

**THE LUCKY COUNTRY
50 YEARS ON**

2014 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

INDEPENDENT SCHOLARS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA INC

The Lucky Country 50 Years On

2014 Conference Proceedings

Independent Scholars Association of Australia Inc

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INTRODUCTION

‘When Donald wrote *The Lucky Country* it fairly flowed out of him.’ This is the sentence Nick Horne chose to open his essay on his father and the book he wrote in the early 1960s—a compendium of observations and critiques of Australia as a ‘derived society whose prosperity came mainly from the luck of its historical origins.’ That Donald Horne was able to write this book in a very short period of time tells us much about the person he was: Nick writes that his varied life experiences, his insights as a journalist and his hunger for reading were formative in directing his themes and sharpening his critiques. But the times also lent themselves to serious social and political criticism. Horne observed that post-war relief and prosperity generated a complacency that quite dampened imagination deflecting contemplation of future challenges and promoting provincialism.

The title of the book is heavy with irony (ironically enough not always recognised) although Nick Horne does point out that his father freely acknowledged that Australia was a happy country. This, of course, is not quite the same as lucky that inevitably reads as derived.

On publication the book was an immediate success. According to Julia Horne her father suspected that the critical focus of the work was the very reason why it was so enthusiastically received—it articulated the disappointments and frustrations of so many people. It identified the need for social, cultural, economic and political change and in doing so offered possibilities to effect it. Julia Horne refers to the ‘historical specificity’ of the work and observes that while some of the problems no longer beset the society we continue to struggle with many of the dilemmas we have inherited—no doubt one reason why the book, as a product of the ’60s,

continues to sell well. Certainly the importance Donald Horne invested in imagination ‘as a political and civic concept’ registers no less insistently today.

Julia Horne’s account of her relationship with *The Lucky Country* comes with personal reflections that bring its author to life as a relatively young, critical and often scornful, man. Her narrative also reveals that her father was not cemented into the views he had expounded but, as a public intellectual recognising the import of social process, was able to shift in his thinking as he and the times changed.

Well aware of the irony in the epithet ‘lucky’ Ian Lowe refers to three warnings from Horne’s 1964 text that, clamant as they were at the time, loom even more ominously 50 years later. We cannot, for example, continue to deny or downplay where we are geo-graphically, geo-politically, geo-economically and geo-culturally. There is another dimension to Julia Horne’s reference to the historical specificity of the book that is imbricated in so many of our present problems, it is the too often unconsidered (or is it over-considered) weight of our history limiting and reconfiguring our present worldviews.

Turning to a second of Horne’s warnings, Lowe is cutting on the question of economic priorities that privilege short-term thinking at the expense of a bigger picture. It chimes with a general point that David Suzuki made some 30 years ago about advanced economies that were headed for fourth world status as their manufacturing industries became run down and reliance on unprocessed products increased. Misplacing economic priorities has also had a crippling impact as public investment in our tertiary education systems and a reduction in research generally bleeds the bank of knowledge on which economic calls are made. To fail the future is irresponsible indeed.

Then, there is the need to rethink what ‘the whole place adds up to now’. There is a sense in which this caution is especially problematic since, even more than the other two, it carries the burden of will. The notion of public good is all too often over-shadowed by materialism and insouciance on matters of social justice and sustainable development—attitudes manifest in both individuals and in government. It seems that especially lacking is that quality that Julia Horne reports as so important in her father’s analysis—

political and civic imagination. But while Lowe sees the outlook as grim he spells out the advantages that Australia has in facing the future and points out that the future is of our making.

The three sets of warnings are not discrete, they interleave and reinforce the challenges they carry. Education is one of the elements that courses through both limitations and possibilities. Stephen Darwin notes that in 1964 higher education was really only attractive and possible for the already privileged and funding it was not a high priority for governments—state or national. Notwithstanding post-war economic growth there were only eleven universities in Australia. But that prosperity brought about greater awareness of correlations between economic development and education and alerted increased expectations of tertiary education across a broader sector of the community. Darwin traces the vicissitudes of the higher education system over the decades with their social consequences. While the establishment of colleges of advanced education—creating another tier in the tertiary education sector—opened opportunities it also introduced ambiguities. What were seen as the problems with the binary divide were ultimately dissolved a decade and a half later when the halcyon days of the early Whitlam government were overtaken by the forces of market liberalism that dictated policies underlying the direction of universities and consequently the types and levels of funding. Darwin is clear on the damaging impact for research and education with crippling consequences for both students and staff. The notion of education as a public good thus stands in danger of being hijacked by the ‘largely unchallenged orthodoxies’ of the market. There are obvious implications that flow through these three warnings.

Subscription to market forces also profoundly influenced policies determining funding for systems of primary and secondary education. Like Darwin, Ian Keese reviews changes that have been instituted over the last half century. While Horne’s summary of schooling was bleak—unacceptably large classes, teachers ‘shunted’ around unpredictably—improvements were taking place; the retention rates of students improved, teachers were required to be educationally qualified and there was an increase in the number of women entering the teaching workforce, and they gained equal pay. The

sticking point here, however, is that, as a feminised field, it is not well paid. There are also, as Keese points out, low entry requirements for university teacher education courses that run the danger of having inadequately educated teachers. These features do not serve this vital system well.

Among positive changes that Keese is able to point to is the development of a national curriculum and the potential for change in the Review led by David Gonski. The problem lies relentlessly in the funding model for the system which, like the tertiary education sector, has become increasingly subject to neo-liberal marketplace evaluation. It is an approach in which state schools fare ill, in defiance of allocation on the basis of need.

Keese rues Australia's relatively poor international standing, arguing that we have both the intellectual capital and financial capacity to improve this position but present policies, heavily structured around the funding model, do not offer great hope.

Diane Bell is not deaf to the irony of the title of Horne's book but asks the question 'lucky for whom?' Her essay weaves around the issue of social justice which causes her to pose this question insistently. She notes that Horne's views of Australia at the time of publication of the 1962 edition shifted over the years but wonders why at that time he was insensitive to changes already foreshadowed. She homes in on the divides of gender, race, culture and class—in short the 'others' in society. What she identifies in this reconsideration is a kind of double helix, a narrative interplay of two cultural critics who from different perspectives and over decades have been interrogating Australian society and found it wanting, albeit for different reasons and from different standpoints. This double helix shadows her discussion. Her critique is penetrating and deeply disturbing insofar as the socially fracturing divisions are ever recreated; her comments have relevance across a number of the other essays.

It is unsurprising that as an Alyawarre woman, Pat Anderson's story, charged with personal memories and broad social comment, tackles the intergenerational persistence of social injustice for Aboriginal peoples. In tracking this history through her own family, her own experiences and observations and her politicisation, she emphasises the importance of

education. To grow up in white Australia without education is to be disempowered. Luck has nothing to do with that. Burgeoning optimism, fuelled by some improvements in formal and certainly in political education has resulted in enduring positive changes evident in the provision of health services, in acknowledgement of land rights and of legal rights, in political representation and in cultural recognition. And yet, as Anderson observes, so many Aboriginal people continue to be trapped in the fault lines of social injustice—in cycles of poverty and unemployment. Critical of the recent policies of intervention she sees them as disconnecting from the processes of decision-making the very community members who would traditionally have exercised influence. But her optimism is strong and fifty years on from a bleaker time she sees hope in the power of education for Aboriginal people. One might argue for the society as a whole.

The notion of an Australian character is slippery. It has been variously celebrated, lampooned or disowned for many a year. Susan Priestley situates it as a dimension of Horne's explorations of national identity (in which mindlessness is the 'fount of its mediocrity') and is struck by the focus of his constructions that exclude any consideration of rural Australia that served as the major motor of prosperity in the 1960s. Nor is there any mention of the advances of scientific research. Querying whether the concept of national character can stand up to interrogation and turning to rural Australia she offers a series of commentaries drawn from letters to her grandmother from her great uncle, an English visitor travelling through the Australian country. As brief pen portraits offered by a motley of acquaintances—mostly relatively recent English immigrants—they stand as varied down-to-earth comments defying generalisations of an Australian character.

It is interesting that Priestley picks up on the Anglo-Celtic culture in Australia drawing attention to the Scottish elements for it is the presence and participation of Celts (Scots particularly) in the development of the nation that is the nub of Sybil Jack's critical essay. Anglo-Celtic migrants (as they were described in the 1960s) and their descendants have not endured the discriminatory practices of 'othering'. To the contrary, Jack argues, they have sought to celebrate their cultural differences from the dominant English

characterisation of white Australia even in descending generations. She is unhappy in the way that Horne overlooks the achievements of the nation's leaders, emphasising that many were of Celtic descent. Paradoxically the later policies and programs of multiculturalism associated with the influx of South East Asian migrants in the 1970s had little relevance for Celts who determinedly sought to re-infuse their sense of traditional culture. While the movement for republicanism suggests that through multiculturalism the values and traditions of non-Anglo migrants could be integrated into a rich national culture Jack sees that Celtic societies and associations struggle to maintain their difference.

At the time he wrote *The Lucky Country* Horne's criticism of Australia was essentially social and political but it also had a cultural strand and it is from this perspective that Joy Wallace and John O'Carroll approach the work. They point out that in this commentary on a society 'without a mind' there is no discussion of literature. Indeed this is puzzling given that, as the authors and Nick Horne observe, as a young man Donald Horne wanted to be a poet and a novelist. Wallace and O'Carroll argue that this omission is significant and examine Horne's social and political criticisms set against those of several literary writers whose works contain cultural critiques. Their analysis focuses on the views of Judith Wright whose 'account is valuable precisely because it admits the tendencies to derivativeness and stereotypical thinking that Horne deprecates'. They are, however, generally sympathetic to Horne's views and conclude that his and Wright's work, for all that they take different directions, are complementary both offering insights into the Australian mind of the time. They are also aware that Horne did change in his appraisal of the cultural life of the nation.

Horne's statement 'Australia is a lucky country run mainly by second-rate people who share its luck' is quoted often enough and with much sage agreement. John Hood challenges the notion that Australia is 'managed' or 'run' by leaders. In making his case he draws on rich documented information—archival collections of case records and newspaper articles—relating to the eviction of tenants in Sydney in the economically distressing years of the 1930s. The evictions he details took the forms of battles, the

most violent that attracted large crowds of demonstrators being that at 143 Union Street, Newtown. Police, called in to enforce the eviction used firearms, doors were broken and stones were thrown by those inside. Colourful accounts differ as to who initiated the attack and the details of it but an extensive list of the injured, including police, was published and arrests were made. Curiously, however, the case against the accused was dropped. Hood argues that the evictions and resistance to them was not simply the action of individuals, rather they revolved around an economic system that allowed private ownership of housing. The Union Street demonstration was the last and within a week the NSW Attorney General tabled a Fair Rents and Lessee's Relief Bill. Public sympathy and mass action had been persuasive and 'uncommon' individuals, rather than leaders had been the prime movers influencing decision-making.

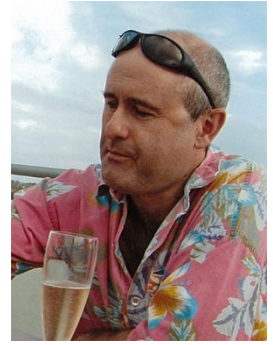
John Moses' reflections do not draw directly from Horne's writing—evidently so given that much of his memory relates to experiences in Germany. Although they predate that publication it is interesting to link some of the early sections of his story to critiques in *The Lucky Country*. Consider his salute to the significance of education that comes from a very personal perspective but clearly extends beyond the individual. Then there is his description of the number of migrants in a remote Queensland town. His own background was a cultural mix and the town he says was 'teeming with the other so-called ethnics, mainly Italian, some Greeks, Chinese, a few Germans, Finns and even Swiss people alongside, of course, many Indigenous Australians'. Horne applauds the contribution of migrant talent to Australian society even though it has not been widely celebrated. Recognising the desire to uphold traditional cultures he is also sensitive to the problems if the nation becomes 'a muddle of national minorities'. At the same time he warns against the arrogance inhering in assimilationist theory.

The message that Moses is keen to stress is that the histories of individuals vary as do the experiences and attitudes of individual historians—a presumption of objectivity is likely to be unreliable.

If the times when Horne was writing were ripe for social and political criticism they are assuredly more than mellow now, fifty years on. David

Headon with lacerating wit trawls through recent political moments that resonate, with amplification, the principal claims that Horne made about Australia. There is a sense of black humour in much of Headon's essay. The claims as he sets them out, using Horne's words, may be rooted in the nation's history but as Headon relentlessly argues it is the political actors of today with their 'mediocrity and self-interest' who bring them sharply into focus and with embarrassing grip. It is not that the ground for these claims has not shifted over the 50 year period—some changes have been made—rather a number of factors have aligned in producing a 'perfect storm of mediocrity'. Headon holds that the key to the nation's 'loss of moral compass', so clearly manifest in the policies and performance of our elected representatives, extends to embrace public behaviour.

Andrew Leigh gave the Annual ISAA Lecture in which he reflected on differences between the then of *The Lucky Country* and the present. Whatever our memories, 1964 was a mixed bag of social benefits. In many ways we are better off today: life expectancy is longer and our earnings (translated as purchasing power) are higher, we are generally less discriminatory (although it must be said that while this may be so from a legal perspective, attitudinally and even behaviourally, intolerance and prejudice simmer close to the surface and often erupt). There are, however, two measures that reveal a loss of social capital. On the one hand there is an increase in inequality as the gap between rich and poor has widened and on the other hand the sense of community and the strength of community ties has weakened. These two sets of information are not really discrete, rather the elements tend to interplay but it is against the backdrop of Leigh's analysis that so many of the essays make uncomfortable sense. But in the spirit of optimism it is worth recalling Horne's stress on the importance of imagination and Lowe's observation that we create our own future.



THE LUCKY COUNTRY 50 YEARS ON

A SUMMARY

When Donald wrote *The Lucky Country* it fairly flowed out of him.

Its theme that we should prefer intelligence to stupidity could have been written by the teenager Donald (or Don as he was known) who first discovered the pleasure of engaging with the contemporary world from Sid Deamer's *The Daily Telegraph*.

Its attempt to remind the myth makers not to forget that Australia was largely a suburban nation was natural for a boy who was born at home in Kogarah; who lived in several rented homes in the western suburbs; who had to negotiate train and tram timetables to get into the city to go to the library or the moving pictures.

Its non-footnoted seemingly superficial generalisations about the Australian character didn't seem outrageous because Donald was a man who had experienced a lot of different social situations and liked talking a lot. There might have been more talking than listening, but Donald wasn't deaf. He had a gregarious family life where, in the pre-TV age, people would drop around unexpectedly. As a boy he'd lean on neighbours' fences and talk with them. He spent a lot of time at university arguing the issues of the ages with an engaged youthful intelligentsia in the quad, cafes and pubs. Incidentally, though never an alcoholic, Donald came from an era where hard drinking was not uncommon and I think his experiences with alcohol were formative and, in some respects, not unhelpful, to the extent that it was an easy way to meet a lot of different people who he could learn from and who could provide a sounding board for whatever he was thinking at the time.

The superficial generalisations about the Australian character also struck

a chord because of his two and a half years in the army living with men who would otherwise have been working the mines. His work as a journalist forced him to get out and about chasing stories, talking with strangers, drinking with cronies. His firsthand experience of working for Frank Packer gave him an insight into how businesses were run as well as providing a (sometimes frightening) tutorial on how power could be exercised. His job as an editor taught him the responsibilities of decision-making. His travels in Asia gave him insights into our neighbourhood.

As much as *The Lucky Country* is a product of the kind of life Donald lived, it is also the product of the things he read. Starting off adult life wanting to be a poet and then a novelist, Donald devoured fiction. This gave him what he would have called an understanding of the follies of the human condition. Introduced to the world of hard facts and informed analysis in *The Economist* he learned an intelligent journalistic way of describing the world in an understandable language. His reading of some of the literary magazines from the UK and the US sharpened his critical skills. And while he had attended university (not finishing a degree because he joined the army), he always had a bit of the autodidact about him, following his own interests. He would have approved of an association of independent scholars.

Yes, John Anderson, or, at least the Andersonians, were important in developing the desire in Donald to embrace reality and smash illusions that runs through the *Lucky Country*. Also, Brian Penton's controversialist *Think or Be Damned*, a 1941 clarion call for a more intelligent Australia, was crucial. Indeed, upon reading it in the 1940s, Donald wrote an outline for a book about Australia that has some of the themes of the later book.

After writing *The Lucky Country*, monitoring the reaction to it, talking over lunches, arguing over cocktails, writing think pieces in *The Bulletin*, shouting at the TV, Donald worked out what he described as his *Lucky Country* thesis—which was that with the end of the post-war boom there needed to be an adjustment to the economic faith of the industrial nations with a new kind of political idealism and a new kind of social morality. Australia was a derived society whose prosperity came mainly from the luck of its historical origins. It was sufficiently like the innovative industrial societies of the west

to prosper from their innovations; it hadn't had to think up much for itself.

There is a shift from the tenor of *The Lucky Country*, *God is an Englishman*, and *The Next Australia* with their acceptance of the wisdom of orthodox economic indicators to a book he wrote in 1976 called *Money Made Us* where he criticises national development as more of a secular religion than an economic doctrine. He edited and contributed to the 1992 book, *The Trouble with Economic Rationalism* which questioned some of the supposed economic certainties of the age. In this, he didn't embrace the Hawke/Keating economic reforms (even though they might have been supported by the 1964 Donald Horne as an opening up of Australia to the world). While still alive he grudgingly acknowledged the success of some of those reforms while still maintaining a suspicion of an obsession with the purely economic as though economic indicators were the best gauge of human happiness.

It's easy to criticise *The Lucky Country* on a number of fronts: as Donald acknowledged, there are references to Aborigines and women which range from inadequate to offensive. Given that he revised the text four times, with the last changes made in 1998 why not cut the bad bits out? Partly because Donald's evolving views found an outlet in the many other books, articles and speeches that were to follow. Partly because Donald felt that the text itself had become a snapshot of how things seemed at the time to the kind of person he was at the time. We get the same kind of warts and all exposition in his autobiographical trilogy *An Interrupted Life*, where Donald tries to give an honest account of his own life.

Not everyone sees things the way Donald did ...

In a 2007 election debate John Howard criticised Kevin Rudd for espousing the Donald Horne Lucky Country view of the world. A few months later Kevin Rudd went on record saying that Australia is not (ironies understood) the 'Lucky Country'.

Advertising, ignoring sophisticated ironies, has never been shy to extol the virtues of the 'lucky country'.

We all walk around with different dictionaries and if people want to praise Australia as a lucky country that's no crime. As Donald himself said, if we are to compare Australia with Afghanistan or Sudan then Australia clearly is

in a good position. Indeed it is helpful to take stock—as Donald did in 1964—and acknowledge that Australia is, in many ways, a happy country. It scores well on quality of life surveys; it has had uninterrupted growth for nearly twenty five years, it's a popular tourist destination for foreigners; it has stunning beaches; beautiful moon like desert landscapes; cosmopolitan cities. And we can list improvements since the 1964 writing of the book, such as the dismantling of the White Australia Policy; more life options open to women; a greater awareness (if perhaps a greater culpability for ineffective action) of the lives of Aborigines; improvements in education that see most children finish high school; more places at universities and technical colleges; more jobs in the civil service taken up by people with relevant qualifications; a relaxation of censorship; a flourishing of the arts and growing out of the cultural cringe; and a greater awareness of our proximity to Asia.

On the down side, politics is perhaps even more despised; and while Australia is more confident of itself as a nation it still does not have the constitutional independence to match.

And yet, there is a good case to say that the spirit that moved Donald Horne to write his little book fifty years ago is still applicable today.

And here I'd like to talk about the title. Donald didn't start writing the book with the title *The Lucky Country* in his mind. Yes, he wanted to give things a good shake up; he thought Australia would have to do things differently if it were to maintain its standard of living; he thought Australian political leadership could be better; he wanted to take out an atlas and point to where we actually were in the world; he wanted us to be smarter. But whether or not Australia was a lucky country wasn't central to the book.

You'd have to say that as a marketing tool the title was a great success. The book has sold perhaps 300 000 copies. When Donald wanted to write a pamphlet about the dismissal of the Whitlam government, Penguin, aware of commercial reality, insisted on calling it *Death of the Lucky Country* (as if the death were a bad thing), which forced Donald to include a chapter of the same name which suggested that a lot of the Whitlam reforms had killed off the old derivative lucky country (as if that death were a good thing). So clearly 'the lucky country brand', if I can call it that, has value. Obviously the book

would not have sold so well if it were merely a cleverly named piece of drivel, but would it have sold so well and would we be celebrating its fifty year anniversary if it were called, say, *Australia in the Sixties*? There are no exit polls outside bookshops, but it's even possible that a few people who bought *The Lucky Country* thought they were buying a hagiography of the place. This is not a criticism of the book and I'm glad we're all here today, but, for me, all the talk about luck is a bit of a sideshow. Okay, to ask whether Australia is a lucky country or not is a legitimate question (so long as you accept that concepts of luck are relative). Regardless of what specific conclusions the book, which I'm going to call *Australia in the Sixties*, makes, its very existence is the important thing. Readable, learned without being obtuse, intelligent, lively, rationally optimistic, trying to match pragmatism and idealism and aimed at a broad informed public it provided a good model for one way in which ideas can be discussed in Australia.



