationships, just to keep a roof over her daughter's head.

> *Once, I was working as a nanny, and my ex showed up. I was trying to mind a baby and I had to phone the police. That got me fired.*

At 31, Kim was offered a public housing apartment, where she now lives. She is working with a domestic violence counsellor she met through Vinnies to overcome the psychological scars of years of abuse.

Kim will share her story at the next Vinnies CEO Sleepout on June 20.

The annual sleepout is in its 14th year and has raised more than A$50 million to provide essential services for people experiencing homelessness.

Female leaders make up about 19% of those participating in the CEO Sleepout, a slightly higher proportion than the 17.1% of CEOs in Australia who are female. Those who participate are motivated to make a difference. As one said:

> *I just have a tiny sliver of this experience sleeping out in the cold. The sleepout brings together people who have larger spheres of influence, who can exchange ideas and push the message out more broadly.*

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Period pain is impacting women at school, uni and work. Let's be open about it

DR MIKE ARMOUR, DR CHRISTINA CURRY AND DR FREYA MACMILLAN

Menstrual symptoms including pain, heavy bleeding and low mood may be linked to nearly nine days of lost productivity per woman every year, according to a new study published in the British Medical Journal this week.

The researchers evaluated lost productivity associated with menstrual symptoms, as measured by time off from work or school (absenteeism) and working or studying while feeling ill (presenteeism), in 32,748 Dutch women between the ages of 15 and 45.

While just under 14% of respondents said they had taken time off from work or school during their periods, more than 80% said they had continued to work or study while feeling unwell, and were less productive as a result.

These findings tell us we need to better recognise the impact menstrual symptoms are having on women.

We recently reviewed the literature and found that globally, almost three-quarters (71%) of adolescents and women under 25 reported having period pain.

Period pain (dysmenorrhoea) is perhaps the most common symptom associated with menstruation. It's characterised by pain in the lower abdomen that usually occurs just before or during the first few days of a woman's period. Period pain can be mild for some women, but more severe, and even debilitating, for others.

Primary dysmenorrhoea is the most common type of period pain and is mostly caused by changes in hormone-like compounds called prostaglandins, which are responsible for the cramping feeling many women report during their period.

Secondary dysmenorrhoea occurs when pain is caused by an underlying problem in the pelvis, such as endometriosis or adenomyosis.

In our research, one in five young women (20%) reported missing school or university due to period pain. Two in five (41%) said pain affected their concentration or performance in class.

Many of these young women run the risk of falling behind during their final years of schooling – a crucial time in their academic lives.

Women in our research also missed social activities, other school activities and sporting activities because of their menstrual symptoms. This is concerning

as social interaction and participation in physical activity are important for good health, particularly during adolescence.

Many women think of period pain and other menstrual symptoms as "normal". They don't always recognise that their pain may be a health problem, and often believe it's just something they need to "put up with".

So most young women use self care to manage the pain themselves rather than seeking medical care. This is likely due to a variety of factors, including not discussing menstruation because of social or cultural taboos, a lack of quality education on menstruation, feeling dismissed by medical professionals, or the pain occurring for so long it just becomes "normal".

While mild pain or discomfort could be seen as part of a "normal" menstrual cycle, if pain or any other menstrual symptoms are enough to prevent normal activities such as going to school or work, it's important to go and speak to your doctor.

Moderate to severe period pain alone doesn't necessarily mean you have a condition like endometriosis, but it's likely that something can be done to help reduce the impact of your pain.

There is a range of effective treatments for period pain, although there's no "one-size-fits-all" approach that works for every woman. Some women may require multiple strategies to get their pain and symptoms to a level that doesn't impact their daily lives.

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories such as ibuprofen, and to a lesser extent the oral contraceptive pill, can be effective in treating primary dysmenorrhoea. Both treatments carry the risk of side effects, so should be discussed with a doctor.

Paracetamol, despite being commonly used for period pain, doesn't appear to be particularly effective.

There's some evidence that heat and regular physical activity can help. Heat seems to work best if used when pain is present, whereas exercise, such as yoga, is better if it's done regularly throughout the month.

While symptom management is important, increasing young women's health literacy around menstruation is equally vital. Improving education on menstruation may help women make better self-care choices like choosing more effective pain-relieving medications and taking the correct dose.

Several programs in Australia and New Zealand have been designed to help young people better understand the menstrual cycle. These include programs aimed at early adolescents, either at home or school.

The content of school-based programs varies but includes topics such as what a "normal" menstrual cycle looks like and how to identify symptoms that might indicate more serious conditions. Importantly, these programs generally target boys too, which should help reduce the stigma around discussing periods.

Whether at school, university or in the workplace, menstrual symptoms cause absenteeism and presenteeism among a significant proportion of women. We need to break down barriers that prevent open discussion of periods, so women of all ages feel they can discuss any period-related problems with their boss, teachers, family or doctor.

Secrecy and shame around periods can prevent access to effective health care. Ensuring menstruating women of all ages have the information they need to choose the best way to manage their pain and symptoms is vital.

Dr Mike Armour is Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the NICM Health Research Institute at Western Sydney University, Dr Christina Curry is Lecturer in Health and Physical Education at the School of Education at Western Sydney University, and Dr Freya MacMillan is Senior Lecturer in Interprofessional Health Science at the School of Health Sciences at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Conversation on 28 June 2019.

Why western Sydney needs more architects

PROFESSOR PETER POULET

Despite the self-confident veneer of Sydney, the truth is cities across Australia are transplants from another place. The homogenisation and the internationalisation of our urban environments is advancing at a pace – push back is inevitable.

With record levels of multi-million dollar investment, once-in-a-generation government infrastructure projects and a history of overdevelopment, more than ever, western Sydney is in need of its own homegrown architects – architects who offer a connection and understanding of the community they create for.

These architects have the opportunity to engage with the reality of the region and the community in which they practice. The region is crying out for urban environments that incorporate genuine and meaningful responses to the unique conditions we face in western Sydney.

Good architecture has always been the product of the social and spatial vagaries of everyday life and place and, for western Sydney, this is our biggest opportunity. Examples that embrace that opportunity include the Bankstown Library and Knowledge Centre, a sensitively designed indoor and outdoor public space set in the heart of Bankstown; and the much-anticipated Yandhai Nepean Crossing, which created a pedestrian and cycle way that spans the mighty Nepean River.

To get it right, we need to be skeptical of the planned utopias of the past and reject the myth of the single-handed idealist. Instead, the challenges of the region call for an open minded and engaged approach to our messy world at large. Western Sydney architects will have to embrace the ambiguity of everyday life leading to a more inclusive built environment.

Western Sydney deserves architects who understand diverse communities. Architects who, through empowering and working with people, make their own places. This begins by recognising and learning from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait community and its understanding of country.

The only hope for western Sydney is that our new infrastructure-rich cities and towns are environmentally appropriate; dealing with climate, water, air, energy and waste. The health woes of our communities are well documented, and part of the solution is for neighbourhoods to enable healthier and more active lifestyles.

Importantly, the region needs architects who are passionate about community-focused neighbourhoods. The reason we love our old buildings and streets is the authentic connection to our past, and it pays to remember that, right now, we are building the "heritage of the future".

With this in mind, it's time to be vigilant that the architecture and urban environments being made in the west are not only seen as uniquely "place based", they should exemplify new and best design practice.

The true architects of western Sydney have an opportunity to not only make their places well but lead industry best practice through inclusive design methodology. By engaging with real projects and partnering with community, business and government, our architects will be gifted the opportunity of true insight. We call for a collaborative effort to produce industry-ready graduates who can enrich industry and government with the research and exploratory capability unique to tertiary institutions.

Our new cities and towns being planned and constructed deserve the localised and crafted response only available through deep and genuine engagement. The democratisation of design leads to better buildings, better places, and stronger communities because they have engaged personally and thoughtfully.