DONALD HORNE AND *THE LUCKY COUNTRY*

My scholarly relationship to *The Lucky Country* (1964) really Donald Horne and *The Lucky Country* began as a young undergraduate student in the 1980s when I first read the book as a prescribed text for my history course. Long versed in the family lore of the book as a critique of an older Australia, I approached it not as commentary on present-day Australia, but as a 1960s historical document. Yet to my surprise, an argument erupted amongst my classmates—it seemed that Australia really was a lucky country even though other students heatedly explained that they had missed the point.

In the early 1990s I read *The Lucky Country* in a professional capacity as a history tutor for a course on Modern Australia. This time there was no defence of Australia as being a lucky country and my students, who were babies in the 1970s, dispassionately explored the text for what it said about a bygone Australia.

Only late last year, just before *The Lucky Country* turned fifty, did I take the book off my shelf to read it for a third occasion, now for enjoyment, and also to see how it had stood the test of time.

The story goes that as I slept in my cot after lunch in late December 1963, my father Donald Horne and my mother Myfanwy sat on deck chairs in the small garden of their ground floor apartment, and with foolscap writing pad on knee and fountain pen in hand he began to write a book about Australia.

Penguin Books approached my father to write such a book on the strength of an article, 'Living with Asia', published in *The Observer* in the early 1960s. The article was an 'ideas piece' critiquing Australia's relationship with Asia,

contemplating past and present failings, yet imagining an optimistic future. Penguin's men in Australia liked its mix of critique and optimism, and believed the style would suit a full-length book.

Over the course of three months my father worked on the book after dinner, on weekends, and whenever he had time, despite a busy job, until he had a draft of 70,000 words. (He had recently taken leave from employment as an editor of two magazines for Sir Frank Packer and was during this period a busy advertising executive, working on a new campaign for Qantas.) The typed draft was passed to my mother, herself an experienced journalist, who, he later reminisced, 'nipped out unnecessary words and sorted out word jams', responsibility she continued to undertake for the rest of his writing life. And after puzzling over the title, the publisher suggested: why not look to the first sentence of the last chapter? 'Australia is a lucky country run mainly by second-rate people who share its luck.' And so, the book was called *The Lucky Country: Australia in the Sixties*.

The book was released in December 1964 and 18,000 copies were sold in nine days. My great grandmother sent a letter: 'My word, Don, you're going to wake people up'. By the end of 1966, almost 100,000 copies had sold and over the next thirty odd years another 160,000, thus recreating my father as a person whose commentary on Australia mattered. In many ways, I grew up not only with a family, a canary, a dog and a pet tortoise, but also with a famous book that grew along with the rest of us, changed its outward appearance more than once, sometimes brazenly, though in later life, more subdued.

The title, as we know, became part of the Australian lexicon even if the irony was often lost. Watching television in the 1970s I clearly remember my father's displeasure when the phrase was used to advertise a popular brand of moselle. Yet for those who read the book the irony could not be missed. As he wrote in the opening of the last chapter entitled 'The Lucky Country—living on our luck':

Australia is a lucky country run mainly by second-rate people who share its luck.

One of the most quoted sentences of twentieth century Australia, for decades it was truncated to 'Australia is a lucky country', which of course transformed the meaning of the sentence. The next sentence began:

It lives on other people's ideas ...

(Which referred to the derivativeness of Australia in the early 1960s, a state of national outlook that its author believed changed from the 1970s.)

... and, although its ordinary people are adaptable, most of its leaders (in all fields) so lack curiosity about the events that surround them that they are often taken by surprise. A nation more concerned with styles of life than with achievement has managed to achieve what may be the most evenly prosperous society in the world. It has done this in a social climate largely inimical to originality and the desire for excellence (except in sport) and in which there is less and less acclamation of hard work. According to the rules Australia has not deserved its good fortune.'

Clearly, the phrase 'the lucky country' was not meant as praise. Yet as we now know, the phrase took on a life of its own, often used as an expression of praise and self-congratulation, completely devoid of the social and cultural criticism of the original sentence. For those who read the book, the message could not be clearer, expressed in abrupt, clean prose, sometimes cheeky, that created urgency about the subject matter, a way to grab the attention of Australians. He later speculated that people's reactions to the book suggested its success was largely because it articulated the sorts of frustrations Australians were feeling about their nation: a lack of political imagination, a scarcity of effective public discussion, an unwillingness of leaders to think creatively were all criticised in the book:

There are no great debates, there is little effective public discussion. The men in power do not seem able to excite first their own imaginations and then those of others into becoming familiar with these challenges ... There are few "new men" gathered together in the precincts of power to revisualize the images of the nation so that change may become possible. The men at the top, the tribal leaders, are not in training for such a set of awkward situations. Their imagination seems exhausted by the country's achievements. Their own ideals—those of a more modest and earlier Australia—have been met and there are few people to whom they will listen to tell them that those ideals are now obsolete.

He bemoaned the fact that few of these leaders could see beyond the luck of a largely buoyant post-war economy, their complacency making them ill-prepared for the challenges that were now facing the western world as it entered the second half of the twentieth century. The root of the problem he saw as provincialism, a state of mind long despised by my father, and which he blamed on a 'provincial generation produced in a period when

mindlessness was a virtue, the self-interest of pressure groups was paramount, cleverness had to be disguised, quick action was never necessary and what happened overseas was irrelevant.'

But the statement is also interesting for the importance my father gave to 'imagination' as a political and civic concept, one which he felt our current leaders were incapable of utilising despite a history in Australia of the adoption of imaginative political ideas. The statement also reflects an observation made many times in the book on how Australian leaders operated on past ideals, those of 'a more modest and earlier Australia', the "old Australia" that he saw as increasingly irrelevant to Australia's place in the new global order of the second half of the twentieth century. Racism was criticised. In one section the White Australia Policy was condemned as an inappropriate racist immigration policy largely used against our Asian neighbours, potentially damaging what otherwise might be constructive relationships with Asian nations. He disapproved of the various racist policies used since colonial times to exclude Aboriginal Australians: 'There is no doubt that given the affluence, skills, and professions of humanitarianism and fraternalism in Australian society, modern Australians have made a mess of restoring the Aborigines to the human race'. And while presenting the 1960s case for assimilation as better than past policies of segregation and worse, he condemned the slowness in granting full rights to Aborigines. This reluctance on the part of politicians partly came 'from theories of race' but he argued that it was now mainly the result of 'blindness of conscience and a sheer lack of imagination'. Throughout *The Lucky Country* there are calls for leaders to place 'imagination' in their leadership toolkits, a necessary and exciting means of dealing with the new challenges of the second half of the twentieth century.

In all this critique there was also a niggling worry that our cultural, intellectual and educational institutions, which had served us well in the past, may no longer be up to the task of taking us forward into the future, and so he included a separate discussion each on schools, academics and universities, the press, the intellectuals, the bureaucracy and our system of government. We must remember that the book was written in the early 1960s at a time

when the technological revolution, to which Australia had originally adapted with great efficiency, was now passing into new forms, and many Australians were wondering what would happen to Australia in the process. How would they invest in different skills to implement new techniques? Would overseas firms continue to buy up Australian firms at an increasingly high rate? Would Australia end up as what he called an ‘economically colonial country again with foreigners managing its main economic affairs?’

The historical specificity of the book is interesting for what it reveals about the then tension between an old and highly-admired Australia of rugged bushies and rural idylls, and a new Australia emerging as an independent nation in a changing international climate. He believed that no other ‘Western’ nation had ‘to face so wide a cross-section of the mid-century’s typical dilemmas’, which is partly why he wrote the book. Some of these dilemmas are still recognisable because they still face us, and I think help to explain the currency of parts of the book, and why after 50 years it is still in print. Taken from his list of dilemmas are the following: the ‘pressures of under-privilege and of over-population’, ‘the problems of maintaining growth in a sophisticated society’, and ‘the problems of developing a physically “have-not” country’. Other dilemmas are still current, but expressed in a language of the past, such as ‘the development of anti-racialism and of anti-colonialism’, a problem that now manifests itself in the language of human rights.

But some of the problems he mentioned in the 1960s are no longer part of our international vocabulary, and illustrate how the book was very much of its time: for example, ‘the collapse of European colonial empires’, ‘the emergence of Communism in Asia’ and ‘the surplus of temperate foodstuffs’. Each of these mid-twentieth century predicaments has now largely been sidelined by new geopolitical dilemmas, even if we still live with the consequences of their histories.

He believed that Australia could not protect itself through isolation, but like other western nations, must prepare for new challenges. To ignore them would lead to demise. But to address them with imaginative solutions would raise Australia out of its stupor and recreate it as a truly twentieth century

nation. In this sense, *The Lucky Country* was an attempt to shake up the national conversation and to throw into the mix some of the dilemmas that many Australians themselves were pondering. The leaders may have been complacent; but the book's immediate success showed that many Australians were not.

In this sense the ideas in the book are not just the thoughts of a cranky young man, but a manifesto for social, cultural, economic and political change. It was not the Australian people he reserved his greatest criticism for, but the complacency of their leaders. And in identifying the problems he also wanted to suggest how they could be resolved. The manifesto was outlined in the chapter headings: 'The Australian Dream', 'What is an Australian?', 'Between Britain and America', 'Living with Asia', 'Who runs Australia?', 'Forming Opinions'. He explored possible cures. With prosperity due to a mineral boom, Australia might further loosen its ties to Britain, develop new international relations outside the British Commonwealth, ideally even become a republic. It could free itself of the notorious white Australia policy in order to do business with Japan and other parts of Asia, firm up relations with America while becoming a chief voice for Oceanic nations. Government, parliament, bureaucracy, schools, universities could all be improved and traditional ways of doing things reformed to ensure all Australians benefited. I want to emphasise 'all Australians' because he devoted two sections to critiquing the idea of Australian racial and cultural homogeneity by exploring what he called 'senses of differences'. He described an Australia that was highly urbanised yet continued to look to the Bush, an ideal from the old Australia, for a sense of identity. The term 'Australian', he argued, covered a world of difference especially in terms of race, religion and class. (Only in the next edition did he engage with the idea of gender as a form of 'difference'.)

While *The Lucky Country* has continued to have a life well beyond what its author intended, and has become a measuring-stick of sorts on how Australia fares, my father also saw the writing of *The Lucky Country* in profoundly personal terms. It was his first published book, and it transformed him into a writer. He was to continue as a journalist and editor of the *Bulletin* until

the early 1970s when he left the Frank Packer fold, became a professor of political science followed by various public appointments. But from 1964, he also averaged a book almost every year, some which sold well in terms of Australian book sales, others less so.

It's worth contemplating how some of these books developed ideas first raised in *The Lucky Country*. Books such as *Southern Exposure* (1967), *The Next Australia* (1970), *Money Made Us* (1976), *Time of Hope* (1980), *The Lucky Country Revisited* (1987), *Ideas for a Nation* (1989), *The Avenue of the Fair Go* (1997), *Looking for Leadership: Australia in the Howard Years* (2001), and *Ten Steps to a More Tolerant Australia* (2003), all pursued themes in *The Lucky Country*, directly addressing in greater depth aspects of our social, political, historical and economic character.

But many of his other books could also be seen as descendants, if distant cousins, of *The Lucky Country*. The autobiography of his childhood and adolescence, *The Education of Young Donald* (1967), is also a text on the 'old' Australia pilloried in *The Lucky Country*. *God is an Englishman* (1969) was an account of postcolonial Britain in the 1960s as it managed its ways through the mid-century dilemmas facing western nations. *The Great Museum* (1984), *The Public Culture* (1986) and *The Intelligent Tourist* (1992)—none of them about Australia—explored how nations make and use myths, which underlay much of his critique in 1964.

The Lucky Country transformed 'Donald Horne, editor and journalist', into 'Donald Horne, author'. This is how I saw him as I grew up, even though his other professional selves were always close by, which included magazine editor, most notably of a transformed *The Bulletin*, a university academic, a chairperson of various national cultural and civic organisations, a university chancellor, a cultural rights activist and a public intellectual.

I have many memories of my father as a writer. In 1966 when we moved to our new home, a terrace house in Sydney's eastern suburbs, my parents created a study, book-lined with his ever-growing reference library ranging over a variety of topics including all manner of histories, politics, contemporary society, travel as well as a twentieth century writer's tools of trades such as dictionaries, lexicons and encyclopaedias. For many years, in a

time before Google, *The World Book Encyclopaedia* and *The Australian Encyclopaedia* took pride of place, as much a gathering point for my friends and me to consult as a quick way for my parents in their writing enterprise, to check general facts. The 'Study', as we called it, occupied the light-filled, top front room of our terrace. While there were times when he would close the door to keep family noise out, and only my mother would dare enter, for the most part, the Study was a place of welcome and sustenance, and to me as a child, a font of seemingly unbounded knowledge. It was slightly shambolic with books all the way around the walls, and as the collection grew, so did the number of shelves creeping up to the ceiling, requiring my father to balance precariously on a tall ladder to reach those books at the very top.

My father, I feel certain, had read them all, often marking passages of significance, and then took delight in deciding where to place them for further reference, knowing that his orderly approach would allow quick retrieval when needed. It was a working library of over 7000 items, and much of this reading helped shape his writing. But as a public intellectual who scorned the scholarly artifice of footnotes, it was also his bibliography and footnotes. The pages of many of these items still bear the paper clips, discrete dots and notations, these markings now symbolising the intellectual influences on his own writing and critical approaches.

As a book of ideas he wanted *The Lucky Country* to engage Australians in national conversations about 'being Australian', one broader than the usual nationalist myths of ockers, sheep and sport. My father saw *The Lucky Country* very much as a book of its times and an intervention into the national conversation of the 1960s. Yet its longevity provided a point of departure for many subsequent explorations, often inspired by his belief in the power of imagination. As he explained in the book, 'imagination is not merely making things up; it can also lie in discerning the shapes of problems, in probing new areas of the possible'. For me, that captures not only the serious message of *The Lucky Country*, but also the man I knew as my father.



CAN WE RE-INVENT 'THE LUCKY COUNTRY'?

Introduction

Fifty years ago, Donald Horne¹ described Australia as 'a lucky country run mainly by second-rate people who share its luck'. He went on to say that we 'live on other people's ideas' and that 'most of our leaders (in all fields) so lack curiosity about the events that surround them that they are often taken by surprise'. His book caused a sensation at the time but, as in so many areas, its message was usually misrepresented by people who had not read the book, or had certainly not understood it if they did read it.

Reflecting on the book's reception from the vantage point of 1998, Horne² observed that 'misuse of the phrase "the lucky country", as if it were praise for Australia rather than a warning, has been a tribute to the empty-mindedness of a mob of assorted public wafflers. When the book first came out, people had no doubt the phrase was ironic. Twisting it around to mean the opposite of what was intended has silenced the three loud warnings in the book about the future of Australia.'

In this paper, I am revisiting Donald Horne's three warnings issued fifty years ago, reflecting on their applicability to modern Australia, and offering some thoughts about our chance of re-inventing 'the lucky country'.

The Three Warnings

Those three loud warnings in the 1964 book³ were that it is essential to accept the challenges of where Australia is on the map, the need for a revolution in economic priorities 'especially by investing in education and science', and the need for a 'a bold redefinition of what the whole place adds up to now'.

Writing in 1998, Horne⁴ observed that the same three warnings should be repeated 'with the amplifying knob turned up'.

In terms of the challenge of where Australia is on the map, our leaders are still in denial or offering over-simplified generalisations about Asia, in a way they never would about other continents like Europe. There is little emphasis in our education system on learning any of the major Asian languages or learning about the history of China, Japan or Indonesia. Asian countries are still seen, as Horne⁵ observed fifty years ago, through a narrow economic prism: 'little more than an economic machine out of which we can make a buck'. As one extreme example, our current leaders obsess about the possibility of so-called 'free trade agreements', in the hope of selling more of our cheap commodities to countries like China. At the same time, they mindlessly follow the USA into ill-advised military adventures, without any sign of considering how this would look to our neighbours, while Coalition figures also talk airily about nuclear power, without considering why Iran's neighbours are nervous when a nation with abundant energy resources goes down that path.

As far as economic priorities are concerned, Horne⁶ wrote that the Australia into which he was born was a 'rather stupid place that ... cover[ed] its imports bill by exporting unprocessed commodities ... [with] a philistine rhetoric that concealed, for instance, how the success of the export industries ... depended partly on research scientists who were among the best in the world'. If that was an accurate observation then, as I believe it was, it is more obviously true today. We have run down our manufacturing so that we now do not make even such basic products as shirts and shoes. Our escalating import bill for these advanced manufactures has been covered by exporting ever-increasing quantities of unprocessed raw materials, principally iron ore and coal. This economic model can only work even in principle as long as long-distance freight transport is powered by cheap petroleum fuels and countries like China continue to buy our cheap commodities. To reinforce this point, government sources have hailed the recently-negotiated trade agreement with China as enabling the export of large amounts of milk, expecting the community to see this as a desirable investment in our

economic future.

While Horne recognised that the ability of commodity exporters to compete has been supported by our investment in research, especially through the CSIRO and universities, recent governments have been reducing their expenditure on science and innovation generally. Bob Hawke said Australia should aim to be ‘the clever country’ in an election policy speech, but did little to implement the rhetoric once the election was safely negotiated. More recent prime ministers haven’t even bothered to employ superficial slogans about science. Science funding by government is now at its lowest for thirty years, with CSIRO making hundreds of scientists redundant in response to the 2014-15 Budget, and for the first time in decades we do not even have a Minister for Science. There is increasing desperation to have our mineral resources ‘developed’—an obvious euphemism since the process actually destroys the resources from an Australian viewpoint, turning an ore body into a hole in the ground here and wealth in the pockets of overseas shareholders. As an extreme example, as I was writing this paper the relevant State government announced that it would spend several hundred million dollars of taxpayers’ money to build a railway in central Queensland in the hope this would enable an uneconomic coal mine venture to go ahead.

Perhaps most disturbing in terms of its long-term impact, successive changes to government policy on university funding have re-framed tertiary education from a public investment in our common future to a private investment in earning capacity. This re-framing has seen a dramatic shift away from such fields as humanities, science and engineering in favour of degrees that are seen as a licence to print money: medicine, law, commerce and business studies. The decline in numbers studying areas basic to future innovation bodes ill for Australia’s ability to compete even in the export of primary products; it is a fatal impediment to developing the growth industries of the twenty-first century.

There is little serious discussion of Australia’s future. The Commission for the Future, established by Barry Jones when he was Minister for Science in the Hawke Government, was always seen by his government colleagues as an

indulgence; its public funding was discontinued after he ceased to be the responsible minister. Under successive governments over the last thirty years, we have seen Americanisation by stealth: erosion of the public provision of essential services, rapidly growing inequality, the sale of public assets and the reduction of government's capacity to regulate for the public good, all justified by the fatally flawed fixation with flat-Earth economics and philistine materialism which has come to dominate politics in the English-speaking world. Social cohesion and the provision of infrastructure in urban areas has been undermined by a rate of immigration that gives Australia the highest rate of population growth in the OECD, with public attention distracted from the growth problem by demonising refugees and 'dog-whistling' by conservative politicians to encourage latent racism. The public support for becoming a republic was cynically diverted by John Howard into an argument about the appropriate mechanism for a new system: the time-honoured divide-and-rule approach.

Perhaps the most serious problem is the disappearance from the political agenda of the goal of sustainable development. As far back as 1992, the Council of Australian Governments adopted the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development⁷, committing the Commonwealth as well as all state and territory governments to a set of laudable principles, including the following:

- 'a path of economic progress that does not impair the welfare of future generations'
- 'equity within and between generations'
- 'recognition of the global dimension'
- 'protection of biological diversity'
- 'maintenance of ecological processes and systems'.

There has been little sign that recent governments are even aware of these lofty principles; they certainly do not routinely figure in analysis of competing policy options. Only a Prime Minister in deep denial about these obligations could cheerfully claim that coal is good for humanity and try to prevent a major global meeting of leaders from discussing the problem of climate change.

Other thinkers have been warning about the short-sighted pursuit of material gains for decades. Charles Birch⁸ wrote in 1975 that the time had come to place constraints on our materialism and become a sustainable society, accepting the need for constraints instead of competing for a larger slice of the cake. He said, 'What holds us back is not the pressure of reality but the absence of dreams ...' Jonathan King⁹ wrote in 1984, 'We must learn that there is more to life than getting rich quick. We have overdone the selfishness and it is time we put the community before our personal greed ... Material wealth cannot go on forever, energy resources are finite, the costs in economic and social terms are already too great.' I chaired the advisory council which produced the first independent national report on the state of the environment in 1996. It noted¹⁰ that Australia's environment is mostly in good shape by international standards, but we also have some serious problems that must be addressed if we are to achieve our stated goal of developing sustainably: the loss of our unique biodiversity, the degradation of productive land, the state of our inland rivers, pressures on the coastal zone and rapidly increasing greenhouse gas emissions. Three subsequent reports at five-year intervals show all these problems getting steadily worse. The 1996 report noted that these problems do not have simple causes. They are the consequence of the growth and distribution of our population, lifestyle choices, the technologies we use and the resulting demands on natural resources. A simplistic approach of pursuing growth for its own sake is inevitably making all these problems worse and reducing the capacity of future generations of Australians to meet their needs.

Prospects for Re-inventing the Lucky Country?

In the introduction to the 1998 fifth edition of his book, Horne¹¹ wrote that Australia 'should be impelled to display its talents in a sense of reality' observing that we have 'great qualities that could constitute the beginnings of a great nation'. He listed what he regarded as these qualities:

- Anti-doctrinaire tolerance
- A sense of fair play
- A sense of family

- An interest in nature
- Adaptability
- Fraternalism
- Scepticism
- A talent for improvisation
- Courage and stoicism.

While there might be room for argument about whether these qualities are either universal within Australia or unique to this country, Horne's argument certainly had some validity when he made it. Maintaining cultural attributes and traditions does, however, depend on the maintenance of the capacity to tell our own stories in our own languages. That capacity has been steadily undermined by the failure of successive governments to maintain our cultural institutions. As Horne¹² expressed it, 'we must have our own books about our own history and our own society, we must have our own fiction, our own poetry, our own plays, films, television series and also our own soap operas, our own social and political analysis, our own music and dance'. He added, 'if we do not place cultural concerns at the centre of the contemplation and determination of our collective future, any political, social and economic attainments will be hollow, and our collective future bleak and meaningless'. The gradual colonisation of our media by the USA has significantly reduced both our capacity to tell our own stories and public awareness of Australia's unique social history.

That being said, Australia undoubtedly has significant advantages in facing what has been described as the 'existential crisis' facing industrial societies. Our leaders, in common with others around the world, are still in denial about the inconvenient truth spelled out by the first report to the Club of Rome more than forty years ago:¹³ there are limits to growth. That report concluded that if the trends of growth in population, resource use, industrial production, agricultural output and pollution were all to continue, the world would reach limits to growth within a hundred years, with the most likely result 'a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline in both population and industrial capacity'—in other words, economic, social and environmental collapse. Turner has shown that all those growth trends have indeed

continued, putting the world right on target for that grim future. The 2013 Fenner Conference reviewed all the evidence and came to a similar conclusion.¹⁴ Friedrichs¹⁵ has shown that the global economy is being squeezed between the two forces of declining production of conventional oil and rapidly accelerating climate change, driven in part by the use of dirtier replacement fuels. Higgs¹⁶ has shown more generally that the industrial system is on a 'collision course' with the capacity of natural systems to provide our need and manage our waste products. Even the World Economic Forum concluded at its 2008 Summit on the Global Agenda¹⁷ that the recent crises of food, fuel and finance are 'the canaries in the mine that indicate that the current economic system is simply not sustainable'. While there are still optimists who hope that the growing disillusion of people around the world with the intransigence of our leaders could produce a 'Great Transition', all the indicators point to a breakdown of global systems over the next few decades.

In facing that future, Australia has real advantages:

- Adequate resources per head [as have only New Zealand, Norway, Iceland and Canada among other OECD nations];
- Self-sufficiency in food [if we manage our productive land and limited water resources sensitively];
- We are an island nation, so we have relatively little fear of border disputes;
- Despite recent erosion, we still have a good base of science and innovation;
- We have strong social institutions;
- We have those general qualities spelled out by Donald Horne and listed above.

In principle, Australia decided more than twenty years ago to develop in a responsible way when the Council of Australian Governments adopted the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, as noted above. Those principles, clearly more honoured in the breach than the observance by recent governments, still constitute a framework for a future that is economically sound, socially just and environmentally responsible. The

critical issue is the need to move beyond the mindless fixation on economic growth as an end in itself, seeing it as the indicator of a healthy future; even thoughtful economists now caution against this delusion.

Creating Our Future

The most important principle to recognise is that the future is not somewhere we are going; it is something we are creating.¹⁸ At any given time, there are many possible futures. Which one eventuates will be the product of our choices and actions, individually and as groups. It will, of course, be influenced by global events over which we have no control. We should be aware of the old sailing maxim: we cannot choose which wind will blow, but we can set the sails. A good sailor can use whatever wind is blowing to head in the direction they choose. Recognising the global forces we cannot control does not imply meekly surrendering our fate to those forces. As Donald Horne argued fifty years ago, we have the resources and the qualities to do better and become a great nation, an exemplar to others as they face the existential crisis before us. The choice is up to us.

¹ D Horne, *The Lucky Country*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1964.

² D Horne, *The Lucky Country*, fifth edition, Penguin, Melbourne, 1998.

³ D Horne, 1964.

⁴ D Horne, 1998.

⁵ D Horne, 1964.

⁶ D Horne, *Think or Perish!*, Occasional Paper No. 8, Commission for the Future, Melbourne, 1988.

⁷ Council of Australian Governments, *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development*, available at <http://www.environment.gov.au/about-us/esd/publications/national-esd-strategy>

⁸ C Birch, *Confronting the Future*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1975.

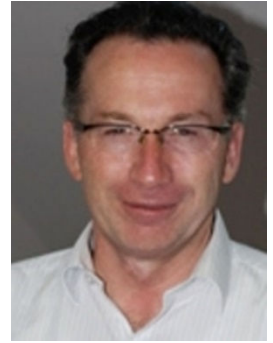
⁹ J King, *Waltzing Materialism*, fifth printing, Harper and Row, Sydney, 1984.

¹⁰ State of the Environment Advisory Council, *State of the Environment Australia 1996*, CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, 1996.

¹¹ D Horne, 1998.

¹² D Horne, 1998.

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- ¹³ D H Meadows, D L Meadows, J. Randers & W W Behrens III, *The Limits to Growth*, Universe Books, New York, 1972.
- ¹⁴ J Goldie & K Betts, *Sustainable Futures*, CSIRO Publishing, Collingwood, 2014.
- ¹⁵ J Friedrichs *The Future Is Not What It Used To Be*, MIT Press, Boston, 2013.
- ¹⁶ K Higgs, *Collision Course*, MIT Press, Boston, 2014.
- ¹⁷ World Economic Forum, *Summit on the Global Agenda*, WEF, Geneva, 2008.
- ¹⁸ I Lowe. *A Big Fix*, 2nd edition, Black Inc., Melbourne, 2008.



THE RISE AND FALL OF AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

Introduction

It is indisputable that the Australian higher education system has grown dramatically in the last fifty years, developing from a small and largely elite construction to one that offers a rich diversity of educational opportunities for contemporary students. Yet so much of this growth has not been primarily driven by the genuine educational aspirations of government leaders to grow a high quality university system. Instead, growth has primarily (though not exclusively) been generated from real political pressures to broaden access to a university education, as Year 12 retention rates have increased, social aspirations for access to higher education have elevated and economic demands for higher skills have grown. This has meant that the motivations to develop higher education have been primarily driven by the need to address these essentially political demands, leading to decisions largely framed by educational pragmatism.

In addition, the lingering desire of some political leaders to retain a remnant liberal, elite university model (akin to Oxford and Cambridge) has confused this pragmatic intent. Essential to this pragmatism has been the objective of generating university 'places' whilst not substantially increasing overall government expenditure on universities. This has produced a number of serious implications for the formation of Australian higher education over recent decades, including the creation of sub-university institutions, the reformation of these lower funded institutions into universities, the re-

introduction of tuition fees, the increasing reliance on international student income and, most recently, the steep reduction in per student funding. Therefore, all too often the primary motivation for the expansion of universities has been the product of a series of extrinsic drivers rather than borne of innate desire to build the teaching and research capabilities of Australian universities.

Moreover, we are currently on the eve of a further dramatic transformation squarely centred on the dramatic expansion of university places in tandem with a seemingly paradoxical 20 per cent reduction in government funding to the sector. Again, but perhaps more dramatically than ever before, the expansion of university places will be funded largely by students and powered by the largely uncontrollable mechanism of deregulated university fees. This radical transformation is the end point on a continuing belief that the market—rather than government—can best determine the nature of higher education provision, effectively amounting to the progressive privatising of Australian higher education. This retreat by government, predicated on the need to allow Australian universities to ‘compete’ on the world stage (that is, arbitrary university league tables), ironically represents the ultimate retreat into the sanctuary of ‘other people’s ideas’ that Horne warned of in *The Lucky Country* five decades ago.

Australian Higher Education in 1964

When Horne pessimistically reflected on the national torpor in 1964, Australia had just eleven universities. These were made up of the current Group of Eight ‘sandstone’ universities, plus the University of New England and Macquarie University (which opened in that year). Despite the waves of post-war growth, the number of universities had increased only modestly during this period with the addition of only five universities—though importantly this did include the creation in 1964 of a new research-focused, Commonwealth-funded institution (The Australian National University). University education remained a largely elite formation, providing little access for students outside privileged socioeconomic circumstances and had not effectively graduated from a marginal function and a largely peripheral

social status.¹ Moreover, the only significant other post-secondary education in 1964 was offered in a range of small, state-based technical colleges that provided training largely in trade occupations. Essentially, at this time higher education remained fragmented as a result of fragilities of funding and educational priorities of state governments, and politically incidental given its limited reach beyond those from privileged socio-economic circumstances.

Nevertheless, significant pressures were manifesting during the early and mid to late 1960s to expand Australian higher education. Industrial development and rapid growth in primary industries (most notably mining) were generating more complex and broader demands for higher skills level in the economy. Coinciding with this, emerging economic development theorists were drawing new correlations between expansion of the higher education sector and economic growth. Heightened prosperity was also creating increasing expectations in families that their children would be able to access a university education. Moreover, an earlier review of Australian universities in the late 1950s (known as the Murray Report) found universities to be short-staffed, poorly-housed and equipped, with high dropout rates. Despite this, the conservative Menzies Government remained anxious that a rapid growth in universities would be an expensive and largely unpopular priority. Despite the earlier introduction of some centralised funding, in the mind of most of his colleagues universities remained largely a responsibility of the states.² Moreover, it was feared by others that the persistent demands of an aggressive labour market expansion might challenge the elite liberal university model currently in place. These demands were seen as creating an imperative for a more explicitly vocational framework that would potentially undermine the social standing and standards of universities.

It was in response to these rising tensions that the Menzies Government established a major inquiry into tertiary education under the stewardship of the conservative head of the then Universities Commission. This inquiry, known as the Martin Committee, eventually reported in 1965. After five years of often-turbulent deliberations, this review recommended strategies to

allow all those who wished to engage in tertiary education to be able to do so. However, it asserted that this could not be achieved solely within universities due to the diverse nature of emerging labour market needs. It therefore advocated the establishment of a binary system. This involved the modest and managed expansion of the traditional universities and the creation of new Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE's) focused on vocational and technical areas of study required by industry and commerce.³

However, the first CAE's opened in 1965 were established on uncertain educational demarcations with universities, primarily framed around a fragile theoretical versus applied dichotomy. This introduced demarcation was neither clearly articulated by government, nor accepted broadly by academics.⁴ Similarly, the relationship between the vocational focus of the state-based technical colleges and the 'advanced' vocational skills of the new CAE's also remained ambiguous. Regardless of this ambiguity, the expansion of student places in tertiary education was to accelerate dramatically in the decade following the Martin Inquiry. There were seven universities with around 70,000 enrolled students in Australia in 1963, yet only a decade later there were 17 universities and an additional 77 CAE's, with total enrolments of around 230,000 students.⁵ Yet the actual funding per student in the new CAE's represented a significant reduction to the per student costs in current universities, with an absence of research and a teaching intensive role prescribed for academic staff within these new institutions. Although the creation of the network of CAE's had the effect of relieving mounting political and social pressures to create opportunities in tertiary education, it created an uncertain binary divide and a structural inequality in funding that was to haunt the Australian higher education system into the future.

Real Growth in Australian Universities

The growth in Australian universities was to quicken further with the election of the Whitlam Labor government in 1972. The new Labor government made a series of major policy decisions around higher education during its brief period in office. Their primary objective was to broaden access of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to the then traditional

university student. These wide-ranging decisions included:

- abolishing tuition fees in tertiary education;
- introducing a living allowance for students from low-income households;
- assuming total funding responsibilities for Australian universities from the state governments;
- planning a range of new universities in growth regions of major cities.

A hostile Senate, an international oil crisis and the subsequent recession of 1974-75 curtailed the complete fulfilment of all these aspirations. However, they did represent the first coalescing of the tertiary sector under a unified national framework of funding and policy formation. This move built on the earlier centralising foundations of the preceding Menzies era increasing further the direct interest of the Commonwealth government in universities and their management. This more substantial interest provided the immediate platform for the introduction and broadening of student feedback-based evaluation that followed. However, the basis for the intervention would not be that expected in this period of halcyon growth for the university sector.

The force of the international recession of 1974-75 significantly affected the funding context of Australian higher education. The last budget of the Whitlam government reversed growth in government spending as the anti-Keynesian monetarist philosophies of Friedman and Hayek began to gain traction in Western economies struggling with rampant inflationary pressures. Funding across the public sector, including for universities and CAE's, was frozen. This was despite the ambitious growth trajectories anticipated by the 'education for all' mantra of the Whitlam era. This response, and that which followed in the immediately succeeding years, represented a major turning point in government and broader social conceptions of the Australian higher education system.

Elected in December 1975, the Fraser government largely reacted to the severe economic and social shock generated by recessionary inflation and unemployment by using strong monetarist strategies. In declaring an end to

the era of post-war growth, the Fraser government progressively consolidated this anti-Keynesian market liberalism into a broader policy framework, which gradually began further to reshape the higher education landscape. Using the springboard of a comprehensive initial review of government spending and a second more comprehensive review in 1981 (dubbed the Lynch Razor Gang after the treasurer who led it), higher education funding was reduced in real terms. In addition, triennial funding was suspended, fees were introduced for second degrees and postgraduate awards were significantly reduced. For the first time during this period, the number of tertiary institutions declined with the forced broad-scale amalgamations of Colleges of Advanced Education. Arguably, this retreat would have been more significant had the Fraser government opted to reintroduce the tertiary fees abolished by the Whitlam government in 1974 (as it reportedly considered). Nevertheless, for the first time since the Second World War, the higher education sector was to stop growing. This was despite the increasing numbers of students completing secondary education.

Much of this government response was founded on the broad ideological foundation of market liberalism, which stressed that open markets, competition and individual effort based on 'free' choice was the essence of human fulfilment. It represented the antithesis to the Keynesian orthodoxy of government-led social and economic development centred on the strategic use of collective taxation. Critically, the changed nature of political debate centred on the need for a more flexible and responsive economy sufficiently agile to embrace the looming tides of globalisation.

This created the public policy logic for elevating levels of accountability, transparency and a relentless pursuit of cost efficiencies in all public institutions, including universities. The logic rested on corporate forms of planning, budgeting, quantifiable outcomes and devolved authority to act. It inevitably generated elevated levels of policy interest in the reform of specific micro-economic facilitators of economic development, not least of all in Australia's higher education system. This was for two primary reasons: firstly, it was an area of relatively high federal government expenditure that could be subject itself to reform, and secondly it had a prospective role in building

competitiveness and economic growth. Ironically, this elevated interest was to reach its zenith following the subsequent election of the Hawke Labor Government in March 1983, which adopted an even more systematic and broadened engagement with the drives of market liberalism.

Market Liberalism and the Reformation of Higher Education

The election of the Hawke Labor Government in 1983 quickly transformed the Whitlam-era agenda around higher education. Instead of expansion and access, the early attempts by Labor economic leadership to constrain higher education expenditure demonstrated a strong attraction to the principles of market liberalism. In the framing of the so-called *Prices and Incomes Accord*, education became largely ancillary to the more significant agendas of growth and international competitiveness. Moreover, the pressing imperative to deregulate Australia's economic framework provided fertile ground for the related monetarist strategy of reducing government spending, a tendency amplified as the economy had slipped into recession in 1982-83. As a result, for the second time since the Second World War, expenditure on higher education actually fell in real terms during the first years of the Hawke government.

However, it took some years for this retreat in government funding to become of significant impact. The Education Minister in the new Labor Government, Susan Ryan fought hard to resist the strong drives of Treasury and Finance to reduce further higher education expenditure. Initially, some rationale for this stance was provided by the social wage component of the Accord that was intended to provide compensation for broader wage restraint by unions. However, as economic conditions deteriorated further and the demands for surpluses and tax cuts grew, the demands from Treasury and Finance (with the support of their Ministers) grew ever louder for much harsher discipline on public expenditure, including on higher education.

A key Treasury priority was to canvass the re-introduction of tertiary fees abolished by the previous Whitlam Labor Government, as well as the potential opening of private universities to compete with public universities.⁶ Implicit in this argument was the reframing of university education as a

private gain rather than a public good, an argument led at time by Finance Minister, Peter Walsh and strongly supported by Treasurer, Paul Keating. Further, consistent with the principles of market liberalism, it was argued that the funding of higher education (like other services) needed to be subject to the efficiency of a consumer-driven market imperative. Fundamental to this paradigm was the private exercising of preference in order for expenditure to be most effectively targeted, based on the discriminating power of consumer demand. This was not made any easier by the fact that public universities were also held in generally low regard within the prevailing market orthodoxies of the Hawke era. As Ryan later observed:

According to the marketplace universities had failed. Competition did exist among them for the brightest students and the most distinguished staff, and among students for the most rigorous courses. This was not the right kind of competition; it was not price-based. The excellence achieved by the system as demonstrated by our disproportionately high number of Nobel prizes was not the right kind of excellence. It was produced by public, not private investment.⁷

In tandem with a deteriorating economic situation, growing secondary retention rates meant there were rising social (and therefore political) demands for further significant growth in university places. This meant the continued growth in funding of Australian universities was under pressure like never before. One tentative response came in 1984. In response to the rising demands by government for greater levels of accountability for higher education expenditure in the face of rising political demands for access to higher education, the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) recommended the first cross-sectoral measures around student demand, student progress, productivity and academic performance. In its essence, this initiative was a direct response to elevating government expectations that universities do more with less. Reflecting this, a further *Review of Efficiency and Effectiveness in Higher Education* by the CTEC quickly followed this move in 1986. The review analysed the effect of a 25 per cent increase in student numbers without any real increase in funding over the preceding decade, and the prospects of this continuing into the future. It recommended a greater focus on raising private sector income, embracing new learning technologies and further moves to measure and assess

institutional effectiveness.⁸

Further radical change was to occur following the 1987 election when ambitious economic reformer and former Finance Minister, John Dawkins, was appointed Education Minister in the third Hawke government. For the first time, higher education was integrated into portfolios of employment and training. This anticipated the clear intent to harness education to respond more directly to industry and labour market needs, thereby increasing the weight of the 'private good' notion of access to higher education. Such change was consistent with a broad reformist zeal of the government to restructure urgently the Australian economy, with a belief that this would enhance its productivity and competitive strength in a globalising marketplace. Essential to the Dawkins approach to higher education was significantly to increase the size and scale of the university system to contribute to enhance Australia's competitive position. However, consistent with the position of continuing government economic orthodoxy, this growth should not be at the expense of the Commonwealth. In early speeches, Dawkins offered strident criticism of university responsiveness and efficiency, the effect of ambiguities inherent in the binary system and the urgent need to bring universities under more direct control of government in a period of economic transformation. Indeed, it was reported that Dawkins believed universities to be 'fat, lazy, complacent institutions unprepared to face reality and make hard decisions'.⁹

Impatient for change, Dawkins moved rapidly to initiate a major review of higher education and to disband the independent CTEC. He moved both the direction and policy framing for higher education under his direct Ministerial and Departmental control. Although this arrangement was subsequently blunted by a Senate amendment to create an advisory board across the education portfolio, it did little to limit his intent to intervene directly in university matters and ensure compliance with government policy frameworks for the sector.

Breaking with tradition, a review of higher education initiated by Dawkins was not undertaken by an expert panel but instead by Dawkins himself, supported by a group of handpicked (and allegedly sympathetic) academics and departmental staff. It was suggested that this represented an attempt to

circumvent those who has prevented reform and produced inertia in the preceding Ryan years, such as the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee and academic unionists.¹⁰ The eventual report, cast somewhat unimaginatively as *Higher Education: a policy discussion paper*,¹¹ recommended an array of radical and instantly controversial initiatives including:

- the end of the binary system of universities and Colleges of Advanced Education, effectively creating a dramatically expanded university system and as a consequence reducing both the status and power of established universities;
- a simultaneous increase in the level of institutional autonomy and accountability for educational outcomes, with university governance reformed in the image of a corporate entity. This was centred on strengthened institutional leadership and streamlined councils in the image of a board of directors;
- the introduction of institutionally specific funding agreements which would necessitate acceptance of a range of provisions defined by the Department of Education, Employment and Training around governance, teaching arrangements, equity goals and performance indicators (including teaching performance).