This points to a changing in direction for our cities. By accepting the contingent and inter-related nature of future city shaping, next-wave architects will have the essential agency and ethics required for the task. We will be making buildings and places that serve people well, are resilient, environmentally responsible and have longevity.

The inevitability of human urbanisation implores us to make our cities humane and western Sydney will teach us to tame the egotistical, the expedient, and the unsustainable – an essential aspiration for all cities of the future.

Peter Poulet is Professor of Architecture at the School of the Built Environment at Western Sydney University. He is also a District Commissioner at the Greater City Commissioner. This article was originally published in The Sydney Morning Herald on 16 October 2019.

" With record levels of multi-million dollar investment, once-in-a-generation government infrastructure projects and a history of overdevelopment, more than ever, western Sydney is in need of its own homegrown architects – architects who offer a connection and understanding of the community they create for. "

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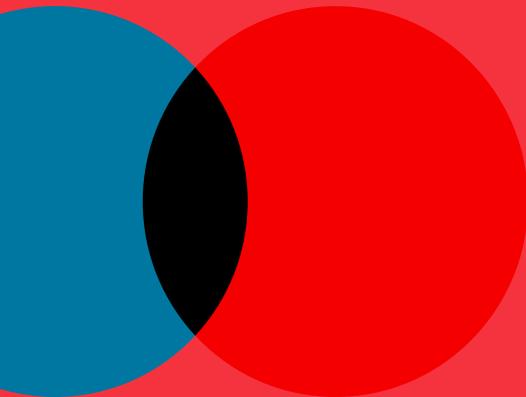
Forget Pyrmont, Sydney's west desperately needs a bit of government love

DR ANDY MARKS

"No one has ever escaped from Stalag 13!" Oblivious to rampant breakouts occurring right under his nose, Colonel Klink of television's *Hogan's Heroes*, never let reality spoil his triumphalism.

There was a hint of Klink in the NSW government's recent announcement that Pyrmont "will be transformed into the next jobs hub and economic driver of Sydney".

This densely populated inner Sydney suburb has one of lowest unemployment rates and densest jobs concentrations in Australia. It doesn't need saving. Certainly not courtesy of NSW taxpayers.

Meanwhile, large swaths of Greater Sydney show no signs of being "transformed". And it's not like the Berejiklian government can claim the "I know nothing", Schultz defence. The evidence abounds.

More than two years ago a well-publicised report commissioned by Youth Action highlighted youth unemployment rates of greater than 20 per cent in the sub-regions of Lethbridge Park-Tregear, Bidwill-Hebersham-Emerton, Ashcroft-Busby-Miller, Fairfield, Cabramatta-Lansvale and Liverpool-Warwick Farm. And that's not the half of it.

In 2014, the Herald reported "a daily exodus ... of about 200,000 commuters leav[ing] western Sydney on crammed trains, packed buses and choked roads heading eastwards for work".

Where do they go? To "job-rich centres" such as "the CBD, North Sydney ... Macquarie Park" and, you guessed it, "Pyrmont".

At least now we know what the coming Sydney Metro West is for. Forget about shifting the jobs balance westwards. The planned rapid-transit link between Parramatta and Sydney must be about funnelling more commuters into Pyrmont. Clearly that's where the government views job-creation as most urgent.

It's not just the NSW Coalition falling for this illusion. Star Entertainment, Crown Resorts and the Sydney Business Chamber among others, are pushing for a Metro station at Pyrmont.

These lobby groups argue the "15-minute walk from the city" is a barrier to job creation. They should try hoofing it from Lethbridge Park to Mt Druitt, the nearest

train station. At just over an hour, job seekers need a special kind of determination to make that trek.

For a government with a remarkably strong record on economic growth, infrastructure investment and delivery, the current administration seems utterly incapable of seeing gaping holes in its employment strategies.

Acting contrary to the facts because of ignorance is one thing. Colonel Klink and co made a hit show of doing just that for six years. Wilful denial of objective evidence is something altogether different. Some might call it neglect.

If our parliamentarians are wondering why voters are increasingly disillusioned with contemporary politics then they need look no further than decisions like the Pyrmont "jobs hub".

As for Colonel Klink. How could he not know about the radio hidden in the coffee pot?

Dr Andy Marks is Assistant Vice-Chancellor at Western Sydney University. This article was published in The Sydney Morning Herald on 8 October 2019.

" This densely populated inner Sydney suburb has one of lowest unemployment rates and densest jobs concentrations in Australia. It doesn't need saving. Certainly not courtesy of NSW taxpayers. "

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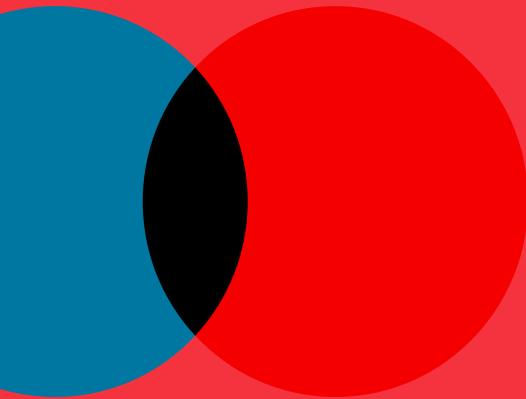
Planning, politics, and power

PROFESSOR NICKY MORRISON

Who owns land? Who owns the right to develop it? And how do we address the thorny issue of planning, politics and power? The answers to all these questions vary across the world.

Let me start by showcasing four highly distinct places, three of which I have worked in and written about extensively. The first is Cambridge in the UK, and specifically Cambridge University's largest capital project to date, located on the edge of the city. The second is downtown Shenzhen, China's fourth largest city. The third is a large informal settlement located in the heart of Accra, the capital city of Ghana. Drawing on these examples, I will highlight the challenges that city planners face in managing economic, social, and environmental priorities, and how they reconcile competing stakeholder expectations and conflicting interests. The fourth place is Badgerys Creek in Western Sydney, where Sydney's second international airport will be located. My previous work offers salient lessons for Western Sydney as it undergoes extensive urban transformation, which is my new, critical area of research.

The international settings are clearly different. Each of my three case studies (Cambridge, Shenzhen, and Accra) operates within very different historical, cultural and political contexts. The land ownership and regulatory planning systems vary considerably too. Yet a common narrative prevails. Planning policy has been used to accommodate the needs of powerful landowners. Economic imperatives have taken precedence over environmental and social equity issues. The government in each location has overridden local concerns. What also knits together these three case studies is a contention that has exercised my whole career, namely:

> *Those whose needs are well articulated and reflected in the city's broader policy ambition are likely to be included in future planning policy. The needs of others considered 'less valuable' to the socio-economic sustainability of a locality may, in turn, be forgone' (Morrison, 2013)*

So why are certain interests favored over others? And why do planning decisions generate winners and losers? Let me take you back to the basic premise of land use planning. There is an inherent tension that city planners face, namely they need to accommodate economic growth and development needs, yet simultaneously protect the city's heritage and environmental assets. Economic imperatives are clearly high up the political pecking order. Economic growth, jobs and prosperity transform lives. Yet how do we minimise any adverse impact on the environment? And how do we make sure planning decisions and outcomes are socially optimal? How can we create inclusive growth that everyone truly benefits

from? Environmental and social considerations are often considered the soft side of planning, and even called soft infrastructure. Yet it is critical to get liveability and place-making right in order to create long lasting sustainable communities. Moreover, delivering genuinely affordable housing to those with least ability to pay is key to creating socially inclusive, mixed income neighbourhoods. These concerns have not only motivated the direction of my academic career but also my advocacy work on behalf of community groups that have the least voice in planning and housing systems around the world.

So why is it so hard to marry together all these goals? It is clearly a complex task. Planning is not simply a technical exercise. Politics and planning are very much intertwined. Elected members on planning committees invariably focus on short-term quick wins and highly visible projects. Whilst spatial plans may have longer-term horizons, they need to align with private investment decisions in order to support them. City planners can only regulate. They need market players so that their plans come to fruition. Private commercial returns on investment, therefore, drive decision-making, taking precedence over broader consideration of the public good and so-called 'softer' planning goals.