Whilst this report was being formulated, Dawkins also appointed a former State Premier, Neville Wran, to lead a committee to consider future higher education funding. The committee reported in May 1988 and argued that the abolition of tertiary fees had not achieved its stated intent of broadening participation. It asserted there was a continuing inequitable private benefit toward 'small and privileged sections of the community'. It has been asserted that this committee was established primarily to legitimise a fee system for higher education that had been a subject of ideological dispute in the Labor government over the previous four years, under the rising tide of market liberalism.¹² This formed the foundation for the introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) in 1989, where students were required to pay up front or deferred fees for higher education. As Marginson further observed:

By dividing the population between 'beneficiaries' and 'payers' Labor fractured the social solidarity necessary to a system of universal financing and provision. In place

of equity as equal economic rights, it substituted equity as participation. It substituted the public choice theory notion of individualised benefits in exchange for individual taxes, in place of social programs as common benefits.¹³

In late 1988, all Australian tertiary institutions (that is, both the then 19 universities and 54 Colleges of Advanced Education) were invited to apply to be part of a new unified national university system. The invitation specified key criteria around minimum student numbers and research loads. It also insisted on a series of commitments to management efficiencies, equity objectives, credit transfer, and significantly, a range of specified performance measures (including those related to student satisfaction levels). For instance, measures to bring 'greater accountability for performance of the academics primary duties of teaching and research' and 'more rigorous review procedures to assist decision on salary levels' needed to be agreed as a prerequisite for access to the system.¹⁴

The so-called 'Dawkins Revolution' produced 39 'new' universities. It also profoundly changed the relationship between government, higher education institutions, academics and students by taking unprecedented control of the sector. In enacting the models of public policy framed by Hayek and Freidman, the Labor government had essentially framed a devolved market-based system of managing higher education. As a result, Australian universities (old and new) were to be subject to unprecedented levels of accountability, measurement and scrutiny. It had managed to tackle the sacred cow of tuition fees, laying the groundwork for what was to be the further evolution of higher education students as market consumers in a purchaser-provider relationship with their institutions. A core underpinning assumption of this reformation was that students would act as rational consumers if they were better armed with performance information on the available higher education 'marketplace'.

The subsequent Liberal government (which was in power from 1996 to 2007) oversaw a further development of the market-based model of higher education. Early in its term, the new government commissioned the *Review of Higher Education Funding and Policy*, which recommended radical deregulation of forms of university funding and postgraduate and international student fees. It also proposed increased 'consumer protection'

arrangements for students. The Review's recommendations built on other mounting pressures in the teacher-student relationship. They included:

- rapid cuts in Commonwealth funding (down to 49 per cent by 1999 from 68 per cent a decade before);
- significant increases in student HECS contributions;
- tightening industrial legislation which further controlled the rights and permissible activities of university staff.

This reality changed little under the stewardship of the subsequent Rudd and Gillard Labor governments (2007-2013), with the retention of the framework for performance indicators it inherited and further advancing institutional performance funding. Two of the Rudd-Gillard Labor governments' most significant moves in higher education policy—to uncap university places and to establish mission and performance-based compacts with universities—demonstrated a continuing intention to pursue the market model pioneered by Labor predecessors in the Hawke-Keating era.

The Contemporary Condition of Australian Higher Education

The Australian higher education system in 2014 is a reflection of this complex history. Most starkly, the levels of government support for higher education (as illustrated in Table 1 below) have retreated significantly from 89 per cent of university funding in 1981 to less than half that in the contemporary environment.

In 2013, Australia was the fourth lowest ranked OECD economy for public investment in higher education. Student tuition fees through HECS/HELP, fee-paying postgraduate programs and international student charges have consequently escalated dramatically over the last 25 years to compensate somewhat for this reduction. Yet the funding available to universities per student has continued decline. This effect has been aggravated by the rising contemporary pressure on universities to generate high-level research outcomes to sustain rankings on international league tables, resulting in teaching revenues having to almost invariably subsidise the cost of under-funded research. This has had the inevitable effects: higher

student to staff ratios, an acceleration of moves to online teaching and, most perniciously, an increased casualisation of the higher education workforce.

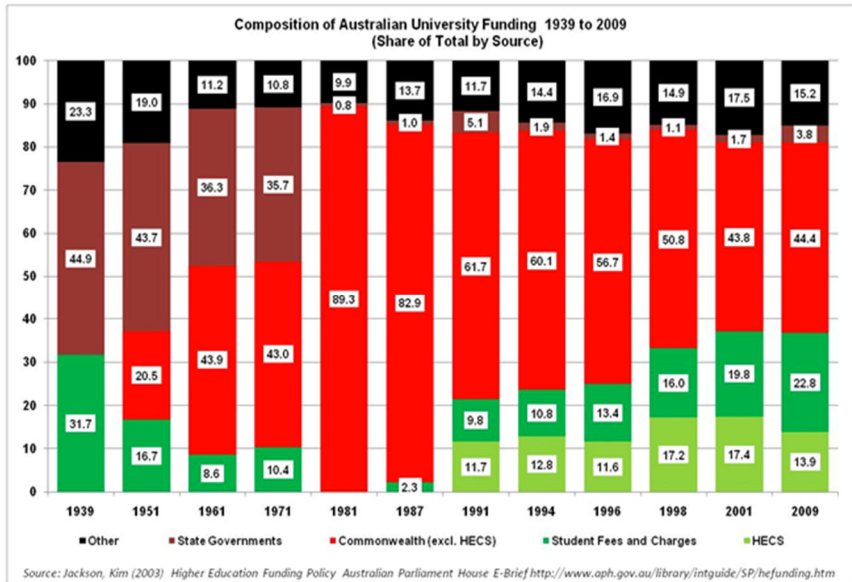


Table 1: Composition of Australian University Funding 1939 to 2009

Research undertaken by the National Tertiary Education Union in 2013 revealed that over 50 per cent of all teaching in Australian universities was now by casual sessional staff.¹⁵ This form of insecure employment has become a familiar, if unwelcome, opening in the careers of most academics, robbing them of an opportunity to establish networks, undertake research or even simply be paid properly for the efforts required to generate high quality teaching and learning outcomes. Moreover, staff in Australian universities are increasingly labouring under elevating workloads, confounded with hyper-marketing demands to attract students (often in order to maintain their own employment) and confronted with frustrating pseudo internal markets that frame everyday activities. In addition, a vast array of metrics and performance management systems effectively mediate work that once carried a characteristic autonomous and collegial character. This is no better

embodied than in the plethora of university league tables that are used increasingly frequently to constraint, cajole and confront academic work.

Introduced into this increasingly dystopian environment of the contemporary Australian university have been the proposals by the Abbott government to reduce government funding by a further 20 per cent (on average) to allow non-university providers to access government support (spreading the funding even more thinly still) and to deregulate student fees completely. Unfortunately, a mixture of desperation and impotence has driven most Australian Vice-Chancellors into the arms of this radical extension of the neo-liberal experiment commenced in the Dawkins era. This Abbott government proposal, under parliamentary scrutiny at the time of writing, will have a crushing effect if implemented. Aside from dramatically increasing the levels of student indebtedness, it will in effect further corporatise and eventually privatise Australian universities. Universities will be re-moulded to offer those courses that will be most profitable, most attractive in the labour market or cheap to offer, contorting the range and scope of degree programs on offer.

Moreover, as we have seen in the TAFE system in recent years, the introduction of for-profit providers will produce a dramatic reduction in quality as making money will become more important than anything else. Overseas experiences suggest more may be spent on marketing than on teaching, as attracting students becomes more important than the quality of the education they receive. Further, as the Federal Education Minister, Christopher Pyne, has frequently reminded us, the only real regulation for this new model will be the market itself. To reinforce this point, the current higher education regulator (TEQSA) has had its staff cut and the government has declared its role in framing university offerings for social good is effectively over.

Conclusions

The rise of Australian university system since 1964 arguably has defied the pessimism of Horne's earlier assessment of their intellectual potential. Yet, at another level, the impressive growth of Australian higher education has

also been problematic, as successive governments have struggled to meet elevating political and social needs for university places by devising strategies that ultimately have left a system that is fragmented, underfunded and increasingly reliant of student fee income. Further, this imperative to increase university places has been in constant tension over the last three decades with rising austerity demands and a developing attraction to neo-liberalist market tools as a means of creating largely ethereal efficiencies.

The embodiment of measurement and accountability mechanisms has increasingly allowed governments to retreat from both funding responsibilities and public policy framing of the work of universities. As time has progressed, it has increasingly evidently been at the cost of students and university quality. It has also essentially fractured the foundations of the intellectual life of contemporary universities by introducing widespread insecure forms of employment and the perpetual need for secure funding sources. This has produced often destructive competition for diminishing resources amongst disciplines—creating the internal ‘rich’ and ‘poor’. Much of the thinking that has framed this decline (aside from the notable exception of HECS) has been drawn from ‘other peoples ideas’: ideas that are founded in the delusions of marketisation, competition and endless possibilities of efficiencies. These largely unchallenged orthodoxies have gradually aggravated the strong structural tensions in the formation of the Australian university system and produced the seeds for its progressive decline as a coherent, high quality and innovative higher education system genuinely reflecting the potential of Australian education. The imminent prospects of radical deregulation and uncapped private for-profit providers of higher education outside the university system herald a further profound aggravation of these tensions with even more uncertain educational outcomes for Australian universities.

¹ Simon Marginson, *Education and Public Policy in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993.

- ² Madeline Laming, 'Seven key turning points in Australian higher education 1943-1999', *Postscript*, vol.6 no.2, 2001.
- ³ Susan Davis, *The Martin Committee and the binary policy of higher education in Australia*, Ashburton House, Melbourne, 1989.
- ⁴ Laming, 2001.
- ⁵ Simon Marginson, *Educating Australia: Government, Economy and Citizen since 1960*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997.
- ⁶ Susan Ryan, *Catching the waves: life inside and outside of politics*, Harper Collins, Pymble, 1999.
- ⁷ Ryan, *Catching the Waves*, p 197.
- ⁸ Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, *Review of Efficiency and Effectiveness in Higher Education*, AGPS, Canberra, 1986.
- ⁹ Geoffrey Maslen & Luke Slattery, *Why our universities are failing: crisis in the clever country*, Wilkinson, Melbourne, 1994, p 25.
- ¹⁰ Laming, 'Seven key turning points', p14.
- ¹¹ John Dawkins, *Higher education: a policy discussion paper*, AGPS, Canberra, 1987.
- ¹² Marginson, *Educating Australia*.
- ¹³ Marginson, *Educating Australia*, p 227.
- ¹⁴ Dawkins, *Higher Education*, p 57.
- ¹⁵ National Tertiary Education Union, Submission to the Independent Inquiry into Insecure Work in Australia, 2012, viewed 24 October, 2014.
<<http://www.nteu.org.au/library/view/id/2186>>



SCHOOLING TODAY

THE GOOD NEWS AND BAD

Donald Horne discussed Australian schools in his final chapter of *The Lucky Country*, 'Forming Opinions'.¹ When he wrote this in 1964 I was in my second year of a science degree on a teacher's college scholarship. His view of schools in the 1950s and 1960s were largely negative, and matched my experiences.

However some significant changes were just beginning. Many of these were a real improvement on what had gone before but others, and especially Federal intervention, have had serious negative consequences for education.

A View of Schools in 1964

Donald Horne saw many weaknesses in the schools of his time:

Classes are too large. In some secondary schools only half the teachers are University trained ... eleven nations are ahead of Australia in getting results out of the fifteen to nineteen age group.²

Teachers were seen as victims of a centralised educational system:

It was inevitable, given the vast distances of Australia, the sparse population and the weakness of local government that the State systems of education should be centralized around the State capital cities. Children are supposed to be taught the same things in the same way throughout a State; headmasters and headmistresses have little discretion; decision is by decree from the Department rather than by local decision. Experiment is almost impossible. School teachers are shunted around as unpredictably as officials in Stalin's Russia.³

Teachers 'may become so demoralised that their main active belief is hatred of The Department' that employs them.⁴

Horne was also critical of what was seen as the 'progressive' movement in education. He maintained that the Central Authorities' policies were 'largely

dedicated to diluting' education and 'seem to be lowering standards of learning and intellectual vigour. Educational policy is now designed to make adolescents happier.'⁵

People today still try to draw a dichotomy between 'traditional' and 'progressive' education, promoting one over the other, but like most dichotomies it fails to have meaning in the real world. One must begin by engaging the students—meeting them where they are at present—but then challenge them to examine critically and move beyond this.

Horne's Solutions

Horne believed that it was important for schools to be more closely related to the communities in which they operate:

to allow principals of schools greater initiative, to develop a sense of professional responsibility amongst teachers, to allow variety and experiment, and to allow more community participation.⁶

Much decentralisation has taken place in government schools while at the same time an overall administrative framework has been maintained. Being part of a system has, in both government and Catholic schools, many advantages: there is a centralised setting of overall goals and resourcing of schools but individual schools are able to determine the best ways to achieve these goals within their own situations.

Up to the time of *A Lucky Country* education had, as a result of the Federation settlement, been almost solely a state controlled affair. However Horne proposed passing finance, setting of standards and planning to the federal government and, in addition to this there could be 'a policy of part-subsidy of non-government schools run by independent groups.'⁷

However Horne believed that there were two strong arguments why this would not happen:

... the vested interests of the States and the hatred for Catholics. In other words, opposed to such a policy are States Rightism and anti-Catholicism, two of the strongest political forces in Australia.⁸

Horne's summary of prospects for educational improvement was not good:

I have a kind of senseless optimism about the future of Australia. There are many fields in which one can see that change might break quite suddenly. Unfortunately, it is hard to be optimistic enough to see this happening in education.⁹

The Next Fifty Years

While Horne's summary of schools in the 1950s and early 1960s was accurate, significant changes were beginning to take place in schooling against a background of a rapidly increasing adolescent population—a result of both the 'Baby Boom' and post-war migration.

One of the most significant changes was the introduction of the Comprehensive High School. Prior to the mid-1960s, only a few students undertook a five year High School course where they were prepared for university matriculation. The majority of students undertook a three year course at a junior secondary school preparing them to enter the workforce at around 15 years of age. During the seventies and eighties significant numbers of students still left after four years of secondary education but from the nineties onwards the large majority of students continued to Year 12.

Teachers were now expected to be graduates and during the 1960s prospective teachers were offered scholarships to undertake a university degree, followed by a Diploma in Education and were then bonded for five years. The rapidly increasing numbers of students resulted in young enthusiastic teachers entering the workforce. Teachers with two or three years training were encouraged to upgrade their qualifications to four year status.

Another significant change was an increase in the number of women entering the workforce. In 1961 teachers were the first female workers to gain equal pay, and this coupled with the working hours and conditions being conducive to parenting, resulted in an influx of high quality female teachers. As one side effect schools became more humane environments. The use of corporal punishment declined slowly although it was not formally banned in government schools until 1985 in Victoria and until 1990 in New South Wales.

Working conditions for teachers also improved. In the fifties and sixties class sizes were often over thirty students and could reach forty or more. Teachers unions were strong in the seventies and eighties and, as well as gaining smaller class sizes, they won significant salary increases that reflected the increasingly graduate status of the profession. In Catholic schools a large

growth in student numbers combined with a reduction in those seeking a religious vocation resulted in an increasingly lay workforce.

Federal Involvement

In 1964 Donald Horne did not see federal involvement in funding education as a real possibility. However on 21 May 1964 the Menzies Government's *States Grants (Science Laboratories and Technical Training) Bill* was passed through the Senate.¹⁰ Although the initial allocation, made to both government and non-government schools was only £1.25 million further money followed. Between 1964 and 1969 grants to schools for science laboratories totalled \$13,871 million.¹¹

In 1969 Malcolm Fraser was Education Minister in the Gorton Government and two additions were made to federal funding. The first was funding for secondary school libraries and the second was the introduction of recurrent grants to schools on a *per capita* basis: \$35 for a primary student and \$50 for a secondary student. The same money went to a rich private school or a struggling Catholic parish school but in an interview in 2006 Fraser argued that to do otherwise would raise sectarian issues in the Liberal Party.¹²

The Labor Government had historically been opposed to any federal aid going to non-government schools, but when Gough Whitlam succeeded Arthur Calwell as Opposition Leader in 1967 he pushed for funding for both government and non-government schools on the basis of need.

The 1969 Labor Federal Conference adopted the following motion:

The Commonwealth to establish an Australian Schools Commission to examine and determine the needs of students in government and non-government primary, secondary and technical schools and recommend grants which the Commonwealth should make to the States to assist in meeting the requirements of all school age children on the basis of needs and priorities.¹³

Less than two weeks after Whitlam became Prime Minister on 5 December 1972, terms of reference were announced for the Interim Committee of the proposed Schools Commission, with Peter Karmel, chairman of the Australian Universities Commission as Chair and Jean Blackburn, who had worked with Karmel in South Australia, as Deputy.

After extensive research into both government and non-government

schools, schools were placed into eight categories, from the richest, most resourced schools in Category A to the most under-resourced in Category H. The top four categories, which were operating with resource levels above those in government schools were to have their funding reduced and it was intended that funding for Category A schools was to be removed completely. The bottom four categories were to have their funding increased.

The Schools Commission became a statutory body on 1 January 1974, with Ken McKinnon, the former director of education in Papua New Guinea as its chair. In 1983 McKinnon, reflecting on his seven years as chair, stated that when he was appointed:

I regarded the Commission as an historic opportunity to establish at a national level an ongoing authority responsible for analysis of educational issues and problems, within which funding issues, especially those affecting non-government schools, should become a relatively minor responsibility. Indeed Kim Beazley [snr] told me that he expected that the Commission would take the funding out of the political arena.¹⁴

The Schools Commission continued through the period of the Fraser Government (1975-1983) but it was directed to focus on 'freedom of choice' and this meant that it again supported basic grants to all non-government schools on a pupil per capita basis. However the government was unwilling to increase the overall education budget and this meant in effect that non-government schools would get increased funding at the expense of government schools.¹⁵

Another policy introduced by the Fraser Government encouraged the creation of new non-government schools, even in areas that were well served by those schools already existing. These were usually relatively small schools and most were 'faith' based to cater for minority and more fundamentalist Christian groups. There was generous funding of these schools through establishment grants and through per capita funding at the highest level, so fees could be significantly lower than the established church schools. Between 1974 and 1985 345 new non-government schools were established.¹⁶

When the Hawke Labor Government came to power in 1983 it was faced with a high budget deficit and, with the collapse of the resources boom, high youth unemployment. It aimed to return the concept of 'need' to determine

funding for schools and also wanted to increase the number of students in the post compulsory years and to widen the educational opportunities. It believed the only way to do this within tight budget constraints was to reduce funding for the best resourced schools and redirect it to schools located in areas of economic and ethnic disadvantage.

Labor believed that a more comprehensive measure of ‘need’ was required. This would be one which:

took into account the capacity of the community to contribute, the educational requirements of the children and the range of responsibilities undertaken by the school.¹⁷

Much tighter conditions were set for the establishment of new schools because of concern about the expense of setting these up without a clear educational advantage to the population as a whole.

In 1987 the Schools Commission that had been set up by Whitlam to give independent advice to the Government on funding was abolished. This was done because the Commission was consistently recommending more money for schools than the Government felt it could provide. However this was, in my view, a bad decision because removing an outside body made funding a more political issue.

In the early years of the Howard Government there was a shift back to federal support of non-government schools. Restrictions on the creation of new schools were eased and implied criticism of public schools was made as being ‘value-free’ whereas I would argue they more closely represent the values of a pluralist democratic society.

National Funding, a National Curriculum and National Assessment

However in the later years of the Howard Government three significant nation-wide developments in Australian schooling began. The first was a fresh examination of what an equitable funding program would look like, the second was a move towards a national curriculum, initially in English, Mathematics, Science and History and the third was a national program of assessment in literacy and numeracy.

These were both completed during the Rudd-Gillard Government. A new

funding model was prepared through the Review led by David Gonski. In the Review the goal of a funding model was set out:

The funding arrangements should be aimed at achieving an internationally competitive high standard of schooling, where outcomes are not determined by socioeconomic status or the type of school the child attends, and where the Australian Government and state and territory governments work in partnership to meet the schooling needs of all Australian children.¹⁸

The Committee also made clear what was wrong with the current funding model that was based on:

... an outdated and opaque average cost measure, the Average Government School Recurrent Costs. As such, the funding that is provided to schools does not directly relate to schooling outcomes, and does not take into account the full costs of educating students to an internationally accepted high standard of schooling.¹⁹

The panel also recommended the establishment of The National Schools Resourcing Body which could be seen as an extended version of the Education Commission set up by the Whitlam Government to 'be responsible for the ongoing development and maintenance of the schooling resource standard and loadings to ensure that they remain contemporary and aspirational'.²⁰

The panel maintained that such a body:

... should have the necessary expertise, independence and budget to support its roles. The body would also be required to commission and undertake research and analysis that will further current thinking on how to measure effectiveness in schooling. This will necessitate significant improvements in the collection of nationally comparable data. It will ensure that the funding framework continues to be developed and enhanced through solid evidence and intellectual rigour.²¹

This would have the effect of removing funding of different systems being used as a political football while it would still be up to individual governments to decide the extent to which the resourcing bodies' recommendations could be implemented.

Prime Minister Gillard rejected this recommendation, which I believe severely weakened the potential of the report to bring about real change. Also in her discussions with states and territories during 2013 Gillard muddled the waters by providing conditions for funding based on simplistic views of school improvement: more autonomy, more competition between schools, more testing and more accountability.

A National Curriculum

There had been decades of attempts to introduce a national curriculum, but it was only in the last years of the Howard government that the process began and this continued under the Rudd government, with general bipartisan report. The process was carried out by an independent authority, the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (ACARA).

It must be appreciated that this is a ‘curriculum’ only in the narrowest sense as an outline of what is to be put into practice. Already individual states have put their own spin on it and the final test will be what is actually experienced by students.

There is much that is positive about it:

- It was the product of one of the widest consultations in our history.
- It does reflect many of the best features of the state curricula that have developed over decades.
- Its greatest advantage is that it provides a common language for teachers across Australia—resources developed in any State can be easily shared and further developed.

A lot more work needs to be done if this is to be successfully taught in the classroom. The review of the curriculum, set up by the Abbot Government, has recommended that in primary schools there is a need to focus on a core of knowledge and skills rather than cover little bits of everything from all the different curricula. At the time of writing the Federal Government has not spelt out its full response to the review.

National Assessment

The National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is also organised by ACARA. It has been subject to more criticism than the National Curriculum, especially with its potential to create ‘League Tables’ from results placed on the MySchool website. However, recently the media seem to have become aware of the complications of using raw figures without taking the individual school’s situation into account.

While NAPLAN still provides relatively crude data on student achievement it is being continually refined and some of its advantages are:

- Individual schools find it to be one indicator of whether school improvement programs they are instituting are having an effect.
- Grouping schools according to their SES does provide data to support the comparable achievements of public schools.

As an example, looking at Year 5 literacy results for schools drawing from a high SES background, it can be seen that across Australia, 18 government primary schools, obviously in the wealthier suburbs of cities, clearly outperform a prestigious, high-fee school in inner Melbourne.

Chris Bonnor and Bernie Shepherd have used a detailed analysis of the MySchool site to demonstrate that since the Gonski Report was released, inequities in schools have actually increased.²² One example of this growing inequity in funding is given below.

National Professional Teacher Standards

Between 2000 and 2010 I was involved in a program in New South Wales that assessed some of the highest quality teachers at primary, secondary and tertiary level. Parallel to this was a study of what quality teaching looked like. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has developed a set of standards that define at a national level what quality teaching looks like.

These come under broad headings:

- Professional knowledge
- Know content and how to teach it
- Create and maintain a supportive environment
- Assess, provide feedback and report on student learning
- Professional engagement

Under each heading are sub-headings and a series of indicators to assess whether a particular teacher is at Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished or Lead level. Again, this provides a common language to evaluate quality teaching and by defining the higher standards of Highly Accomplished and Lead there is a basis for rewarding teachers who remain in the classroom but lead and inspire others.

International Comparisons

When Donald Horne said that in 1964 Australia ranked 12th he did not specify the countries with which we were being compared but I assume few were from the Soviet Bloc or East Asia. Today we have far more sophisticated instruments to make comparisons of educational outcomes and a far wider set of countries are involved.

The three main instruments for international comparisons are:

- PISA—Program for International Student Assessment
- TIMSS—Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
- PIRLS—Progress in International Reading Literacy Study

I will concentrate on PISA because it covers Science, Mathematics and Reading but PISA only looks at one group—15 year olds. TIMSS and PIRLS include assessment of both primary students, where Australia's performance is even worse, and secondary students. TIMSS does show that some of the weaknesses in primary schools seem to be remedied by the time students reach year nine, especially in mathematics

Figure 1 gives an overview of Australia's PISA rankings for 2012, indicating numbers of countries whose results are (a) significantly above, (b) statistically equivalent to and (c) significantly below those of Australia.²³

In an overview of the 2013 results in Figure 1, Australia is still doing reasonably well in Reading (14/52) and in Science (16/52) but not so well in Maths where at 19th it is close to the mean.

Ten years ago I gave a paper at the ISAA National Conference called 'Valuing our Schools: confronting the myths of failure',²⁴ where I referred to the first set of results from PISA in 2003. At that time Australia was in the top five. Since then, as shown in Figure 2, there has been a decline in both relative terms—more jurisdictions from the Asian region are now included and some countries, such as Germany and Poland who earlier ranked below Australia have made significant improvements—in absolute terms.

Figure 2 gives PISA 2012 results for first 16 countries/jurisdictions in the three 'literacies'.²⁵

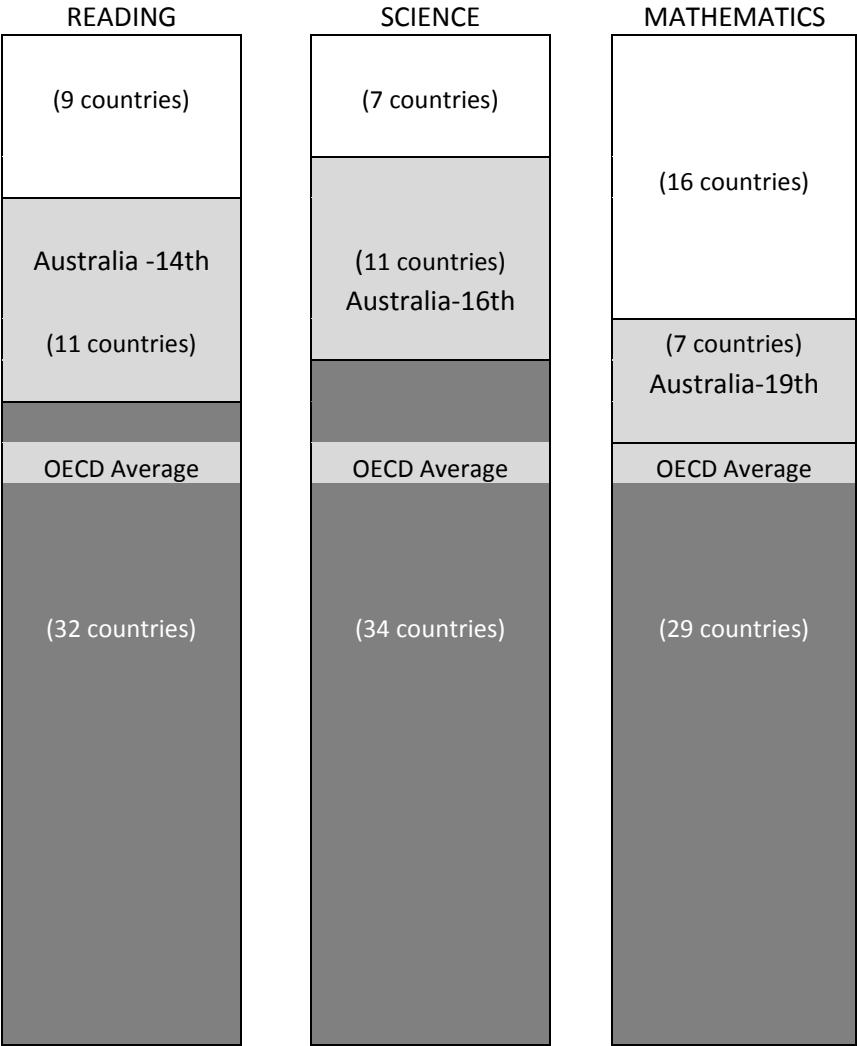


Figure 1: Overview of Australia's PISA rankings for 2012, indicating numbers of countries whose results are (a) significantly above, (b) statistically equivalent to and (c) significantly below those of Australia.

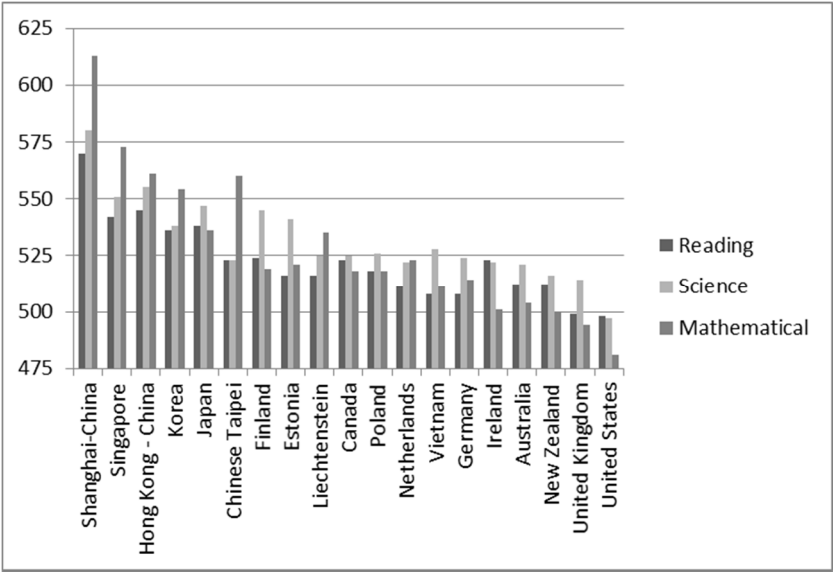


Figure 2: PISA 2012 results for first 16 countries/jurisdictions in the three 'literacies'.

However, in interpreting these figures there are many caveats. Shanghai, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taipei are essentially cities and if we just showed Canberra, Sydney or Melbourne's results the picture would be quite different. Nor do many of these jurisdictions, with the exception of Canada, have either an indigenous or large non-native speaking population. Australia's results represent an average of city and country, those who are privileged or not and those who have been here for generations and those who have recently arrived. Like all averages it conceals as much as it reveals.

Figure 3 gives PISA 2012 Results broken down by States and Territories. If we break Australia's results down by states and territories (Figure 3) we see what lies behind this 'average'. The relatively higher score of the ACT, which is similar to that of Hong Kong can be easily explained, as can, unfortunately, the poor results the Northern Territory, but Western Australia's good results cannot be so easily explained. Maybe educators should make a flight to Western Australia rather than Finland to see how to produce quality results.



Figure 3: PISA 2012 results broken down by states/territories.

Despite a breakdown by states and territories putting a better light on the results in some situations, there is still cause for concern, and the position has deteriorated since I gave my conference paper ten years ago. One concern is the obvious inequity in outcomes across Australia, which I will return to later with evidence that this is continuing to grow. Another concern has been a significant decline overall in our achievement, which has taken place at the same time as countries like Poland and Germany have made great improvements.

In Figure 4, to allow a quick comparison I have averaged the results for the three ‘literacies’: Reading, Science and Mathematics.

The mean score for all countries is close to 500 and Australia is moving towards this and we should be doing a lot better. Germany thought it had a good education system until the first PISA results came out in 2003 and the graph indicates a steady improvement, although it has not yet reached where Australia was in 2003, before our decline began.

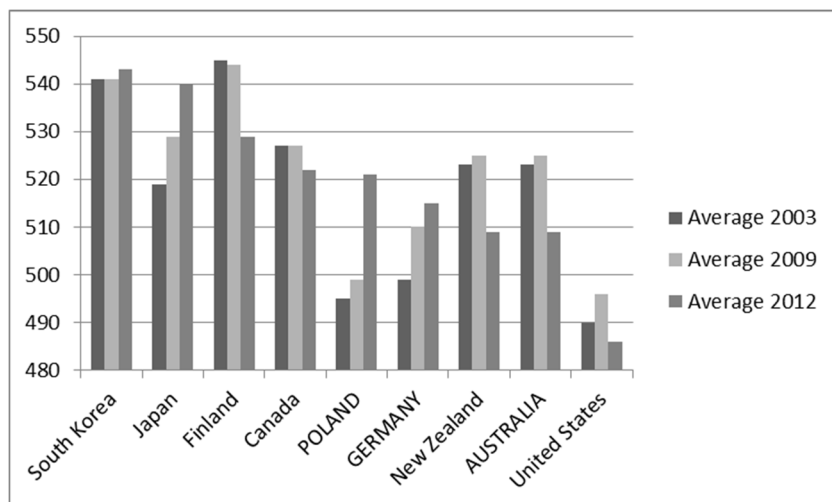


Figure 4: Changes in average PISA results in selected countries 2003-2012.

The reasons given for Germany's improvement have some relevance to Australia despite Germany retaining two types of high schools—technical and academic. Germany's success is seen as a product of:

... changes it has made to the structure of its secondary schools; the high quality of its teachers; the value of its dual system, which helps develop workplace skills in children before they leave school; and its development of common standards and curricula and the assessment and research capacity to monitor them.²⁶

Poland's improvement has come largely from the overthrow of communism, where most young people were prepared for work in factories and only a few were permitted to follow an academic career. In the former Democratic Republic (East Germany), on the other hand, despite weaknesses in other areas its system of comprehensive high schools was acknowledged to have been far better than that of West Germany.

School Education in 2014

Fifty years ago Donald Horne felt that greater federal involvement in school education would be of benefit, but in Australia it has resulted in one of the most privatised and fragmented system in the world and policies at the federal level and in some states creating 'Independent' Public Schools will only

further this fragmentation.

Two factors have brought this about. The first is that, despite what Horne stated in 1964, Australian's belief in States Rights is fairly shallow. In other federal systems, such as Germany, Canada and the United States the individual identities of states are far stronger and have had a far longer and more contested history. In Australia most states had only existed for less than fifty years before Federation.

The second factor was the adoption of neo-liberal philosophies, with a stress on value being determined by the market supported by the doctrine of 'freedom of choice'. The consequence has been that rather than seeing public schooling as the means through which every child was given the opportunity to participate to the best of their ability in society, education has instead come to be seen as a way for the more privileged to take further advantage of that privilege.

Professor Field Rickards, from Melbourne Graduate School of Education, puts this succinctly:

Whereas the Finnish have created a system where the 'best' school is the closest one, we are a long way from being able to say this in Australia.²⁷

A national curriculum, assessment program and teaching standards can all contribute to improvement, but this will mean nothing unless we focus resources on those schools in areas of greatest disadvantage. The Gonski Review spelt out where this funding needs to be directed and ways in which it needed to be directed.

In fact, research on funding of schools since the release of the Gonski report has shown that disparities have only become worse. Between 2009 and 2012 the combined recurrent funding for Government schools, those that obviously include among their enrolments the greatest proportion of students with educational needs, increased by 10.9 per cent. The increase for Catholic schools was 19.8 per cent while the increase for independent schools was 20.0 per cent. With many schools in the Independent sector this increase has taken place while fees charged to parents have risen well above inflation.²⁸ What is the moral justification for this?

While the Victorian Government just incorporated any funding into general education expenditure, in New South Wales Adrian Piccoli, the

Education Minister has made a specific commitment to implementing the reforms by such policies as early intervention for those with learning difficulties and direct attacking of disadvantage.

Improvement also requires quality teachers. In Finland, only one in ten applicants are chosen to be teachers.²⁹ It is more difficult to get into teaching than it is into Law or Medicine. In Australia on the other hand, the Labor Government offered to fund any university places that could be filled and many universities with little experience in education offered places to students with university entrance scores as low as 45, just so that they could get funding.³⁰ How can it be possible for someone to stand in front of a class when half the students are brighter than their teacher?

The Future

With the current Federal Government's education policies, or more exactly lack of policy, it is unlikely that our international standing will improve in the short term. State governments do have the opportunity to make a difference and it remains to be seen if other states will follow New South Wales's lead in at least trying to implement some of the Gonski Review recommendation.

Those who can afford school fees, or who go to government schools in the wealthier suburbs will continue to get a reasonably good education but the gap between these and the rest will continue to widen with the destructive social consequences that follow.

We do have the intellectual resources and financial capability to give every child a world class education. Countries such as Japan, Germany and Canada have shown it can be done. I just hope it doesn't take a further decline in our international results to do something about it.

¹ Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1964, pp 186-192.

² Horne, *Lucky Country*, p 186.

³ Horne, *Lucky Country*, p 188.

⁴ Horne, *Lucky Country*, p 191.

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- ⁵ Horne, *Lucky Country*, p 187.
- ⁶ Horne, *Lucky Country*, p 189.
- ⁷ Horne, *Lucky Country*, p 190.
- ⁸ Horne, *Lucky Country*, p 190.
- ⁹ Horne, *Lucky Country*, p 190.
- ¹⁰ Educational Transformations Pty Ltd, *A History of State Aid to non-Government Schools in Australia*, Department of Education Science and Training, Canberra 2006 p 19.
- ¹¹ *A History of State Aid* p 40.
- ¹² *A History of State Aid* p 44.
- ¹³ Quoted in Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*, Viking, Ringwood 1985 p 308.
- ¹⁴ Ken McKinnon, 'Meeting needs: seven years hard Labour' (Fink Memorial Seminar, University of Melbourne 1983) in Imelda Palmer (editor), *Melbourne Studies in Education 1984*. MUP, Melbourne, 1984, p 107.
- ¹⁵ Praetz, Helen, 'Public Policy and Catholic Schools', *Australian Education Review*, number 17, 1982 p 46.
- ¹⁶ Australian Council for Defence of Government Schools Website, High Court case quoted in *A History of State Aid* p 126.
- ¹⁷ *A History of State Aid* p 109.
- ¹⁸ David Gonski et al, *Review of Funding Final Report*, DEEWR, Canberra 2011 p xiv. Full report available at <http://www.appa.asn.au/content/gonski-report/Review-of-Funding-for-Schooling-Final-Report-Dec-2011.pdf>
- ¹⁹ *Review of Funding* p xvi.
- ²⁰ *Review of Funding* p xix.
- ²¹ *Review of Funding* p ix.
- ²² Chris Bonnor and Bernie Shepherd, 'School equity: from bad to worse' <http://insidestory.org.au/school-equity-from-bad-to-worse> accessed 28 October 2014.
- ²³ Data sourced from Sue Thomson et al, *PISA in Brief Highlights from the full Australian report*, ACER, Melbourne pp 7-9. Available at <http://research.acer.edu.au/ozpisa/8/> Accessed 1/11/2014
- ²⁴ Ian Keesee, 'Valuing our schools; confronting the myths of failure' in Gretchen Poiner (ed) *The First Necessity: Access to learning in the 21st Century 2004 ISAA Annual Conference Proceedings*, ISAA, Canberra, 2004 pp 13-18.
- ²⁵ Sourced from *PISA in Brief* pp 7-9.
- ²⁶ OECD, 'Germany; once weak international standing prompts strong nationwide reforms for rapid improvement' <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/46581323.pdf> Accessed 29 October 2014.
- ²⁷ Quoted in Maxine McKew, *Class Act*, MUP. Melbourne 2014 p xii.

- ²⁸ Chris Bonnor and Bernie Shepherd 'School equity: from bad to worse'
<http://insidestory.org.au/school-equity-from-bad-to-worse> Accessed 1 November 2014.
- ²⁹ <http://www.ncee.org/programs-affiliates/center-on-international-education-benchmarking/top-performing-countries/finland-overview/finland-teacher-and-principal-quality/> Accessed 5 November 2014.
- ³⁰ Steve Dinham 'Standards will slide while teacher education is used as a cash cow', *The Conversation*, 18 January 2013. Available at <http://theconversation.com/standards-will-slide-while-teacher-education-is-used-as-a-cash-cow-11677>



OUT OF LUCK

WOMEN, INDIGENES AND IMMIGRANTS

Acknowledgement of Country

I pay my respects to the Ngunnawal and Ngambi, the traditional owners of the land on which we are meeting. Your stories have sustained your society for millennia; your Old People have endured. More than ever, we need to find ways of working together respectfully and purposefully. Your wisdom can guide us and help ensure a future for our children and grandchildren.

Reading *The Lucky Country*

Donald Horne has been hailed as one of Australia's public intellectuals. His commitment to the Republican cause has been unerring. His removal of the long standing 'Australia for the White man' from the masthead of the *Bulletin* properly praised. His searing critique of the complacency of citizens lulled to sleep in a peaceful prosperous land, led by men of little imagination, lacking in curiosity, gave us the phrase that has passed into the lexicon: 'Australia, a *lucky country* run mainly by second-rate people who share its luck'.¹

I read *The Lucky Country* when it was first published in 1964. I still have my rather tatty marked up copy. While I appreciated the bite of his ironic title, I wondered, 'Lucky for whom?'