At the same time, planners are neither neutral nor value free. Planning rules embody power relations, privileging certain positions and courses of actions over others. The stroke of a Planning Minster's pen and rezoning of land use creates immediate land value uplift, with financial windfalls bestowed on certain stakeholders, whilst others lose out. Speculation over land and real estate opportunities along with rent seeking behavior that uses the political planning processes to seek private gain are rife in all urban land markets. Those with most to gain and most to lose from planning decisions know how to play the planning system. Powerful landowners lobby (even bribe) planning representatives to achieve certain ends. They have the resources and tactical repertoire to exert influence, and often hold the upper hand. Formal planning frameworks in effect blend with informal non-codified rules. Tacit understanding and a culture of the 'way we do things' exist the world over.

So what is the role of academics? We apply with objectivity our theoretical frameworks to different institutional contexts. We track the interplay of different stakeholders at different stages of the planning process. We examine the way formal rules merge with informal growth coalitions in order to maintain place competitiveness. We advance theoretical and empirical knowledge through use of our case studies. Yet our academic independence also allows us to do so much more. We can question planning decisions and outcomes. We can proactively

shape planning and housing debates. We can co-create strategies with city planners on ways to create inclusive growth for all. We have a social responsibility and civic duty to advocate on behalf of those with the least voice.

Each of my three case studies (Cambridge, Shenzhen, Accra) epitomises planning, politics and power. I suggest that opportunities exist to make sure we get it right in Western Sydney by framing its urban transformation around notions of accountability, sustainability, and equity. In doing so, a more inclusive growth vision will be delivered.

Nicky Morrison is Professor of Planning at the School of Social Sciences at Western Sydney University. This extract was part of her opening remarks at her Professorial Lecture, delivered in October 2019.

More can be done for housing in Western Sydney

DR LOUISE CRABTREE

A great deal has been made of the ongoing investment into infrastructure in Greater Western Sydney – the recently-named Nancy-Bird Walton airport and the Metro West spring to mind. While these investments and the jobs they bring are welcome, it is perhaps time to focus on the most critical infrastructure of all, our communities and how people can live well in them.

Greater Western Sydney is a vast, diverse area, yet one issue increasingly impacts the region and its liveability across the board: housing affordability. Historically, the region is the more affordable alternative to the eastern suburbs, but as the pricing woes of the east worsen, they spread to the west where people are much more vulnerable to rises in the cost of living.

Data from the 2016 Census shows that the median income of individuals aged 15 and over in Fairfield was $439 per week, while the average rent for a one-bedroom unit at the time was $250 a week, some 57 per cent of that income. Limiting the data to Fairfield renters aged 25-34, their weighted average income of around $720 a week still had them paying 35 per cent of that as rent. For ownership, the issue only worsens. In 2016, the average purchase price of a one-bedroom apartment in Fairfield was around $280,000, which was affordable once the household income topped $1,000 a week, more than double the median individual income.

It's simple, current commitments to social and affordable housing provision will not meet the needs of the 55,000 households on existing waiting lists let alone accommodate future growth.

Year on year, Anglicare's rental affordability snapshot shows that Sydney's housing is unaffordable for people on low incomes. ABS data also shows us that access to affordable homes is not only an issue for low income households or impacting only renters. Social housing is vital infrastructure as it provides affordable shelter for households that a free market will never provide for in housing markets, such as Sydney's, where prices continue to run hot and well beyond median incomes despite the recent downturn.

Let's return to Fairfield. The data suggests at least 55 per cent of households in rental housing (representing 20 per cent of all households) were eligible for social or affordable housing. Where state-wide targets for these housing types exist, they sit around a tentative 5-10 per cent of new housing stock, "subject to viability". Without question these targets need to be higher to meet the needs of 20 per cent of all households, which is underscored by the failure of the private rental market to deliver affordability. Throw into the mix that many households are caught in the

trap of having incomes too high to meet social or affordable housing eligibility but too low to afford a home in the open market – and that's not taking into account the need to save for a deposit – and it's plain to see, something has to give.

Housing is a major election issue, but we haven't seen much in the way of policy to address these problems. International experience shows that in addition to maintaining and increasing social housing stock, housing quality and ownership rates can be improved by strengthening rights of private renters and adopting home ownership models that are attainable, especially to those on lower incomes. But perhaps most importantly of all, we need New South Wales' political parties to spruik affordable housing as passionately as they have other vital infrastructure.

Dr Louise Crabtree is Senior Research Fellow at the Institute for Culture and Society at Western Sydney University. This article was first published in The Daily Telegraph on 8 March 2019.

"Greater Western Sydney is a vast, diverse area, yet one issue increasingly impacts the region and its liveability across the board: housing affordability."

DR LOUISE CRABTREE
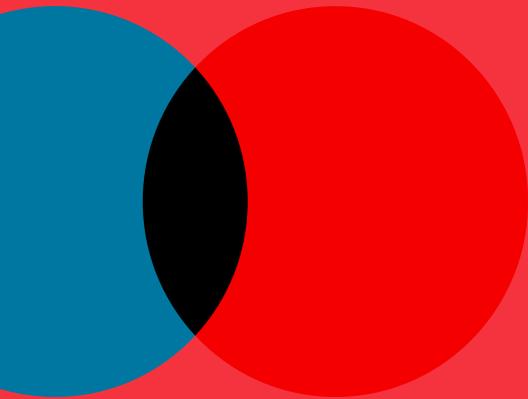
Drought and climate change were the kindling, now the east coast is ablaze

DR RACHAEL HELENE NOLAN AND PROFESSOR ROSS BRADSTOCK

Early November 2019 saw an unprecedented outbreak of large, intense fires stretching from the mid-north coast of New South Wales into central Queensland.

The most tragic losses are concentrated in northern NSW, where 970,000 hectares have been burned, three people have died, and at least 150 homes have been destroyed.

A catastrophic fire warning for Tuesday has been issued for the Greater Sydney, Greater Hunter, Shoalhaven and Illawarra areas. It is the first time Sydney has received a catastrophic rating since the rating system was developed in 2009.

No relief is in sight from this extremely hot, dry and windy weather, and the extraordinary magnitude of these fires is likely to increase in the coming week. Alarmingly, as Australians increasingly seek a sea-change or tree-change, more people are living in the path of these destructive fires.

Large fires have happened before in northern NSW and southern Queensland during spring and early summer (for example in 1994, 1997, 2000, 2002, and 2018 in northern NSW). But this latest extraordinary situation raises many questions.

It is as if many of the major fires in the past are now being rerun concurrently. What is unprecedented is the *size* and *number* of fires rather than the seasonal timing.

The potential for large, intense fires is determined by four fundamental ingredients: a continuous expanse of fuel; extensive and continuous dryness of that fuel; weather conditions conducive to the rapid spread of fire; and ignitions, either human or lightning. These act as a set of switches, in series: all must be "on" for major fires to occur.

The NSW north coast and tablelands, along with much of the southern coastal regions of Queensland are famous for their diverse range of eucalypt forest, heathlands and rainforests, which flourish in the warm temperate to subtropical climate.

These forests and shrublands can rapidly accumulate bushfire fuels such as leaf litter, twigs and grasses. The unprecedented drought across much of Australia has created exceptional dryness, including high-altitude areas and places like gullies, water courses, swamps and steep south-facing slopes that are normally too wet to burn.

These typically wet parts of the landscape have literally evaporated, allowing fire to spread unimpeded. The drought has been particularly acute in northern NSW where record low rainfall has led to widespread defoliation and tree death. It is no coincidence current fires correspond directly with hotspots of record low rainfall and above-average temperatures.

Thus, the North Coast and northern ranges of NSW as well as much of southern and central Queensland have been primed for major fires. A continuous swathe of critically dry fuels across these diverse landscapes existed well before last week, as shown by damaging fires in September and October.

High temperatures and wind speeds, low humidity, and a wave of new ignitions on top of pre-existing fires has created an unprecedented situation of multiple large, intense fires stretching from the coast to the tablelands and parts of the interior.

Many parts of the NSW north coast, southern Queensland and adjacent hinterlands have seen population growth around major towns and cities, as people look for pleasant coastal and rural homes away from the capital cities.

The extraordinary number and ferocity of these fires, plus the increased exposure of people and property, have contributed to the tragic results of the past few days.

Communities flanked by forests along the coast and ranges are highly vulnerable because of the way fires spread under the influence of strong westerly winds. Coastal communities wedged between highly flammable forests and heathlands and the sea, are particularly at risk.

As a full picture of the extent and location of losses and damage becomes available, we will see the extent to which planning, building regulations, and fire preparation has mitigated losses and damage.

These unprecedented fires are an indication that a much-feared future under climate change may have arrived earlier than predicted. The week ahead will present high-stakes new challenges.

The most heavily populated region of the nation is now at critically dry levels of fuel moisture, below those at the time of the disastrous Christmas fires of 2001 and 2013. Climate change has been predicted to strongly increase the chance of large fires across this region. The conditions for Tuesday are a real and more extreme manifestation of these longstanding predictions.

Whatever the successes and failures in this crisis, it is likely that we will have to rethink the way we plan and prepare for wildfires in a hotter, drier and more flammable world.

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"Whatever the successes and failures in this crisis, it is likely that we will have to rethink the way we plan and prepare for wildfires in a hotter, drier and more flammable world."

DR RACHAEL HELENE NOLAN AND PROFESSOR ROSS BRADSTOCK
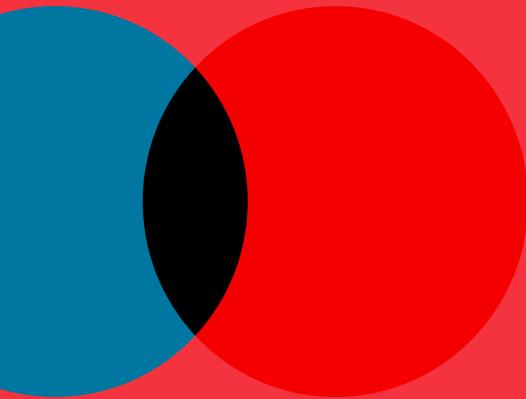
Keeping the city cool isn't just about tree cover – it calls for a commons-based climate response

DR ABBY MELLICK LOPES AND PROFESSOR CAMERON TONKINWISE

A recent report by the Greater Sydney Commission singles out urban heat as one of four priority areas given our coming climate. It identifies tree canopy as the top response for reducing city temperatures and delivering amenity. However, the public conversation about urban heat often misses the complex relationship between trees, people and the built environment, which challenges this response.

In soon-to-be-published research supported by the Landcom University Roundtable we found that responding to a more extreme climate requires new social practices and new relationships with the commons. Commons are the spaces, resources and knowledge shared by a community, who are, ideally, involved in the regeneration and care of those commons. Trees are an important social commons, but they also present multiple challenges.

For one, trees are an outdoor amenity, but we are spending more and more time indoors. For those who can afford it, air conditioning delivers cooling in the privacy of your own home or car – no need for trees.

However, staying in cool bedrooms and car rides mean less time outdoors and with others, which isn't ideal for human health and well-being.

Air conditioning also uses more fossil-fuel-based energy, which generates more greenhouse gas emissions. The result is more climate change.

As the Greater Sydney Commission report makes clear, tree canopy in Greater Sydney is roughly proportional to household wealth. The "leafy suburbs" are the wealthier ones. This means tree planting is an important investment in less wealthy parts of the city, which experience more extreme heat days.

However, research also shows people have mixed feelings about trees. In comparison to the neat shrubbery and easily maintained sunny plazas we've become used to in our cities, trees can be "messy" and "unpredictable". Leaf litter can be slippery and natives like eucalypts, with their pendulous leaves, provide limited shade. People worry about large trees falling over or dropping branches.

Trees are often at the centre of disputes between neighbours. They can also be perceived as a security problem – if trees reduce visibility they might provide cover for wrongdoers.

In addition, insurance companies can charge a premium if a property is deemed at risk of damage by large trees. As we experience more extreme weather, laws on vegetation clearing are becoming more risk-averse.

Urban development tends to give priority to roads and delivering the maximum number of dwellings on sites. This leaves little space for trees, which need to fit into crowded footpaths with ever-changing infrastructures. For example, will larger trees interfere with 5G?

When juggling priorities in the streetscape, trees often lose out.

It's an obvious point, but trees take time to grow. It can take many years for a planted sapling to become a shade tree. In that time there will be no shelter from the heat.

Also in that growing period, which can sometimes be unpredictable, trees need to be nurtured, especially in times of drought. And, once the tree is mature, fingers crossed that extreme weather events do not undo all those years of waiting.

So, while increasing tree canopy sounds like an obvious solution, trees are in fact a complex social challenge. In our research, we point to ways some of these tree-related tensions can be managed.

Shade is an important civic resource. Large, mature trees with spreading canopy provide the best shade, so strategic construction bans and tree preservation orders are an obvious first step.

However, if shady canopy is decades off, we need to think about other, creative ways to provide shade in the meantime to ensure, for example, that people of diverse abilities can walk their city in reasonable comfort. This might include temporary shade structures such as awnings, bus shelters and fast-growing vine-trellised walkways (if there is space to create troughs for soil and the structure doesn't cause access problems).

And, as the Cancer Council consistently reminds us, we all need to adopt more climate-defensive clothing.

An important alternative is to follow our regional neighbours and start to populate parks and other public spaces at night. This suggests a need for removable shade, so we can take part in activities like stargazing.

Mature trees can die back or die altogether, so other trees should be maturing to take their place. Usually, experts design and maintain landscapes for others to enjoy.

However, users of the cooling services of parks could be invited into the process of planning and realising landscape designs. This would give them a say on the trees of which they have "shared custody". Planting for succession can create an intergenerational sense of ownership over a shared place.

Current planning practices tend to ignore wind and solar patterns. The result is urban forms that make heat worse by prioritising comfortable private interior spaces over the commons of public space. Designing cool cities means using trees, water and buildings to create cool corridors that work with cooling breezes – or even summon these in still, heat-trapping basins like Western Sydney.

These few examples point to new ways of living with trees as social commons, but they also point to new forms of commoning – collaborative forms of care and governance that invite people to adopt new social practices better suited to living well in the coming climate.

It is a positive step that state development agencies like Landcom aim to demonstrate global standards of liveability, resilience, inclusion, affordability and environmental quality. In so doing, they initiate transitions to these more commons-based ways of living.

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Want to stop Australia's fires? Listen to Aboriginal people

ALEXIS WRIGHT

CARPENTARIA, Australia — Aboriginal people in this country firmly believe that we are the longest-surviving culture in the world. We were raised with the knowledge that our ancestors have adapted to changing climatic conditions here for millenniums.

And yet our knowledge of caring for the land is questioned or largely ignored. In the face of catastrophic fires, Australia's leaders need to recognize the depth and value of Aboriginal knowledge and incorporate our skills in hazard management.

I spoke about the destructiveness of the recent fires with my countryman Murrandoo Yanner, a Gangalidda leader and the director of the Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation. Mr. Yanner is a man made for these times; he has an encyclopedic knowledge of the world that he has assimilated into Gangalidda laws and philosophy.

Mr. Yanner said that the way forward is back. "If we can understand, learn from and imagine our place through the laws and stories of our ancestors," he told me, "then we will have true knowledge on how to live, adapt and survive in Australia, just as our ancestors did."