- Not for women such as myself: a primary school teacher, a fitting fill-in job till one married, working for 80 per cent of the male wage while doing exactly the same job, in fact more because female teachers did the bulk of the 'nurture' work with the students: it was our role.
- Lucky? Not for immigrants. In 1964 I was teaching the children of 'New Australian' parents who lived in the Hostel, whose lunch boxes

made them outsiders in the playground. Once out of the Hostel they lived in multi-family households, grew veggies in the front garden and played soccer. They were blamed every time something went missing. Their mothers spoke little English. The kids translated for the parents. Some of those kids got lucky: at sport, in business, the professions.

- And Indigenous Australians? My knowledge in the early 1960s was fragmentary. I knew of Aboriginal rights' advocate, actor and worker Bill Onus (1906-1968) and of Pastor Doug Nicholls (1906-1988) athlete, shearer and statesman. Just anecdotes. In 1955 Bill Onus had suggested 'Moomba' as the name for the Melbourne festival. The translation was an ongoing joke amongst my schoolmates: Moomba: 'Have some fun' or 'up your bum'. From my Dad who was, amongst other things, a professional foot-runner, I learned that Doug Nicholls had also run for money and had won the 1928 Warracknabeal Gift. My Dad had run in the Stawell Gift but never made it past the heats. In 1961, I visited Alice Springs and the Hermannsburg Mission. No enjoyment of the lucky country for Aborigines in the Northern Territory but plenty of experience of second-rate leadership and an absence of imagination. These are experiences that framed my first reading of *The Lucky Country*.

Fifty years later, for this paper, I planned to trace the continuities and discontinuities of Horne's accounts of women, Indigenes and immigrants to the present within the context of critical writing about Australian society. The dust jacket of my 1978 edition promised an 'honest and sometimes startling analysis' where even its 'detractors were forced to admit the issues it raised were those that Australia most needed to face'. Max Harris had suggested the book; Geoffrey Dutton, editor at Penguin, took a risk and published it; Humphrey McQueen thought Horne had been working on the book all along.² It was written at lightning speed.³ Horne recalls it as 'a series of essays held together by a last minute final thought about what it was all about'. He'd listened to what people were saying, put it together and played it back. 'It was what they agreed upon', Horne told interviewer Philip Adams

in 2005.⁴

Returning to the book in 2014, my anthropologist self wants to know: to whom was he listening? Women are addressed in a voice worthy of Edna Everage in three pages in the chapter on 'Senses of Difference' along with migrants who get five pages. Aborigines warrant three and are located in the chapter on 'Living with Asia': racism is the unifying theme. As I re-read Horne, I heard his voice as world weary, parsing difference; ill-informed of the life of the intellect being pursued by lesser mortals, if not his 'High Intellectuals'. But I knew that in the suburban wastelands, there was self-awareness, curiosity and critique. We were on the cusp of momentous change.

How could he have missed the signs? Then I listened to and read interviews with Donald Horne from 1992, 2004 and 2005. In his eighties, revisiting his text, he noted the energy about to be unleashed by the women's movement and Indigenous rights campaigns but these insights do not inform his 1964 text where women are left content in their homes, Aborigines will be assimilated and the White Australia Policy is entrenched. Horne writes in the moment and 'on the run'.⁵ He is not interested in prophecy. Fair enough, but one cannot then claim that *The Lucky Country* laid the basis for future political and cultural analysis. It captures Horne's vision of Australia at a particular moment. It is based on the observations and experience of a journalist, well read, travelled, urbane, but a white man mixing with men who shared his values. As such it is a valuable articulation of what was on the political and cultural agenda for his class and gender. What is deeply troubling is that after five decades of scholarship, law reform, constitutional amendments and the like, so many women, Indigenous and the new 'New Australians' remain out of luck.

Maybe, it's best to think of two books: the 1964 one that the journalist Donald Horne, then in his 40s, wrote; and second, a retrospective book constructed from re-engagements with the 1960s in interviews by Horne the Elder (1921-2005): Chancellor of the University of Canberra from 1992-1995; Professor of Political Science at the UNSW; Chair of the Australia Council. And, in constructing my narrative, I find I also have two stories to

tell: the initial reactions I remember facing in the 1960s as a woman who had not completed High School but who read voraciously, argued passionately, and wrote surreptitiously. Now, in my seventies, I am returning to matters concerning race, gender and 'other' as ones that have engaged me as a scholar, writer and social justice advocate.⁶ These matters, I would argue, must be addressed if we are interested in the shape and texture of a just society. So we have a kind of a double helix, an intertwining of narratives of two cultural critics, who from different perspectives over a span of 50 years have been interrogating Australian society and found it wanting, albeit for very different reasons and from very different perspectives.



DNA Double Helix.
Image by the National Human
Genome Research Institute,
sourced on Wikimedia
Commons.

Donald Horne on Women

The 'stiffness in relations between the sexes' is, in Horne's view, 'better described as social awkwardness than as male domination'.⁷ Women, he says, are no worse off in Australia, a man's country, than elsewhere. A similar line is pursued *vis-à-vis* Aborigines. Inequality is not to be interrogated as long as everyone else is doing it? In Horne's schema, Australian women 'rule the roost' at home and are dedicated to throwing dinner parties. His evidence comes from the women's section of newspapers. No doubt a good gauge of what women were being encouraged to do in the post-World War II years. The men were home and needed jobs. The women needed to be made 'happy and satisfied' in their sparkling homes. Horne offers the following cliché:

While the men stood up in their bars and fantasized about women they would like to get into bed with, their wives gathered at home over afternoon tea and fantasized about new bedspreads.⁸

I can't remember one conversation about bedspreads: they were candlewick and that was that. In the early sixties I was reading the tracts

coming out of the USA, such as Betty Friedan's 'The problem that has no name'. 'Is this all?' she asks.⁹ 'Yep, it's called patriarchy.' I was reading hand-roneoed manifesto calling for a new sexual division of labour. Germaine Greer was yet to publish *The Female Eunuch*¹⁰ but Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*¹¹ was available, had been for decades. There is little in Horne's book that challenges women's role as homemaker. His luck was to be born male and to be the recipient of the 'patriarchal dividend'.¹²

In looking back from 1992, Horne sees the Women's Movement take off and notes how quickly Australian feminists made it theirs, a product of the 'land of a fair go' that he so admires. What is missing in 1964 and 1992 is recognition of the feminist scholarship that delved into the origins of systemic discrimination.¹³ Attempts to address this persistent phenomenon in legislation such as the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* gave rise to deep fears for the family, the well-being of children, and laid bare the tension between the secular egalitarianism underpinning the Act and patriarchal religious precepts that framed and continue to frame issues of women's rights.¹⁴

A key moment for Australian women was the arrival of the Pill in 1961. It transformed the lives of women and discourses about our bodies. It struck at the core of patriarchal religious values. The Pill was only available to married women and not dispensed by Catholic doctors and chemists, but tired of playing 'Vatican Roulette' and fearful of backyard abortions, women recognised that once they could control their fertility, their lives at home and work would never be the same. These dramas were played out against the debates raging around Vatican 2, announced in 1959.¹⁵ A secular country to be sure, but religious agenda have shaped and continue to shape our personal and public lives. Goodness, in the 1960s a 'mixed marriage' was one between a Protestant and Catholic.

Horne is live to religious rifts in his discussion of DLP/ALP split of the fifties and with respect to education but is silent on the matter of Vatican 2, makes no comment regarding the transforming power of the Pill in 1964 or in 2004 apart saying, in parentheses, that Australian women are potentially lead adopters.¹⁶ But women's reproductive bodies remain sites of political wrangling. The legislature is still double guessing women and contemplating

further regulation of our bodies.¹⁷ The campaigns, prosecuted primarily by men who take their religious responsibilities for the unborn very seriously, share tactics with similar 'legislative moves in the USA'.¹⁸ Child-care, on the other hand, remains a 'woman's issue'.¹⁹

Equal pay? I grew up in Melbourne where trams were a site of struggle and the wit of the 'connies' (conductors) was part of working class culture. Women could travel on trams but should not drive these complex hunks of metal: apparently we did not have the strength to apply the handbrake. For a brief period during the war, women were 'connies'. After the war they were sacked, then rehired because of staff shortages. However, notwithstanding their roles during the war in industry and transportation, they were not destined to be drivers in post-World War II reconstructing Australia.

In protest and to draw attention to the lack of female participation in the hearings at the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission for equal pay, Zelda D'Aprano chained herself to the Commonwealth Building in Spring Street, Melbourne in 1969.²⁰ Her direct action was noticed. She went on to co-initiate the Women's Action Committee (WAC) that campaigned for equal pay and against sex discrimination. To draw attention to the inequalities of unequal pay, WAC ran a clever campaign, paying only 75 per cent of the fares when riding on public transport.

Back in tram-land, in 1975 union objections were overcome and Joyce Barry drove a tram, the first woman to do so in Australia²¹ and she was paid the same as her male counterparts. Some 'connies' were reluctant to work with her. Radical changes in gender roles that required forging new identities at work and home threatened both men and women. Horne the Elder has explained his disenchantment with the union movement and its pervasive sexism and racism, but working women are not part of the 1964 narrative. Zelda D'Aprano, the daughter of working-class Jewish immigrant parents negotiated the intersecting structures of gender, race and class. She was not alone.

By 1992 Horne the Elder has had an epiphany regarding women:

At the university I passed from Trotskyism to anarchism, and then subsequently I became a conservative, although a liberal conservative and then I began to disband that in two ways: one was that the social movements of the 1960s finally were saying

what I'd always believed, that when God created human beings she created women and men ... I started writing a book about Australia in the 1940s in which I attacked the ... what we would now describe as the racism and sexism of the Australian Labor Party.²²

Such a book may have forced Horne to rethink his preference for 'social awkwardness' over 'male dominance' as a structural principle of Australian society. Listening to Zelda would have been illuminating.

Donald Horne on Indigenous Australians

In Horne's account of settlement, the treatment was

like that given by other migrating races when confronted with an extremely weak and disorganized aboriginal society. Most of the dominant races in Asia treated their aborigines similarly; they pushed them out of the way.²³

But there *was* resistance. It was *not* disorganised. Horne appears to have accepted the convenient narrative that Aborigines faded as the colonial frontier pushed on. He brushes aside the rights and wrongs of colonisation. In his view 'What matters is the position now'.²⁴ Yet in the 1960s there was already research underway on frontier violence and Aboriginal resistance: Mervyn Hartwig had researched the *Coniston Massacre* in 1960, more was in the pipeline.²⁵

However, consistent with the convenient narrative that traditional society had been washed away by the tide of history, and that in some states, like Tasmania, 'there are no Aborigines because they were all killed', Horne saw assimilation as inevitable.²⁶ He quotes his then colleague at the *Observer*, Peter Coleman:

Once the idea was to kill them off; then the most humane programme was to let them die out peacefully and meanwhile to smooth the dying pillow; now the policy is to assimilate them. But as far as the aborigines themselves are concerned the result in each case is the same. Assimilation ultimately means absorption and that means extinction. As a "nation" with its own way of life and even as a race the aborigines are still destined to disappear ... It is one of the ironies of our history that the only recompense we seem to be able to give this race for what we have done is to help it disappear.²⁷

The Assimilation Policy as articulated in 1951 and reiterated in 1961 was the expectation for Aborigines to 'attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community.' This

policy, Horne emphasised is not the Apartheid of South Africa.²⁸ Further, in his view, assimilation was succeeding: the 'part-Aborigines' population was increasing as an absolute number and as a percentage of the total Indigenous population.²⁹ In language that makes one gasp today, Horne declared in 1964, 'Assimilation finally means interbreeding'.³⁰

Horne appears deaf to the voices that would roar onto the public agenda with demands for equal pay, land rights and a treaty. Here it is helpful to recall that Aboriginal advocacy has a long, honourable history reaching back to the 19th century. Horne was writing as a journalist, not an historian, but he might have noted the emergence of organisations such as Aborigines Advancement Leagues that brought together white and black Australians in state-based campaigns and the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA). Their voices were part of the Australia I knew in the 1960s; their materials were appearing in student newspapers if not mainstream.

The Victorian League founded 1957, first published its official magazine *Smoke Signals* in 1961 with Pastor Doug Nicholls as editor. 'Nicholls' philosophy that, like the keys of a piano, black and white needed to work together to create racial harmony³¹ was a powerful metaphor for Reconciliation, a movement yet to emerge as state sponsored. *Smoke Signals* documented the Aboriginal agenda: the right to vote, marry freely, control their children, move freely, own property and receive award wages.³² Students, church groups, feminists, unions and service clubs stood together.³³

Writing in *Smoke Signals*, Shirley Andrews explained the paradox at the core of assimilation:

A great deal of pompous nonsense is talked about the Aborigines being encouraged to "improve" his way of life until he will become completely acceptable to the rest of the community, but at the same time, wage discrimination against Aborigines is continued so that a large section of Aboriginal workers do not receive sufficient wages to maintain anything but a very sub-standard of living.³⁴

Horne saw a 'very considerable improvement in the 1960s'.

In some areas there are a lot of petty prejudices against Aborigines; in others there are not. It would be hard to legislate these out of existence. Where Australian society might be condemned as a whole is that it was slow to move in granting full rights and in spending more money.³⁵

In 1914, after the 1965 Freedom Rides, the 1967 Referendum, the 1972

Tent Embassy, the passage of land rights acts, the Native Title Act 1993, equal pay, numerous inquiries and commissions, the Apology, and allocations of vast amounts of money, the situation remains bleak for many Indigenous Australians. We need to be asking how are funds being allocated? According to what criteria? The life expectancy of Aboriginal men is 10 years less than their non-Indigenous counterparts, the difference for women 9.5. Despite the 'Deaths in Custody' Inquiry, Indigenous Australians account for 27 per cent of the prison population and the incarceration rates appear to be tracking upwards at an alarming rate.³⁶ Health, education, and employment indicate that 'Closing the Gap' is a problematic policy.³⁷ Jon Altman argues it is a 'misframed debate' that requires new thinking.³⁸ Yet, what do we hear in the language regarding the goals of the current policy? Prime Minister Tony Abbott in the sixth annual 'Closing the Gap Report' stated: 'For the gap to close we must get kids to school, adults to work and the ordinary law of the land observed'.³⁹ Strong resonance with the 1950s and 60s. Even more worrying, what do we see in terms of policies that might reflect Aboriginal realities and futures?

Reviewing the position of Aborigines in the post-Mabo era, Horne the Elder embraced Aboriginal rights to their land but persisted with his view that traditional society had been destroyed. He found support in the word of Charles Rowley:

One of the achievements of the '60s was the careful conceptualisation by the social scientist Charles Rowley that what went with that dispossession was as, above all, "the destruction of Aboriginal society". What mattered most was not how many massacres there had been, but that dispossession disintegrated the structure of the Aboriginal societies.⁴⁰

My anthropologist self believes it does matter. Frontier violence persists. If the gap is to be closed, we need to learn from past failures and build on strategies that succeed. The upheavals of the 1960s remain relevant.⁴¹

Donald Horne on Immigrants

'Australia', writes Horne 'has managed to be an immigrant country for most of its history without even thinking about it'.⁴² Setting aside the 'migration' of convicts and their keepers in 1788, can we 'forget' the Lambing Flat Riots

of the 1860s, the frontier massacres, war time interments of some 19,000 people,⁴³ and more recently the 2005 Cronulla Riots and current asylum seeker policies? Horne persists with his upbeat portrait of policies: of the 167,000 'displaced persons' who were 'bought' very cheaply in the 1940s and early 50s; of signing migration agreements with most of the governments of Western Europe⁴⁴ (What would he say of signing agreements with Cambodia, one wonders?); of the 70 plus foreign language newspapers and periodicals, hundreds of clubs and societies; of divisions within the Eastern European populations on the basis of ethnicity and religion (Jews and non-Jews).

'Amazingly, no-one really knows what degree of assimilation is going on', Horne states and evokes differing responses: the Greeks at Woolloomooloo waiting for the 'bride ship'; the first native-born generation of Northern Europeans quickly assimilated; Southern Europeans slower.⁴⁵ Ordinary Australians, Horne writes have 'assimilated' to Europeans 'more quickly and gently than most critics of ordinary Australians have allowed for'.⁴⁶ Horne discerns no competition for jobs and none of the tensions experienced with non-English speaking workers in the USA. Horne writes:

Although it has no doubt involved many individual unhappinesses natural to migration, the postwar migration to Australia has been a reasonable happy migration, as migrations go.⁴⁷

From his 1964 perspective, underpinned by his faith that with respect to both immigrants and Indigenes, we can 'breed' our way to a better nation, Horne opined

it would seem a good idea if the 'assimilation' theory could be reworded somewhat less arrogantly, although the old assumption that intermarriage is desirable in a migration programme seems sensible enough. Australians do not wish their nation to be a *muddle of permanent national minorities*. Assimilation is best made in bed.⁴⁸ (Emphasis added).

Horne's sweeping generalisations are not substantiated with references. Again I wonder, to whom was he listening? What was he reading? In 1992, having dismissed the pamphlet 'Immigration Reform, Control or Colour Bar' as written by 'bleeding hearts ... overestimating the possibility of change', Horne 'went through it twice with a pencil and then thought: they're right ... the White Australia Policy could be reformed'. Horne had changed his

mind.

Twelve years later, Horne saw the reform as ‘purely home grown’, a 30 year truce that lasted until John Howard became prime minister.

This truce offered the mighty lesson that xenophobia is endemic in any society, but usually it becomes dominant only when politicians wish it so. (An aberration? The Tampa election scares of 2001 were based on three forms of xenophobia—nationalist, religious and racist.)⁴⁹

Horne’s three forms of xenophobia may have flourished when tweaked by political scare campaigns, but the demonising of ‘other’ has a long history in Australia and we have not learned the lesson. Jon Stanhope, Christmas Island’s outgoing administrator likens our current refugee policies to the White Australia Policy and Stolen Generations and laments.

I have no doubt that my grandchildren and their children will look back at this period in our history and think ‘what did they think they were doing and how did they allow themselves to demean Australia and themselves in that way?’⁵⁰

In Horne’s 1964 parsing of the White Australian Policy, individual Australians might harbour ‘prejudices’ but, because they have not been put into practice in a ‘public, fanatical’ way, they are ‘not necessarily of public concern’.⁵¹ And, the policy did not ‘discriminate on the grounds of colour’: there were Asians and Africans in Australia. What is true, Horne concedes, is that they

cannot come to Australia at will and their entry is at present controlled by arbitrary and largely secret administrative decisions rather than by the often canvassed alternatives of tiny quotas. This is a difference of *method* rather than *policy*.⁵² (Emphasis added).

Perhaps, Horne suggested, Australians may be prepared to countenance changes to immigration policies, but in his view politically change would be resisted by the ‘present ruling generation of politicians’.⁵³

Still Out of Luck

So, here we are still out of luck and I am out of time. Where have I landed with my double helix of intertwining narratives of the 1960s and now?

Tracing very different strands, intellectual, personal and political—Horne, a child of The Great Depression, socialised as a journalist in libertarian, self-referential Sydney, an acolyte of the charismatic Professor John Anderson;

and Bell, a child of post-World War II reconstruction, feminist, mature age student in serious, sober Melbourne—intertwine around a common axis: what is this Australia of which we write? Horne was ironic. Bell is angry.

Characterising the deep structural divides of gender, race and class as ‘petty prejudices’, ‘individual unhappinesses’, ‘social awkwardness’ and saying ‘move on’ is a position born of privilege. Yes I am angry. Australia is still lacking imagination; still demeaning and demonising women, Indigenous and ‘other’; our luck is running out: the mining boom is flattening, funding for science and education is disappearing. Hard times do not necessarily make for creative thinking. The ‘second rate’ people writing our scripts are deniers and dangerous. They do not write in my name. So, intertwining again with Donald Horne: What should we be curious about?

¹ Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country: Australia in the sixties*, first published by Penguin in 1964. The pagination in this article refers to the Sydney: Angus and Robertson edition 1978, p 217.

² The *Bulletin* and *Observer* were Frank Packer papers. Horne was editor of the *Observer* 1958–61, *Bulletin* 1961–2, 1967–72, and *Quadrant* 1963–66. Horne admired historian Humphrey McQueen who had apparently read all the editing work Horne had done for these publications (Horne 1992). Max Harris (1921–1995), poet, author, publisher, founded the Angry Penguins.

³ In 2005, Horne said that he wrote the book in ‘six weeks’, Donald Horne, interviewed by Philip Adams, 5 May 2005, viewed 30 September 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/features/inbedwithphillip/episodes/203-donald-horne/>; see also David Mark, ‘Writer, historian, Donald Horne dies’, *ABC Online*, 8 September, 2005, viewed 10 September 2014, <http://www.abc.net.au/cgi-bin/common/printfriendly.pl?http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2005/s1456305.htm>, includes an excerpt from an interview with Horne where the ‘six weeks’ time frame is repeated, viewed 10 September 2014, http://www.abc.net.au/reslib/200509/r57859_158390.mp3; Horne’s daughter, Julia Horne, told me Horne had stated the book was written over a three month period (9 October 2014). I am grateful to Carl Reinecke, who is writing his BA honours thesis on *The Lucky Country* (ANU) and tells me that in Horne’s papers, there are further references that indicate it may have been an even longer period (13 October 2014). Of course, ‘writing’ may refer to the draft that was then edited and typeset.