Since the 1990s, Mr. Yanner has led Aboriginal people in the Gulf of Carpentaria toward sustainable economic development. He guided the Waanyi nation through Aboriginal rights campaigns, including opposition to the development of Century Mine, an open pit zinc mine that began production in 1999 and operated for 16 years.

Today, he leads the Jigija Indigenous Fire Training Program, which educates pastoralists, volunteer firefighters, Indigenous rangers and the mining industry on how to fight fire with fire — as our ancestors did.

One technique the program teaches is mosaic cool-fire burning. Lighting small patches of low-intensity fires during the cool season burns off bush undergrowth, reducing the amount of flammable materials. This prevents fires from developing, as they have now, to catastrophic levels. Mr. Yanner also teaches his students to create wildlife corridors: a continuous refuge of native habitat that allows wildlife to escape summertime fires.

These Indigenous techniques can lessen the damage that fires cause by reducing fuel loads and restricting fires to smaller areas.

Such tactics are vital. Although some fire agencies use these methods, the scale of their efforts should be intensified, and they should be managed with more care for local conditions. We live in a fire-prone country; we still have at least two months to go before this extended fire season ends. And it's not too late to start planning for future years.

The severity of these fires have shown us a reality that was previously unimaginable. A fiery twister formed in the fires on Kangaroo Island. A fireman, Samuel McPaul, was killed when his truck flipped over in a fire tornado in Jingellic, New South Wales. Four thousand people huddled on the beach in the coastal town of Mallacoota as a wall of fire approached them; they had to be rescued by the Australian Navy.

Matthew Deeth, the mayor of Wollondilly, New South Wales, summed up the devastation. In some areas there was "literally nothing left," he said just before Christmas, "apart from a few burnt sticks in the ground."

We are only beginning to understand the fires' disastrous consequences. Fragile forest ecosystems were decimated. Over a billion animals, experts estimate, perished. Perhaps thousands of birds, including our iconic yellow-tailed black cockatoos, died of exhaustion when they flew out to sea to escape the fires; their bodies washed up on beaches in East Gippsland. And our southern skies have been a smoky haze for days. More bad news will follow when rains wash vast quantities of ash from the fires into our waterways.

Australia remains caught in the nightmarish spell cast by these fires. Our hearts and minds have been thrown into a furnace; a volcano of anger has spewed from our mouths. Some of that anger is misdirected, aimed at arsonists or the Greens party for supposedly stopping trees from being chopped down as a fire-management technique. But most of the anger has been directed straight at Prime Minister Scott Morrison, whom people condemn for taking a holiday in Hawaii while his country burned.

Many people are starting to ask the right questions about climate change. When will we have leadership that reflects our needs? We urgently need governments that are not afraid to act to defend our planet from further destruction.

Aboriginal people are the caretakers of this ancient land. The nation's leaders should value our knowledge. I join Craig Lapsley, who led the emergency response after the 2009 Black Saturday fires in Victoria, in calling for the federal government

to start a national Indigenous burning program. While the results would not be immediate, listening to Indigenous knowledge would help curb catastrophic fires of the future.

This terrible disaster has forced us to imagine our way in unimaginable times. I am guided by the words of my countryman Murrandoo Yanner, who reminds me of the strength of our ancient country. "The greatest thing we have to offer today is our humanity," he said, "because this is all we ever had."

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Image taken at Diversity Week campus event,
Western Sydney University Parramatta South

Strength from perpetual grief: how Aboriginal people experience the bushfire crisis

DR JESSICA WEIR, BHIAMIE WILLIAMSON AND VANESSA CAVANAGH

How do you support people forever attached to a landscape after an inferno tears through their homelands: decimating native food sources, burning through ancient scarred trees and destroying ancestral and totemic plants and animals?

The fact is, the experience of Aboriginal peoples in the fire crisis engulfing much of Australia is vastly different to non-Indigenous peoples.

Colonial legacies of eradication, dispossession, assimilation and racism continue to impact the lived realities of Aboriginal peoples. Added to this is the widespread exclusion of our peoples from accessing and managing traditional homelands. These factors compound the trauma of these unprecedented fires.

As Australia picks up the pieces from these fires, it's more important than ever to understand the unique grief Aboriginal peoples experience. Only through this understanding can effective strategies be put in place to support our communities to recover.

Aboriginal peoples live with a sense of perpetual grief. It stems from the as-yet-unresolved matter of the invasion and subsequent colonisation of our homelands.

While there are many instances of colonial trauma inflicted upon Aboriginal peoples – including the removal of children and the suppression of culture, ceremony and language – dispossession of Country remains paramount. Dispossessing people of their lands is a hallmark of colonisation.

Australian laws have changed to partially return Aboriginal peoples' lands and waters, and Aboriginal people have made their best efforts to advocate for more effective management of Country. But despite this, the majority of our peoples have been consigned to the margins in managing our homelands.

Aboriginal people have watched on and been ignored as homelands have been mismanaged and neglected.

Oliver Costello is chief executive of Firesticks Alliance, an Indigenous-led network that aims to re-invigorate cultural burning. As he puts it:

> *Since colonisation, many Indigenous people have been removed from their land, and their cultural fire management practices have been constrained by authorities, informed by Western views of fire and land management.*

In this way, settler-colonialism is not historical, but a lived experience. And the growing reality of climate change adds to these anxieties.

It's also important to recognise that our people grieve not only for our communities, but for our non-human relations. Aboriginal peoples' cultural identity comes from the land.

As such, Aboriginal cultural lives and livelihoods continue to be tied to the land, including landscape features such as waterholes, valleys and mountains, as well as native animals and plants.

The decimation caused by the fires deeply impacts the existence of Aboriginal peoples and in the most severely hit areas, threatens Aboriginal groups as distinct cultural beings attached to the land. As The Guardian's Indigenous affairs editor Lorena Allam recently wrote:

> *Like you, I've watched in anguish and horror as fire lays waste to precious Yuin land, taking everything with it – lives, homes, animals, trees – but for First Nations people it is also burning up our memories, our sacred places, all the things which make us who we are.*

For Aboriginal people then, who live with the trauma of dispossession and neglect and now, the trauma of catastrophic fire, our grief is immeasurably different to that of non-Indigenous people.

As we come to terms with the fires' devastation, Australia must turn its gaze to recovery. The field of community recovery offers valuable insights into how groups of people can come together and move forward after disasters.

But an examination of research and commentary in this area reveals how poorly non-Indigenous Australia (and indeed, the international field of community recovery) understands the needs of Aboriginal people.

The definition of "community" is not explicitly addressed, and thus is taken as a single socio-cultural group of people.

But research in Australia and overseas has demonstrated that for Aboriginal people, healing from trauma – whether historical or contemporary – is a cultural and spiritual process and inherently tied to land.

The culture-neutral standpoint in community recovery research as yet does not acknowledge these differences. Without considering the historical, political and cultural contexts that continue to define the lives of Aboriginal peoples, responses to the crisis may be inadequate and inappropriate.

The long-term effects of colonisation has meant Aboriginal communities are (for better or worse) accustomed to living with catastrophic changes to their societies and lands, adjusting and adapting to keep functioning.

Experts consider these resilience traits as integral for communities to survive and recover from natural disasters.

In this way, the resilience of Aboriginal communities fashioned through centuries of colonisation, coupled with adequate support, means Aboriginal communities in fire-affected areas are well placed to not only recover, but to do so quickly.

This is a salient lesson for agencies and other non-government organisations entrusted to lead the disaster recovery process.

The community characteristics that enable effective and timely community recovery, such as close social links and shared histories, already exist in the Aboriginal communities affected.

The agency in charge of leading the recovery in bushfire-affected areas must begin respectfully and appropriately. And they must be equipped with the basic knowledge of our peoples' different circumstances.

It's important to note this isn't "special treatment". Instead, it recognises that policy and practice must be fit-for-purpose and, at the very least, not do further harm.

If agencies and non-government organisations responsible for leading the recovery from these fires aren't well-prepared, they risk inflicting new trauma on Aboriginal communities.

The National Disability Insurance Agency offers an example of how to engage with Aboriginal people in culturally sensitive ways. This includes thinking about Country, culture and community, and working with each community's values and customs to establish respectful, trusting relationships.

The new bushfire recovery agency must use a similar strategy. This would acknowledge both the historical experiences of Aboriginal peoples and our

inherent strengths as communities that have not only survived, but remain connected to our homelands.

In this way, perhaps the bushfire crisis might have some positive longer-term outcomes, opening new doors to collaboration with Aboriginal people, drawing on our strengths and values and prioritising our unique interests.

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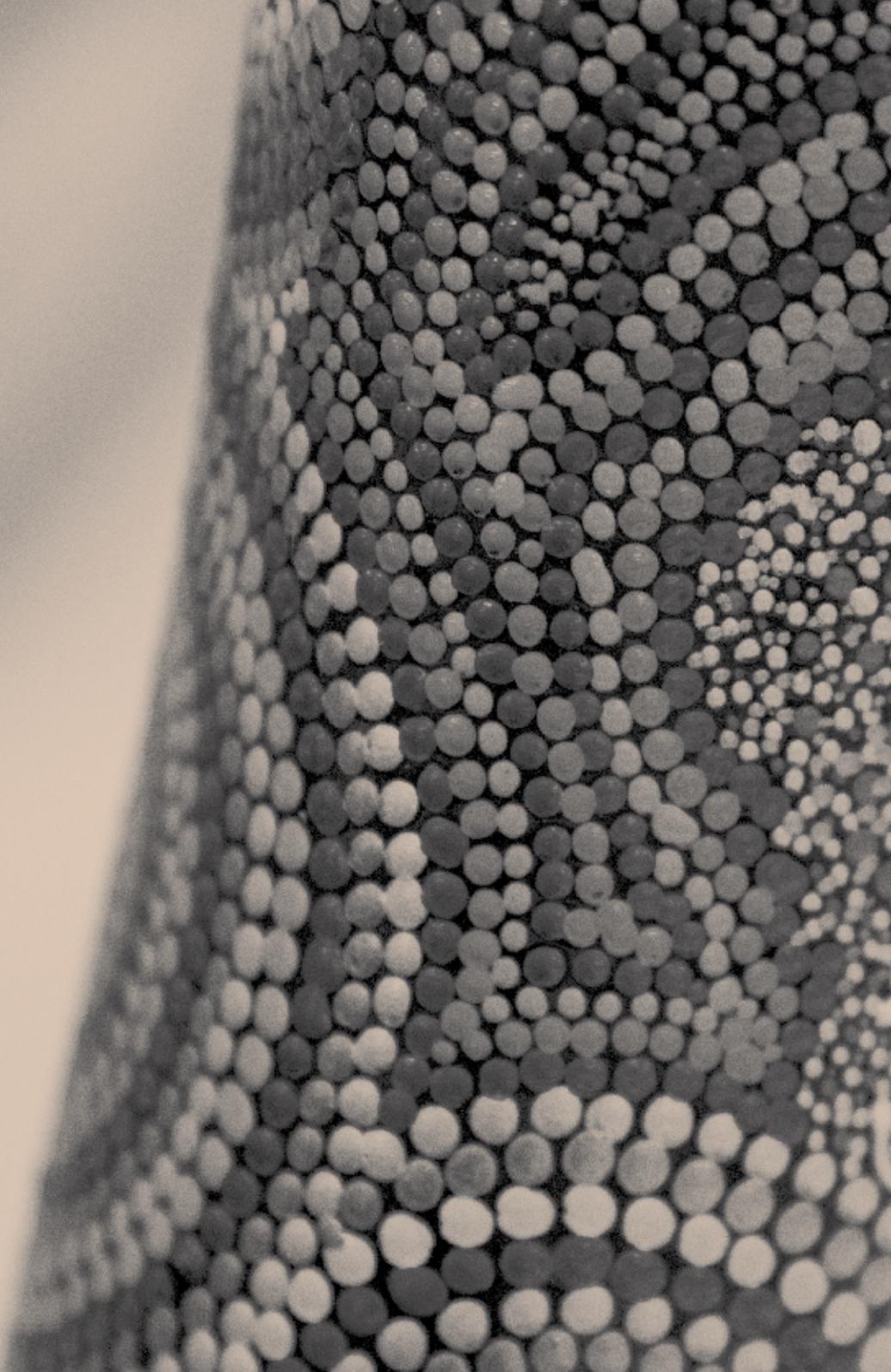
Liverpool, the surprise star of Australia's future-city planning

DR TIM WILLIAMS

We know that technology is disrupting industries and services like never before. Business models are dissolving and being invented on a daily basis. What has been less noted is the way technology is disrupting cities and the way we plan for, experience and get around them.

There are huge opportunities to use digital technology to transform the productivity and liveability of Australian cities. There are also anxieties and challenges.

We need to learn a key international lesson: no smart cities without smart governance. That means the public sector must raise its game. We need a strong public vision for our cities if we are to shape technology rather than be shaped by it.

The crucial one to get right and be really smart about is transport. The proliferation of autonomous vehicles offers a great opportunity for efficient, reliable and environmentally friendly transport that could allow the repurposing of space devoted to the motor vehicle.

But if mismanaged and not adapted to serve a coherent city planning vision, autonomous vehicles could easily bring more congestion to our streets and undermine efforts to reduce the sprawl characteristic of Australian city development.

So where are the Australian frontiers that are grappling with these challenges? Not in the obvious places. There is some innovation in various government departments, and some councils such as the City of Melbourne have been taking a lead.

But I see real smart-city thinking in places with less complex governance. Newcastle is one and, within Sydney, there is Liverpool. Yes, Liverpool, where the city council is leading Australia in its thinking and action to make its CBD a centre of urban and transport innovation. Liverpool has innovation in its DNA.

Rewind to the early 19th century when Robert Hoddle designed Melbourne's famous city grid, tilted a few degrees off the stipulated north-south orientation so it "licked" the Yarra River. It was out-of-the box thinking at the time and the resulting "Hoddle Grid" allowed an attractive, walkable, river-oriented city to flourish.

Few people know that Hoddle laid out the streets of Liverpool, another river city, before his Melbourne commission. Much like Melbourne's pleasing geometric

lines, Liverpool has the bones for a great, engaging, walkable city – if space since devoted to the rise of the motor car can be repurposed.

Western Sydney Airport, which will be Australia's first fully digital international hub, has inspired a whole community and that is driving Liverpool City Council's innovative outlook. It is investigating a trackless tram service, for instance, to connect its growing, aspirational and increasingly educated population to the new airport during its construction and operational phases.

To borrow from Hoddle, a tilt in thinking away from the car will breathe new life into the concept of the CBD. The space saved by reclaiming even part of Liverpool's 5000 car spaces in its 25-hectare CBD would allow generous boulevards, more outdoor eating and entertainment options – true re-activation.

The city could claim as much as eight hectares of prime land for parklands, passive and active recreation, cycleways, outdoor dining and more. Its denizens will enjoy their city again as Hoddle intended – on foot or on pushbike, getting lost on purpose in laneways and side streets. Technology will bring that 19th century dream to life again.

Sydney is a city of different places that are embracing innovation. It's time we listened to them.

Dr Tim Williams is Australasia cities leader and Adjunct Professor at Western Sydney University. This article was originally published in The Sydney Morning Herald on 25 February 2019.

Teenagers need our support, not criticism, as they navigate life online

DR JOANNE ORLANDO

Imagine you're a 14-year-old girl on the train on your way home from school, when out of nowhere a "dick pic" appears on your phone. Surprise! You've been cyber flashed.

It's a form of harassment that didn't exist even a few years ago, and highlights the fast-evolving digital world our teenagers now have to manage (along with all the more regular challenges of nearly being an adult).