Clearly Horne wrote quickly. Further, he had been working on edited pieces around the themes addressed in the book for some time.

⁴ Horne, interviewed by Philip Adams, 2005.

⁵ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p v.

⁶ Diane Bell, *Daughters of the Dreaming*, McPhee Gribble, Melbourne/Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1st edition 1983; Penguin/University Minnesota Press 2nd 1993; Spinifex Press, Melbourne, 3rd edition, 2002; Diane Bell, *Ngarrindjeri Wurrurwarrin: A world that is, was, and will be*, new edition, Spinifex Press, Melbourne, 2014; Diane Bell and Renate Klein, eds, *Radically Speaking: Feminism reclaimed*, Spinifex Press, Melbourne 1996.

⁷ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 65.

⁸ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 65.

⁹ Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique*, Penguin, Ringwood 1963, p 13.

¹⁰ Germaine Greer, *The Female Eunuch*, Paladin, 1970.

¹¹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Gallimard, Paris, 1949.

¹² R W Connell, *Gender, Polity*, Cambridge, 2002.

¹³ Anne Summers, *Damned Whores and God's Police: The colonization of women in Australia*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1973; Miriam Dixon, Miriam. (1976). *The Real Matilda: Women and Identity in Australia, 1788-1975*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1976.

¹⁴ M Thornton and P Luker, 'The Sex Discrimination Act and Its Rocky Rite of Passage' in Margaret Thornton (ed), *Sex Discrimination in Uncertain Times*, ANU E Press, Canberra, 2010, pp 24-5, viewed 4 September 2014, <http://press.anu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/ch0133.pdf>

¹⁵ Neither Pope John XXIII (1881-1963) nor his successor Pope Paul VI (1897-1978) was eager to address the birth control issue. There were however a number of bishops who expressed an interest in addressing this pressing pastoral issue at the Council.

¹⁶ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 46.

¹⁷ See for example, the Health Insurance Amendment (Medicare Funding for Certain Types of Abortion) Bill 2013 re gender selective abortion put forward by Senator John Madigan (DLP, Victoria). There is no demographic evidence this practice is occurring in Australia and no international evidence that legislation ameliorates gender selective abortion. The 'debates' rely on a coded fear of 'other' and serve to limit women's access to reproductive services and possible violate international conventions.

¹⁸ See for example various legal challenges to Roe v Wade (1973) that have eroded a woman's right to choose, David Masci, Ira C Lupa, F Ellwood and Eleanor Davis, *A History of Key Abortion Rulings of the US Supreme Court*, Pew Research, Religion and Public Life Project: Legal backgrounder, 2013, viewed 4 September 2014, <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/01/16/a-history-of-key-abortion-rulings-of-the-us->

- supreme-court/; New York Times, 'States Chipping Away at Roe v. Wade', NYT, 13 June 2013, viewed 4 September 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2013/03/26/us/abortion_laws.html?_r=0; the murder of doctors who perform abortion and the attacks on family planning clinics, B A Robinson, 'Abortion Access: Violence and harassment at US abortion clinics', *Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance*. 2009, viewed 4 September 2014 www.religioustolerance.org/abo_viol.htm
- ¹⁹ See Sheryl Sandberg, *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*, Random House, UK, 2013. Reversing Sandberg's advice to women who expect equality but are reluctant to put themselves forward, maybe, more men need to 'lean in' so more women can 'lean out'.
- ²⁰ Zelda D'Aprano, *Zelda: The Becoming of a Woman*, Zelda D'Aprano, Melbourne, 1977.
- ²¹ Russell Jones, Russell, Joyce Barry: Grassroots advocate for equal opportunity, 2009, viewed 4 September, 2104, www.hawthorntramdept.org.au. In 1956 the Melbourne and Metropolitan Tram Board (M&MTB) attempted to train two women but the Australian Tramway but Omnibus Employee Association (ATMOEA) called a snap strike and passed a resolution that put paid to that initiative. After much concerted lobbying and direct action, in 1975, the resolution was rescinded.
- ²² Donald Horne, Interviewed by Robin Hughes, 17 January 1992, *Australian Biography Project*, viewed 5 September 2014, <http://www.australianbiography.gov.au/subjects/horne/interview6.html>
- ²³ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 112.
- ²⁴ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 112.
- ²⁵ Mervyn Hartwig, The Coniston Massacre. BA (Hons) thesis, University of Adelaide, 1960.
- ²⁶ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 113.
- ²⁷ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 113.
- ²⁸ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 114.
- ²⁹ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, pp 113-4.
- ³⁰ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 113
- ³¹ Richard Broome, At the Grass Roots of White Support: Victorian Aboriginal Advancement League Branches 1957-1972 2010, viewed 6 September 2014, <http://www.slv.vic.gov.au/latrobejournal/issue/latrobe-85/t1-g-t11.html>
- ³² See Richard Broome, regarding the content of the '1962 Petition of the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement', 2010.
- ³³ For example, campaigners included well-grounded Aboriginal activists William Fergusson, Bill Onus, Faith Bandler, Kath Walker and Joe McGinness, plus Church of Christ pastor Christ Stan Davey, Gordon Bryant MHR, Shirley Andrews, bio-

chemist, researcher, active in Communist Party, and Doris Blackburn, feminist and peace activist.

- ³⁴ Shirley Andrews, 'Assimilation—Economy Size', *Smoke Signals*. September, 1964, p 11.
- ³⁵ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 114. I thank Carl Reinecke (see note 3 above) who tells me that Horne's papers are more focused on Aboriginal and Asian Australia. My question would then be why were these insights were not incorporated? Was he censored? Did he self-censor? Deem the time was not right?
- ³⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013, viewed 10 September 2014.
<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/4517.0~2013~Main%20Features~Indigenous%20status%20of%20prisoners~13>
- ³⁷ COAG, 2008, viewed 10 September 2104,
https://www.coag.gov.au/closing_the_gap_in_indigenous_disadvantage
- ³⁸ Jon Altman, Closing the gap on work: a misframed debate that needs new thinking. *Crikey*, Sunday, 4 April 2014, Viewed 10 September 2014,
<http://www.crikey.com.au/2014/04/10/closing-the-gap-on-work-a-misframed-debate-that-needs-new-thinking>
- ³⁹ Tony Abbott, *Closing the Gap, Prime Minister's Report*. Australian Government 2014, viewed 10 September 2014,
http://www.dpmc.gov.au/publications/docs/closing_the_gap_2014.pdf
- ⁴⁰ Horne, 'We should be so lucky', *SMH*, August 21, 2004, viewed 4 September 2104,
<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/08/20/1092972745574.html>; See, C C Rowley, *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, ANU Press, Ringwood, 1970.
- ⁴¹ For example: Where is mention of the Bark Petitions of 1963 presented to the Prime Minister that protested Mining leases on Yirrkala Aboriginal Reserve land and subsequent ones? Merryn Gates services for Arts *et al*, 'Bark petitions: Indigenous art and reform for the rights of Indigenous Australians. Australian Government', 2009, viewed 10 September, 2104, <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/bark-petitions-indigenous-art>. Where is mention of the underlying factors that drove the Gurindji Walk off 1966? They were canvassed in the 1945 inquiry into working conditions for Aborigines in the cattle industry, but that report was 'suppressed', see R M and C H Berndt, *End of an Era: Aboriginal Labour in the Northern Territory*, AIAS, Canberra, 1987. Non-Indigenous males received £2/8/- a week in 1945, as well as being comfortably housed and fed. The 1965 attempt to introduce equal wages for Aboriginal workers failed. Pastoralists, including Vesteyes, argued that equal wages would ruin the industry if paid immediately. Similar arguments were advanced regarding equal pay for women.
- ⁴² Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 67.

⁴³ During World War I, of the 7,000 internments, about 4500 were enemy aliens and British nationals of German ancestry already resident in Australia. During World War II, Australian authorities established internment camps for three reasons—to prevent residents from assisting Australia’s enemies, to appease public opinion and to house overseas internees sent to Australia for the duration of the war. Unlike World War I, the initial aim of internment during the later conflict was to identify and intern those who posed a particular threat to the safety or defence of the country. As the war progressed, however, this policy changed and Japanese residents were interned en masse. In the later years of the war, Germans and Italians were also interned on the basis of nationality, particularly those living in the north of Australia. In all, just over 20 per cent of all Italians resident in Australia were interned. Australia interned about 7000 residents, including more than 1500 British nationals, during World War II. A further 8000 people were sent to Australia to be interned after being detained overseas by Australia’s allies. At its peak in 1942, more than 12,000 people were interned in Australia.’ Viewed 5 September 2014, <http://naa.gov.au/collection/snapshots/internment-camps/index.aspx>

⁴⁴ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 68.

⁴⁵ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 70.

⁴⁶ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 70.

⁴⁷ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 70.

⁴⁸ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 70.

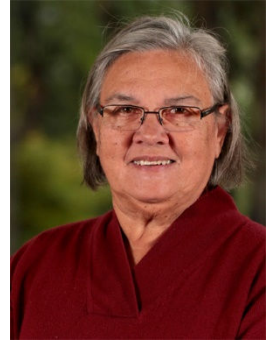
⁴⁹ Horne, We should be so lucky, *SMH*, 21 August 2004, viewed 5 September 2014, <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/08/20/1092972745574.html>

⁵⁰ Oliver Laughland, History will treat Australia ‘very poorly’ over its treatment of asylum seekers, 2014, viewed 3 October 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2014/oct/02/history-treat-australia-poorly-treatment-asylum-seekers?CMP=ema_632

⁵¹ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 107.

⁵² Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 108.

⁵³ Horne, *Lucky Country*, 1978, p 109.



FIFTY YEARS ON THE ROAD TO HEALTH AND JUSTICE FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

*I acknowledge and pay respects to the Ngunnawal and the Ngambi Peoples,
traditional custodians of the land on which we are meeting today.*

I would like to share some personal reflections with you about the last fifty years on the long road towards health and justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. I will start with the past, and give you my impressions of what the world looked like for a young Aboriginal woman growing up in Darwin in the 1960s, at the time when Donald Horne was writing *The Lucky Country*.

I then propose to look at today and reflect on the contemporary policy and political scene in our post-2007 ‘Era of Intervention’—and how this is affecting the First Peoples of this country

Last, I will look to the future, to the prospects for positive change and the emerging cohort of young Aboriginal leaders.

Of course, in the short time I have with you today, there is no way to do justice to the full depth and scope of the last fifty years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history.

I will therefore be talking to you very much from a personal perspective, and concentrating on one particular theme—education—as a way of unpacking the changes we have seen—and the changes we have failed to see in the last half-century.

Let me start by taking you back to Parap Camp in Darwin, where I grew up in the 1950s, with my mother, my father and my five sisters.

My mother was one of the Stolen Generations, taken as a young girl by white men on horseback from her Alyawarre family in the country north-east of Alice Springs, sometime in the early 1920s. She was brought to Darwin, a thousand miles from home and family, and grew up in the Kahlin compound along with girls and some boys from across the Northern Territory.

If you want to learn more about life in Kahlin compound, I highly recommend the *Bringing them Home Report* about the Stolen Generations, and the book by Barbara Cummings called *Take This Child*.¹ If you read this book—or if you could have spoken to my mother or any of the children who grew each other up in the Compound—you would quickly see through the myth that Aboriginal children were taken away from their families for their own good, to provide them with the education and training that would help them ‘better themselves’ (as it was put back then—there’s a whole language associated with this period).

The training my mother received did not go beyond needlework and the jobs needed to keep the compound clean and tidy. She was not taught to read and write. Instead, she was prepared for domestic work and, when she was old enough was lined up with the other girls by the Superintendent of the Compound, while non-Aboriginal women came to choose who they wanted to work for them as domestic servants in return for board and lodging.

My mother was sent to work on a farm near Darwin, and there she stayed for several years, working in the homestead and doing maintenance in the yards and looking after children. Eventually, she met my father—a Swedish sailor who had jumped ship in Perth. Once married, they went to live in Parap Camp in Darwin. This was the world in which I and my sisters grew up. Critically, and unlike my mother and so many of her generation, we grew up with an education. On Parap Camp, going to school was non-negotiable—it was unquestioned and simply expected of us, not only by our parents but also by the mainstream system as well, which would ensure that we attended.

The schooling we received had its deficiencies—I remember in particular being told as a primary school child about how Captain Cook had ‘discovered’ Australia, and even at that age I remember thinking ‘hang about, that’s not true!’ It was my first lesson in how Aboriginal experience can be systemically denied and written out of history.

But nevertheless, unlike my mother, I was allowed to learn to read and write, and for me this formed the basis for everything that came after because, by the 1960s—the period that Donald Horne was reflecting upon in his famous book—we were entering a period of great change globally and a time when within Australia the campaign for our rights as Aboriginal people was intensifying. In this period I got another education: a political education.

This education was underpinned by two important principles: that of collective action on the one hand, and optimism about our ability to change the world on the other.

In terms of collective action; we knew that we were part of a much bigger movement for social justice, across Australia and internationally. In particular, we were influenced by what was happening in the United States Civil Rights Movement. And although Darwin was an intensely local place of less than 10,000 people, nevertheless through the radio we knew of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and later the Black Panthers and all the other manifestations of the African American movement for justice and equality—and we felt a kinship with them. Sadly it was only a bit later that I became aware of the Native American and Canadian situation and recognised them as being Indigenous, like us.

These movements exposed us to new ideas: I distinctly remember seeing a copy of *Ebony* magazine for the first time and thinking ‘this is fantastic’. Before then I would never have thought in my wildest dreams that there could be a magazine by black people, for black people, reflecting a black person’s view and experience of the world. I remember reading the slogan ‘black is beautiful’ and feeling that this was a profound statement at the time because I didn’t think many of us thought of ourselves in that way.

But our notion of collective action was also reinforced closer to home by the support of non-Aboriginal people and organisations. For example, the

wharfies in Darwin used to donate a shilling a week from their pay packets to help the Aboriginal kids in Darwin. One of the things this fund was used for was to have a Christmas party for the kids living in the Aboriginal camps of Darwin. I remember getting my first book from one of these parties when I was about 11 years old, a copy of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, complete with my name written inside it. So, we knew that there were people in the non-Aboriginal world too who were our allies and supporters.

This collective, international view of the world, reinforced our optimistic view about the future. We were confident that, working together, we could change our world. We were not naïve—we knew it would not be easy. We knew that the government wasn't just going to wake up one morning and decide to give us land-rights, or fund community-controlled health services or legal services. We knew that as Aboriginal people nothing would be given to us unless we fought for it.

As the title of this session says—luck had nothing to do with our successes. Nevertheless, there was a fundamental optimism about those times for us. In Darwin this optimism was reflected in the work of the 'Half-Caste Association' (again some of the language of those times is challenging to modern ears) but this organisation fought local battles over discrimination, demanding full citizenship rights and an end to policy discrimination on the basis of race. And our optimism was strengthened by the knowledge that there were other organisations across the country working to the same end—organisations like FCAATSI (the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders) and NAIDOC (the National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee).

With an education, and with this swelling movement around me, as a young Aboriginal woman in the 1960s, I grew up believing that change was inevitable, and that I would be part of it, that I would participate in it, and that I could help shape that change.

This belief was given further energy and optimism in the 1970s with the establishment of the first community-controlled Aboriginal organisations: Land Councils, legal services, health services and others. These organisations

have been responsible for many great and enduring positive changes in many Aboriginal people's lives over the last fifty years.

So, let me turn from these reflections about what the world looked like for us back in the 1960s when *The Lucky Country* was being published, to the contemporary environment for Australia's First Peoples.

The first thing to say, of course, is that much has improved. Land rights, our own health services, legal rights and political representation; we even have our own research organisations such as the Lowitja Institute of which I am the current Chairperson. These are substantial achievements which are rightly recognised and celebrated. And yet, despite these achievements, many of our communities, not all but many, seem stuck, caught in cycles of intergenerational unemployment and poverty.

There are still many, many places—especially in rural and remote Australia—where it is a rarity for Aboriginal children to complete school. Gangs of kids roam the community and it appears to be beyond anyone to get them into the classroom. They become teenagers without the benefit of an education, without the close support, guidance and control of traditional kin networks, and without the prospect of a job or a better life. This feeds directly into negative cycles of disengagement and powerlessness.

This situation—and the poor school attendance of Aboriginal children in particular—has become the focus of a great deal of public debate in recent years. Much of the debate centres around the belief that Aboriginal families are not fulfilling their responsibilities to their children by ensuring they attend school. This is certainly true in some cases and developing parental (and community) responsibility is very important. But I would not like us to forget the responsibility of the state in allowing this situation to develop. The fact is that—especially in remote areas of the country—successive governments over generations completely failed to provide any adequate education for their Aboriginal citizens. For example, during the time of the Stolen Generations, the state was quite willing to intervene dramatically, and often catastrophically, in the lives of Aboriginal families, but this intervention did not necessarily extend to providing education to those children taken

away. And until recently, in many remote Aboriginal communities, schools were non-existent.

This is not a phenomenon of distant history, for example, in 1996 only one Aboriginal person completed Year 12 in the whole of the Central Australian region. Things have improved slightly since then, but these historical levels of neglect have led to multiple generations of Aboriginal people with poor or non-existent education, and little or no chance of getting a job or actively participating in any society, their own, or yours or a combination of both.

Under these circumstances, when so few Aboriginal families see the benefits of education, it is hardly surprising that they do not make going to school a high priority for their children. Under these circumstances, what I find surprising is how many Aboriginal families *do* see education a priority for their children.

In some areas, especially remote and rural, one might ask the question: are the schools ready to receive the children? I have put this question many times over the years and I know the answer, it is 'no'.

Under these circumstances and given our history, it is unjust to turn around and simplistically point the finger at Aboriginal families, decrying the fact that they are not fulfilling their responsibilities. This is especially the case as we have also entered a period where the disempowerment of our communities and families has become embedded at the heart of government policy.

If much of the early part of the 20th century was the 'era of assimilation', and the period from the late 1960s was the 'era of self-determination' one could argue that from 2007 we have now entered the 'era of intervention'. Explicitly or implicitly, this world-view rejects self-determination as a 'failed policy'. It does not approach our communities as having anything valuable to offer or indeed of having achieved anything in the past.

We are to be the passive recipients of non-Aboriginal 'help'.

Under the barrage of continually changing government initiatives, few of which have any genuine commitment to local management and control, I know that in many places, Aboriginal people feel marginalised from the

decision-making processes in their own communities, even in their own families. The nation-state now sits at our kitchen table—just as it used to.

Many families in remote areas, and in some cases whole communities, have suffered a fundamental loss of hope about the future and of the pathways to that future that education can provide. So how do we turn this around? Are there reasons for optimism about the future?

For me, the significant change the future is bringing is the emergence of a new generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. Critically for our collective future, these young people are well-educated and healthier than my generation.

When *The Lucky Country* was published, not a single Aboriginal person had graduated from University in this country. Today, we have twenty-five thousand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university graduates around the country.² This is something to celebrate. They are the ones who have managed to escape the cycle of poor education, poverty and disempowerment I described earlier. Most of them have escaped that negative cycle because they are the daughters and sons—or grand-daughters and grandsons—of those who did get an education and did get the benefits from it.

So, what is the challenge, in my view, for this next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders? First, let me say that I am not advocating some nostalgic return to the ‘good old days’ of the Aboriginal struggle of the 1960s. The methods, arguments and images of the past will not necessarily work today, and our new leaders will need to redefine the campaign for social justice in a way that matches their own experience, knowledge and skills. The situation they face is different. It needs new thinking and new strategies.

Nevertheless, whatever strategies or methods we use going into the future, I would suggest that part of the challenge for the new generation of Aboriginal leaders is rebuilding a sense of collective action and optimism amongst our peoples. We need to be able to base our actions on a foundation of self-belief, on an assurance that ‘yes we can’ change the world.

I remind myself that, despite the incredible pressures people are under, the ideals of self-reliance and self-determination have never disappeared amongst

our peoples. You might go to a local community meeting and there in the back of the room you will see a small group of four or five Aboriginal women, usually in their middle to senior years, not saying much but exerting a quiet authority and you know that it is this group of women who are watching over, and encouraging and guarding the success of an early childhood program for the community.

Or you might be on a small piece of Aboriginal land in remote northern Australia where a family has set up a training camp to get young people into work and it comes complete with hot showers, a laundry, good food and an urn of tea bubbling away; once again you know that people are exercising their authority and their determination to make a better world not just for themselves but for their family and for the next generation.

We all know those local level examples, where that collective, community spirit and that practical optimism about changing the world still exist. I would suggest that sponsoring, facilitating, linking up and spreading such examples of Aboriginal confidence and capability is a key task for the younger generation of leaders.