Cyber flashing involves sending unsolicited obscene images to strangers via AirDrop or Bluetooth on your smartphone.

Unlike old-fashioned flashing, in which the culprit is standing right in front of you, cyber flashing is anonymous. The sender positions themself in a shopping centre, sporting ground, or other public space and sends the photo to anyone within a 3-metre radius – it could be a teenager, an adult or even a 3-year-old holding mum's phone. The victim will likely search around to identify the sender, but ultimately it is a guessing game; it could be anyone in your field of vision.

Like other online harassment such as posting threatening messages, photos or videos online or repeatedly sending unwanted messages, the aim of cyber flashing is to humiliate the victim, and incite fear. The anonymity of the communication exacerbates this.

In the case of the 14-year-old girl, she would have no opportunity to identify her harasser, to seek justice, or even gain an apology for their actions. This will likely leave her feeling powerless, anxious and potentially fearful of future communications by the harasser.

Digital devices have massively influenced how, when, where and why we communicate with others. For example, it is almost standard practice now for many of us to send a series of digital messages over the course of the day, recounting where you are and what you are doing. It may be to your partner, friend, or as social media status updates to whoever is interested, and it could result in 10, 20 or even 50+ digital messages every day.

Twenty years ago, this form of communication would have been highly unusual, almost impossible to deliver, and likely considered inappropriate behaviour.

The constantly changing ways we use technology to communicate with anyone, anytime and anywhere, has had a huge impact on the lives of parents and their children as they endeavour to navigate the digital age in a safe and healthy way.

Until recently, parents did not even know they had to guide their children in how to manage cyber flashing.

Some public figures recommend confiscating technology as the only way to keep young people safe. Such proposals, however, are unhelpful and unfeasible, and based on outdated thinking. The horse has bolted, and technology use has firmly become a central and defining feature of life today.

Smartphone use is almost ubiquitous for young people (95%), and social media is firmly established as their preferred platform for communicating with others. Solutions to keep young people safe need to acknowledge and build this understanding into solutions, rather than dismiss or ignore the realities of their digital lives.

While adults often interpret social media as negatively affecting the relationships young people form, this is not the consensus among teens. Although 27% of teens *concede that social media has* led to more bullying, overall spread of rumours, and less meaningful human interactions, 31% consider social media to have a mostly positive influence on their life. Teens emphasise social media makes it easier to communicate with family and friends, to connect with new people, to be self-expressive and to get support from others.

For the most part, however, nearly half (45%) of teens say the effect of social media is neither positive nor negative on them; it is just life as they know it.

New online safety risks emerge because of a range of intertwined factors.

Continual technology innovation, our increasingly skilled use of our devices, and more blurring of our online and offline lives means that new ways to harass and to be harassed will unfortunately continue to emerge.

It's not just about the technology, however. Harassment (whether digital or not) also boils down to human values. It taps into prejudices and discrimination that relate to, for example, sexuality or gender identity. It can also be connected to personality traits *such as impulsivity, low self-control, inability to appropriately express anger and low self-esteem.*

Direct comparison between factors influencing cyber bullying compared to school yard bullying is difficult. However, some factors are emerging as more influential on cyber bullying. For example, over controlling parenting can lead to an increase

in children engaging in cyber bullying victimisation. A high level of moral disengagement is associated with cyber bullying.

Our digital lives are still human lives. It's vital we support young people to feel safe, and able to deal with the ever-changing risks that can come via digital communication.

Adolescence is a time of transition, and media use in children is increasing. This means parental involvement can be particularly influential and important in supporting teens ability to understand and manage online harassment should it occur.

Research consistently shows approximately one in two young people who experience bullying never tell anyone out of fear, embarrassment or a lack of faith in support systems. A strong and supportive parent-teen relationship, based on good and open communication and healthy guidance should be at the heart of any online safety strategy implemented in the home.

This fosters a sense of openness, so that a teen will feel comfortable to tell their parent about being cyber-flashed or other online harassment they may experience. Dismissing teens' digital lives, trivialising them or being highly judgemental will not.

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What, why and how China

PROFESSOR JOCELYN CHEY AM

Spying. Lobbying. Corruption. Debt trap diplomacy. It seems Australia's relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) have sunk to an all-time low. It is therefore all the more important to understand that country. Criticisms of its present government and of the Chinese Communist Party are often justified but not when they are based on flimsy evidence, supposition and innuendo. This is no basis for a serious relationship, which Australia certainly needs.

Leading China experts from Australia and New Zealand have been invited to contribute reports on aspects of Chinese culture and history that impact directly on the bilateral relationship. Topics to be covered include: how the PRC is finding its place in the world; how Chinese society is evolving; and what are China's enduring core values.

Key to the PRC's international rise is how its national identity has been formed and what meaning is given to "nation" – clearly, this influences how China sees its place in the world. This view is largely shaped by its history and culture. When the country has such a vast geographic spread and includes so many ethnic groups besides the dominant Han, the Party and government give priority to national unity. Over the centuries China has often been labelled an "empire," but it was not committed to maritime expansion like some European empires and the question arises whether the PRC has such ambitions or may have in the future as its economic power and influence increase.

Those countries and territories that border on the PRC feel its growing power and influence most intensely. The Chinese government and Party certainly regard Hong Kong and Taiwan as integral parts of the nation but it is not clear how they intend to handle these territories. China and Japan at present have relatively cordial relations but there are historical differences. One major problem for PRC policy makers is what to do about political developments in the DPRK. Relations with Central Asian neighbours are evolving rapidly following the initiation of the "Belt and Road" project. The PRC and Taiwan have fairly consistent historical geographic claims, including in the South China Sea? Australian observers have been suspicious of China's interests in the Pacific and wonder what the complexities of regional relations will mean for Australia in the future.

It is common and confusing to speak of "Chinese" or "Chinese people" without distinguishing those whose ancestors emigrated many generations ago, those resident on the mainland of China, Hong Kong or Taiwan or those more recently settled in various corners of the globe. In fact, they have very different perspectives and political views. As outward people movement from China increases, whether

for business, study, tourism or other reasons, Chinese Australians also have complex identities in history. Many Chinese Australians find it insulting that their loyalty is called into question. It is important to understand what major social and political issues are of concern to them.

Commentators on the soft power activities of the PRC frequently focus on the United Front of the Chinese Communist Party, without understanding its background history and current goals. The PRC does legitimately seek to win friends and increase international influence through the exercise of soft power but questions may legitimately be asked as to how successful it is, how it uses cultural diplomacy and what is the role of the Confucius Institutes, particularly in Australia.

As the PRC experiences times of great change, the role of the Chinese Communist Party is evolving. We need to understand the relationship between the Party and the Government and how Chinese people regard the Party. As the private economy and civil society grow, their interaction with the central government is changing but this does not necessarily mean they present threats to China's stability.

The PRC is giving priority to the development of new technologies as part of its "Made in China 2025" campaign. Already we can see the national has technological strengths in automation, space technology, genetic engineering and other fields. Australia could benefit from closer cooperation in these and other fields, but should also be aware of potential threats to our security.

The Chinese Communist Party is also critically concerned about domestic security and focussed on national unity. This concern has roots in history and is supported by the general public, including Communist Party measures to maintain ideological correctness such as the "Social Credit" system. The so-called "Great Firewall" and censorship of the media and the Internet are more problematic. Australian businesses and the Australian government need to take these systems into account when developing policies.

The PRC is often accused of contributing unduly to global warming and few people outside China know what actions the government is taking to address this, both domestically and through overseas aid and investment projects. The question arises as to what the implications of Chinese environmentally policies and practices are for Australia and the world and whether there is room for more cooperation in this area.

Turning to China's enduring core values, we look at religion and where it fits in Chinese history. Some scholars say that China has always been a materialist society, while others point to the influence of Confucianism and Buddhism on contemporary values and policies. Christianity and Islam are "foreign" religions that have found a place in China, but both are increasingly strictly controlled and the plight of the Uighurs in Xinjiang is currently of particular concern. Many ask how this complies with the Chinese government's commitment to international human rights conventions and have called on the Australian government to register concern.

China's long history has shaped the thinking of the PRC government and people. The study of history occupies an important place in education curricula but Chinese understanding of heritage and tradition may be subtly different from what applies in other parts of the world and they are often applied consciously by the Party to boost soft power. It is commonly said that the Party and government leaders always take a long-term view and plan well ahead. Certainly, the government still relies on Five Year Plans.

The growing economy of the PRC is changing the class structure. The government claims that China is still a developing economy but this is sometimes challenged in international circles. After decades of a "One Child" policy, demographic trends are changing and this has marked implications for Australian trade including the education and tourism sectors and consumer goods such as wine and dairy products.

The PRC health system has been increasingly privatised since the introduction of market reforms in the 1980s. Unfortunately, this has led to many people losing confidence in it. There are now opportunities for Australia to cooperate with China in medical and health fields and indeed this is essential if both countries aim to prevent global epidemics.

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The legacy of Graham Freudenberg

DR ANDY MARKS

War is readily characterised as a failure of reason. But that's not quite true. It is, in fact, a failure to hear reason. The recent loss of Graham Freudenberg – Australia's greatest speechwriter – compels us once again to listen. We owe him that.

With rising geopolitical instability, the value of reason – of the ilk Freudenberg championed – couldn't be higher. Yet we find ourselves in a vacuum of rhetoric where, according to Scott Morrison, a "miracle" is our best hope and being a "quiet Australian" the noblest virtue. Rendering Australians as mute devotees is a dangerous abandonment of the engaged lineage of political dialogue that figures such as Freudenberg worked so hard to enshrine.

Having worked as a press secretary for Labor leader Arthur Calwell, then as a speechwriter for Calwell, Gough Whitlam, Bob Hawke, Neville Wran and Bob Carr among others, Freudenberg is most remembered for his hand in the iconic 1972 "It's Time" speech. It rallied a groundswell for generational change, ushering in the most dynamic tumult of sociopolitical reform the country has seen. When melded with Whitlam's force of will, Freudenberg's economy of words unleashed a maelstrom of promise. But it's not his best work.

Writing for Hawke at the 75th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing, Freudenberg didn't give ground to the patriotism and jingoism that has infiltrated April 25 in recent decades. His vision is set against a canvas of "untold sacrifice and suffering", of "waste and futility", "ruin" and "carnage". Against his vocation, Freudenberg asserted the meaning of Anzac "goes beyond words". It lay, he reflected, in a truth: in a retreat, not a conquest, and not in bloodshed. He closed Hawke's speech with a quote from a digger, grieving about leaving behind his buried mates on the Turkish peninsula: "I hope they don't hear us going down the gullies."

Ask any veteran. That's the true resonance, the regret, the anguish of war. If we're prepared to listen, that's the truth Freudenberg captured so painfully and so pointedly, decades before Anzac Day was appropriated by politics into something altogether different. It was a stunning speech. But, still, not his best work.

When words are the only thing standing between reason and carnage, it's hard to see how they could possibly triumph. But when those words are born of conviction, I'm convinced they can't lose.

Waiting. Reflecting. Listening for the thread – of meaning, of truth and of consequence. More than the writing itself, Freudenberg's ear was his genius. But the modern-day news cycle doesn't reward the listener. Its drone and

bluster neither value nor encourage patience and ideological fidelity of the kind Freudenberg displayed. Creating the space for integrity in word and rhetoric requires not only that integrity but also obstinacy. Freudenberg found that rare mixture in Arthur Calwell, and it resulted in his greatest writing.

On Thursday, April 29, 1965, in the wake of the Indonesian–Malaysian *Konfrontasi*, Robert Menzies committed Australian troops to the United States-led Vietnam intervention, vastly expanding the limited deployment of military advisers. It caught Labor on the hop. Calwell was hounded by the press for a response. He didn't waver, telling them to expect Labor's position the following Tuesday, when parliament returned.

The intervening time afforded Labor the vital opportunity to weigh the decision before them, granting the issue the gravity and scrutiny it warranted. Importantly, for Freudenberg, the great listener, it gave him the clear air to recall the lessons of past conflicts and imagine the ramifications of rushing into new ones. The resulting speech, which Calwell delivered in parliament on May 4, is without peer in Australian political history.

"When the drums beat and the trumpets sound," stated Calwell, "the voice of reason and right can be heard in the land only with difficulty." He was giving voice to the unspoken: the socially unconscionable regret held by generations of Australians, men and women scarred by two devastating world wars. Inverting established attributes of patriotic valour, Calwell declared: "[Labor] will do our duty".

This sense of duty speaks to the words Freudenberg authored for Hawke 25 years later. Resisting the call to war is dutiful in its honouring of those retreating troops at Gallipoli; soldiers concerned only with their loyalty to fallen mates, and not with manufactured threats such as the domino theory that characterised the Vietnam conflict. Freudenberg picks up this point deftly.

Menzies' decision, Calwell railed, demonstrated "an erroneous view of the nature of the war in Vietnam; a failure to understand the nature of the Communist challenge; and a false notion as to the interests of America and her allies". Labor's stance against "the grotesquely oversimplified position" was proved right on every count.

And, as Freudenberg personally reflected in 2015, subsequent commitments by Australian governments to US-led conflict – for example, in Iraq – left him with a

"terrible sense of deja vu". The same misjudgements and simplifications are evident in political responses to South-East Asia today.

Freudenberg was conscious of the need for clarity, and the 1965 speech made Labor's position unequivocal. Importantly, this stance wasn't forged through the personal retribution or ideological attacks we see valorised in parliament today. It was based in fact, not born of ego or vendetta.

"We oppose the government's decision to send 800 men to fight in Vietnam. We oppose it firmly and completely." Again, the thread of the later Gallipoli speech is evident; Freudenberg turns Calwell towards the personal impact of war. "We do not believe," he observes, "[war] will promote the welfare of the people in Vietnam. On the contrary, we believe it will prolong and deepen [their] suffering." Tragically prescient.

Sadly, the suffering was real also for the almost 60,000 Australians who went on to serve in Vietnam, the 521 who died, the 3000 wounded and the generations affected since. As the son of a Vietnam War veteran, I hear Freudenberg's warning – decades on – and I thank him, personally, for his bravery in standing against the tide. It's why I write. It's why I believe his legacy is so important.

The notion a speechwriter could be the bravest figure amid the wreckage and barbarism of war is difficult for many to countenance in the modern era, in which threats of war and obliteration are exchanged via flippant Twitter insults. When words are the only thing standing between reason and carnage, it's hard to see how they could possibly triumph. But when those words are born of conviction, I'm convinced they can't lose.

Freudenberg's greatest speech could easily be called a failure. It failed the fundamental objective of speeches: to persuade. Menzies' commitment of troops went ahead, the war escalated, Labor was resoundingly defeated at the 1966 election and Calwell disappeared into history, having led the party to three losses.

But as Keating's speechwriter Don Watson later reportedly observed, "It did help [Labor] grow a spine and eventually they won because of it." That moment, of course, came for Freudenberg with Whitlam's victory in 1972. Still, I suspect his pen never hovered with the same weight of purpose as it did during those few days prior to Calwell's statement to the house.

In the era when political victory has been, as Morrison describes it, attributed to "miracles", it is critical we reflect on exactly what political victory means. If it is simply the triumph of bludgeoning "axe the tax" sloganeering, then political power is without substance, purpose, vision or integrity. No wonder it's treated with such abandon.

But if politics is about treating the Australian people intelligently and respecting the forum of parliament – if it is about conviction, purpose and love of country – then we have lost its greatest warrior. Vale Graham Freudenberg, AM.

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