Another challenge facing this new generation is the question of identity. They need to grab this debate and make it as they see it. Take hold of it and not be hurt by bystanders. And I would suggest that our new leaders will also face the challenge of ensuring that the next generation of kids, wherever they may be in Aboriginal Australia and whatever labels might be placed on them, grow up safe and healthy and that they receive an education that prepares them for participation in a global, inter-connected world.

We need to make sure these children go on to get a proper education, an education which will grow them up as another generation of leaders for their families and communities, people who can contribute to building a positive cycle of action and confidence. We need education that enables Aboriginal people to confidently and competently participate in their own culture and mainstream culture, and can help them choose how to actively use this diversity of cultures in their lives.

I have a lot of confidence in this new generation of Aboriginal leaders and their abilities. Their education gives them a tremendously powerful tool for

thinking about and solving the kind of issues I have described and in doing so, they can also draw upon the flexibilities and strengths of Aboriginal culture. We are the oldest living culture in the world and we have always adapted in order to survive. We know change and know how to adapt. We are good at it. This is our strength. We are survivors.

The quest, then for this new generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders is to bring together successfully the richness and adaptability of our ancient cultures, with the benefits of formal education. In doing so, they will enable the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate fully in all aspects of the life of the nation as it, too changes.

¹ Cummings, Barbara, *Take This Child: From Kahlin Compound to the Retta Dixon Children's Home*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1990.

² Reconciliation Australia (<http://www.reconciliation.org.au/home/latest/five-fast-facts--recognising-indigenous-achievement-in-higher-education>)



UP THE DARLING IN 1912 CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL CHARACTER

Myfanwy Horne's requiem for her husband paid tribute to what she termed his 'pilgrim soul ... From his schooldays, Donald was on a journey, his energy, imagination and intellectual curiosity leading him to question and analyse as he tried to make sense of the world around him'.¹ That characteristic befits the true historian essentially imbued with philosophy. Horne's memoirs, consolidated into a single volume *An Interrupted Life* (1998), and followed by *Into the Open* (2000), give testimony to the threads of continuity and change—the very stuff of history—that arise from and are embedded in individual experience. As Ralph Waldo Emerson concluded in 1840, 'there is properly no history, only biography'.² One historical thread that has continuing resonance in Australian political discourse is the concept of national character, most recently refuelled in the wash of World War 1 commemoration.

Whether national character is a philosophically valid concept can be debated, as Horne himself conceded in *Looking for Leadership* (2001), wherein the chapter on 'How to be Australian' begins with 'The *Myth* of National Identity' (emphasis added). Nevertheless as he put it, 'the idea of an identity crisis for Australia seemed to make sense in the mid-sixties as the Dreamtime Fifties finally ended. This was partly what *The Lucky Country* was about.'³ Hence the book's Chapter 2 is devoted to the question 'What is an Australian?' and is answered in five points.⁴ Given the concentration of population in coastal cities and the south-east region, Australia was pronounced to be 'the first suburban nation'. Country towns like the Muswellbrook of his early years were deemed to have virtually the same social

structure as suburbs, if more condensed. Essentially larrikin qualities—happy-go-lucky, hard-drinking, hard-gambling, matey, tough, dismissive of authority—were given as characteristics of the inner city working class, set against the puritanism and gentility of the suburban middle-classes. His reference points here were Parramatta and then Kogarah, a southern Sydney suburb to which the family returned in the later 1930s. A significant extra was that Kogarah, and in particular the house Denbigh, concentrated multiple strands of his cherished family heritage that stretched back on his mother's side to the dimness of the convict era at rural Camden.

The section 'Fair go mate' expounded the 'general belief ... that it is the government's job to see that everyone gets a fair go—from old age pensioners to manufacturers. A fair go usually means money.' That balance has evidently mutated there. 'Having a good time' dealt with the Australian concept of enjoyment, which he saw as a battle between puritanism and a 'kind of paganism ... that the latter is slowly winning ... [and] with so many social constraints on other attempts to give life meaning, money [here social gambling was bracketed with business money-making], like sport and drinking, became a permissible life object'. Beach-going encapsulated Australian hedonism—'the desire for simple pleasure'—where males (especially) can take off almost all of their clothes, display their prowess in the water, gregariously share war, fishing, or sporting stories, or 'just sit in the sun, say nothing, do nothing, and think very little'.

The 'Give it a go' section is not about adventurousness, but Australians' wholesale suspicion of public rhetoric or enthusiasm, which is deflated with laconic humour, with chiacking as in 'Aw, give it a go, mate'. 'This deeply laid scepticism', concludes Horne, 'is a genuine philosophy of life determining individual and group actions'. In the last section 'Racketeers of the Mediocre', he exposes 'one of the real divisions in Australia ... between the mass of the people who pursue innocent happiness and those who attempt to gain the multiple satisfactions of power and ambition'. The latter, whose ambition was once open and straightforward, indeed 'crudely Australian ... may now be in a minority' operated largely in the business world. While their ambition might be 'under an egalitarian disguise', they are

‘as deceitful and tricky as you are likely to find ... are often inefficiently authoritarian ... lack comparative standards and are uninterested in ideas’. The reader of his memoirs might detect personal wounds from his time with a leading Sydney advertising agency. In Horne’s view, being uninterested in ideas was the nation’s besetting sin, the fount of its mediocrity.

What is striking about this view of the 1960s is that no account is taken of rural Australia, the nation’s economic stronghold producing the metals, wool, wheat, meat, dairy products and fruit that yielded major export revenue, as well as raw materials for domestic manufacturing, albeit heavily protected. Hence, bush-derived qualities that were said by C E W Bean, among others, to distinguish the Australian soldier half a century earlier, such as physical and mental hardiness, disdain for outward show, adaptability to circumstance, ‘making do’ and being able to ‘forage’ (live off the land), are no longer apparent. Nor is there mention of scientific and technological aspects of culture, the innovation of the Snowy River scheme, for example, or the rapid post-war expansion and diversification of the government-initiated CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research), which transformed in 1949 to CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation), and the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories.⁵ In *The Lucky Country Revisited* of 1987, Australian scientific research is recognized for outstanding advances on many fronts, but only as a preface to lambasting mediocre business leaders for not seizing on these for their own as well as the nation’s good. Indeed by 1987 ‘Racketeers of the mediocre’ had been expanded into a whole chapter that ranged, or raged, through business, unions, politics, bureaucrats and technocrats, culminating in ‘The institutionalization of mediocrity’.

Even if by 2001 Horne could pronounce national identity a myth, he nevertheless continued to devote considerable word space to exploring what might be distinctive about Australian life. This was done through examining the roles of leaders and commentators during the decades after the 1960s, largely in politics and the visual, performing and literary arts, areas where, it must be said, he himself played a part. Distinctiveness can of course be detected in these public upper echelons, *The Big Picture* as he termed it, a

distinctiveness that both derives from and contributes to any evolving national character. But the Big Picture can readily slip into bland generalities. More incisive and thought-provoking observations may be garnered from a sub-public, down-to-earth stratum, focusing on a random selection of individuals at a particular time—a century ago, eleven years after Federation but before Gallipoli. Some of these I want to share today. Part of their value lies in their straightforwardness, their intimacy—one person to another—rather than being written for that amorphous being ‘the general reader’.

The observations come from letters to my grandmother in Brisbane from her only sibling, 23-year-old Thomas Armitage Hewitt called TAH by the family, who was on the brink of a career with his father’s firm of London solicitors. A visit to Australia between May and November 1912 had as its prime purpose to meet his first nephew born in February that year, but he was also bent on tracing C E W Bean’s *On the Wool Track* (1910) and *Dreadnought of the Darling* (1911) which all the Hewitts had enjoyed for the depictions of character, people and place in the westerly part of the Murray-Darling basin. TAH also made good use of wider points of contact with some school and family friends who were relatively recent English immigrants. At the outbreak of World War I two years later, great-uncle Thomas signed up as a private with the London Rifle Brigade and died in the second battle of Ypres on 5 May 1915.

This morning’s speakers opened up nuances of Celtic and multicultural ethnicity in the Australian character. The Hewitt letters shed light on the complexity of threads in the Anglo element, constantly refreshed as it was by generations of British migrants up to the 1960s if not longer. Backgrounding the Hewitts opens out one or two of these threads. At least four generations of the family had lived in and around Manchester from the late 18th century, earning a modest living as clerks and attorneys. The sons were educated at Manchester Grammar, although the intertwined families were mostly formal dissenters, Independents or Congregationalists, with active leanings towards reformist politics and Sunday schools for the poor (teaching secular subjects as well as the bible). One daughter married a successful cotton manufacturer Elkanagh Armitage, who was mayor of Manchester during the turbulent year

of 1848, and was knighted, probably for his efforts in keeping unrest below riot level as much as for promoting city improvements like its water supply.

Thomas Hewitt, TAH's father, married the daughter of a Manchester shoe manufacturer but determined on a London career where his firm specialised in legal conveyancing with a fruitful sideline in property investment, largely in the developing northern suburbs around Highgate and Crouch End where TAH and his sister grew up. TAH finished his education at Mill Hill, the grammar school established for dissenters in 1807; his sister attended the progressive North London Girls School topped off with learning German at a Moravian school in Switzerland. The family joined London's expanding Baptist congregation that had risen in social status following the conversion of Church of England cleric, the Honourable Baptist Noel in 1849.⁶ The Priestleys were from the same middle-class congregation, and that is how my grandparents Henry James Priestley, another Millhillian, and Margery Hope Hewitt met; but by the time they came to Brisbane early in 1911 (he was the University of Queensland's founding professor of maths and physics), seeds of rationalism/agnosticism had sprouted in both families, while commitment to wider education, through reading and conversation as much as formal courses, was reinforced. TAH's reading matter on the Darling excursion, for instance, was George Meredith's *Beauchamp's Career*, a novel satirising the ambitious life of an upper-crust Conservative, supplemented by Ernst Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe at the Close of the Nineteenth Century*, translated and issued in cheap format by the Rationalist Press Association, which he found in a Mildura bookshop.

The Darling excursion extended over seven weeks from July to early September 1912. A rough passage by coastal steamer to Sydney convinced him to switch to rail travel to Melbourne and then Adelaide where the riverboat companies had their headquarters. As one of eight in a stuffy second class compartment between Sydney and Albury, he commented:

The air was further made purple by the profane Australian youth that haunts my experiences of Australia. He talked all through the night, & sickened me of profanity for the rest of my life. For the rest, the passengers were peaceable & included one ancient Celestial, who made himself cigarettes, smoked them & spat

more than was desirable. He was just back from a visit to his native country & was on his way to a place in upcountry Victoria. The wits of the carriage amused themselves by treating him as a humorous specimen of the race; but I really couldn't see why he should be treated as a buffoon, any more than an Irish peasant should be so treated by an Englishman. I think the constant assumption of superiority by a white man in the presence of a coloured man is simply disgusting. No wonder they don't like us.

White superiority, if not also profanity, might be said to be traits, even 'freedoms', derived from British imperialist roots, albeit not universally embraced. Just as discomfoting for TAH was another imperialist, an old Harrovian, encountered on the riverboat stage of his journey, and later identified as Charles Ernest Jacomb.

20 years ago his father (I[ndian] C[ivil] S[ervice]) had bought some land in Mildura and when this fellow was 19 (5 years ago) he came out to manage it (35 acres) & try to make it pay. He has never been keen, & although he did make it pay, he hopes to sell out soon. He is going to read for the English bar & hopes for some of its side issues. He is a clever, ambitious & sensual sort of fellow, with a sort of refinement (Damned good fellow, you know). His thesis is that English & Australians can never mix & must always mistrust one another. That Australians will never forgive England for the vile men she ... sent out—that their natures are incompatible etc etc. He misses English culture & arguing from his own nature, becomes a sensual epicurean & pessimist (if you can be both at the same time). Oscar Wilde is his style. We have had some very interesting talks but they only make me realise how extreme each of us is.

TAH's opinion was unchanged by further meetings at Mildura while he waited for a passage up the Darling. Indeed, after Jacomb's return to England with a wife he had married at Mildura. He published *God's Own Country: An Appreciation of Australia* (1914) that was sensationally derogatory—Australian men were ugly, the women unchaste, the children feral, state schools hotbeds of sexual vice, etc etc. In contrast to Jacomb the misanthrope was an old Millhillian, manager of a Mildura fruit packing company, whom TAH described as 'an awfully good fellow. He isn't a man who will ever make a fortune but he is quite contented ... His wife, an Australian, is a most excellent cook ... [and they have] a couple of kids ... Australia won't do badly if she gets Englishmen like him'. Equally contented was 'an Assam tea planter [who] has come to live here for the better climate ... and isn't too

terribly Anglo Indian. He says he doesn't find labor here much more troublesome than in Assam, for even there a hundred or so coolies occasionally leave you *en bloc*.'

The most interesting encounter at Mildura was with W B Lloyd, a trained electrical engineer in London before emigrating in the late 1880s after losing half a lung. At the start, Lloyd found work with his sole contact from the old country, Edward Balgarnie, on a pastoral lease near Winton Queensland, and then took a small lease himself only to be forced out in the great drought of 1895-1903. Office life in Sydney was not to his taste, so he took up a Mildura block developing it with impressive technical skill in water management, fruit culture and fruit drying. When his wife died their daughter went to her grandmother in London but the small son remained with him. In 1912, the eight-year-old boy played with friends in their own engineered irrigated kitchen garden. Lloyd father and son were afterwards Goulburn Valley settlers and then became specialist breeders of Southdown sheep.

Contributing on a different level was the young man TAH met at a Wentworth pub.

His father and grandfather were country doctors near Chester ... but the son had the idea of going to sea. After three years ... he deserted at Melbourne from a White Star liner & joined a bullocky going up to Kow Plains (in the north of Vic). On the way he nearly took his toe off with an axe, and when he came out of hospital worked his way up to a sheep station near Wentworth. A jolly boy who will probably never settle ... but will do a good deal of Australia's dirty work, & enjoy his life thoroughly.

Another Anglo variant was the engineer on one of the Darling boats who, as TAH somewhat ruefully reported,

... is simply mad on the single tax question & buttonholes me whenever he can ... He is a Liverpool man of Scotch parentage, so you can understand that he has some comprehension. Rather ludicrous, that I should come up the Darling to learn the single tax question ... he was one of those to start the 1st single tax league in Victoria—at Echuca.

Ideas about politico-economics were not absent from rural Australia. The distinctive Scottish element in Anglo-Celtic culture calls for further investigation.

The letters contain much more about the boat crew, passengers and locals

that TAH met on his Darling excursion, which concluded with an overnight coach ride from Wilcannia to Cobar, a much tamer train journey from Cobar to Sydney, and a couple of weeks on a pastoral station near Glen Innes, owned by the same Edward Balgarnie who had befriended W B Lloyd. I will finish with TAH's depiction of two passengers on the boat from Murray Bridge to Renmark, because it has lasting resonance about the Australian character. One man with

a maximum of collar & gold *pince nez* ... posed as representing the Federal Shearing Co, but we found out that he was from a small business in Adelaide and that he was going as cook on a shearing station! We dropped him & his gold *pince nez* & bowler hat & assistant at a lonely station yesterday afternoon. We also had a shearer on board, and this set him talking. He was a most polished man & would have graced any business house. His city dress put mine to shame ... & he is staying at this 8/- hotel. He starts a cycle ride of 200 miles tomorrow, with a modest little swag on the back carrier. Of course he knows Wilcannia & Bourke & "The Hill" [Broken Hill]. His yarns about the roughness of the shearing stations are pretty thick. He ... expresses himself moderately ... with a minimum of interjections & adjectives ... [but then] sighed & said quietly "and then they wonder why we --- agitate!" His claims were moderate:- a bit of tucker if you arrived after a few hundred miles a day before roll call, mattresses of fresh cocky chaff (they have bare boards at present) and bath rooms (which they already have at the mines) ... He was very impressed by the rosy picture painted by a settler at the Berri Berri irrigation settlement & is seriously considering settling ... here somewhere, and bringing up his wife from Adelaide. He ... would like to be his own master. True Australian! ... These irrigation settlements are ... where a man can be his own master, for 10 acres will bring in £600 in the 3rd year!

From a later encounter at Wentworth, TAH learnt that the shearer was in fact a 'travelling representative of the AWU' who had cycled from woolshed to woolshed despite 'terrible roads' limiting his daily journey to 25 miles. Whether this 'True Australian' achieved his ambition to be his own master makes an intriguing speculation. The Hewitt letters offer many particular insights into the multi-faceted nature of a continually evolving Australian identity.

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- ¹ Donald & Myfanwy Horne, *Dying: A Memoir*, 2007, Viking, Camberwell, Vic., p 109.
- ² 'History' in *Essays of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (orig. 1841), Worlds Classics edn 1906, Oxford University Press, p 5.
- ³ D. Horne, *Looking for Leadership*, 2001, Viking Books, Penguin, p 236ff.
- ⁴ My references are to the 1965 second edition 'revised and enlarged', but Chapter 2 was unchanged.
- ⁵ See C B Schedvin, *Shaping Science and Industry, A history of Australia's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research 1926-49*, Allen & Unwin Australia Pty Ltd, Sydney, 1987; AH Brogan, *Committed to Saving Lives: a History of the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories*, Hyland House, Melbourne, 1990.
- ⁶ Grayson Carter, 'Noel, Baptist Wriothsesley (1799-1873)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004
[<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20231>, accessed 16 October 2014]



LUCKY FOR SOME MAINTAINING A SENSE OF SEPARATE CELTIC ORIGINS AND BELIEFS IN A PERIOD OF MULTICULTURALISM IN AUSTRALIA

Let us start by quoting from Horne's long-term target Robert Gordon Menzies. 'We human beings are easily enslaved by language. A few words suitably grouped into a slogan or catch-cry may acquire such a flashy attractiveness that they are easily mistaken for an entire philosophy.'¹ Donald Horne always claimed that his use of 'lucky country' was ironic but many migrants before him had extolled the qualities of life in Australia. It was a common *topos* in the speeches delivered in Caledonian society celebrations in town and country down to the First World War to promote the virtues of Australia alongside the memories of Celtic tradition. Douglas Pike, in 1962 writing of Australia's destiny had already used the symbolism of a fun-fair and the idea of the lucky dip as his symbol for the course of Australia's early history.²

Those who have written about Australian history since 1788 have tended to present a single, British cultural tradition so that the coming of multiculturalism focuses on changes to what is accepted as a common set of beliefs and expectations that created an Australian identity.³ Without considering the many other ethnic groups that were well established by 1964 my purpose here is to identify the different strands in that 'single' tradition and in particular to dispute James Jupp's claim that what he dismisses as 'the Celtic enclaves' had been culturally swamped by the English.⁴ This is a view that even the recent Governor of New South Wales, Marie Bashir doubts as she remembers her upbringing in Narrandera.⁵

The ship *David Clark* brought a load of Scottish assisted migrants to Australia 175 years ago. They were families—and one can believe that their expressions and gestures, expectations and hopes, the things that made them comfortable with one another and strangers to others—would have distinguished them from the free and convict people they landed amongst. They were amongst the foot soldiers of the Scottish Diaspora, a diaspora that people before the First World War saw as critical to the spread of ideas, of ‘a state of mind, a way of viewing the world and our place in it’ that are basic to western democracy.⁶ It has even been argued that the Scots invented the Modern World.⁷

My purpose in this paper is to consider some aspects of the second part of Horne’s assertion about the lucky country, looking at the rulers and at the people who elected them, starting with the position 50 years ago when Horne first wrote and the way in which the longer established Celtic ethnic groups, with their distinctive cultural practices, adapted to the appearance of other different incoming groups. It ends more or less at the present. I am looking only at Celtic self-perception, not at the even more complex issue of the perception of others. It is in part inspired by Ken McGoogan’s more detailed analysis of the Scots in Canada where although they were only 15–16 per cent of the population they contributed more than half the Fathers of Confederation and 13 of the 22 prime ministers.⁸ Their influence, he argues was so pervasive as to be invisible.

At the same time, in Australia, the Scots maintained a clear sense of a separate identity.⁹ Although, as Tom Devine pointed out, as the nineteenth century went on Irish, both catholic and protestant, Lithuanians, Italians Jews and even English were migrating into Scotland itself producing culture clashes there, it was not producing a combined tradition to import to Australia.¹⁰

The Celtic Tradition in 1964

I fear it is impossible to remove the tag of ‘English’ from the discussion of post-colonial Australian history. After all, the African born Simon Gikandi, (whose work in which he argues that the colonial identity was crucial to the

identity of the mother country could be critical to our analysis) works in a department of English and uses *Maps of Englishness* as his symbolic definition.¹¹ Nevertheless, classing the majority of Australians in 1964 as 'Anglo-Celtic' suggests a merged identity but there were very real continuing cultural differences between those of English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh descent. As other commentators have observed, the Celts were over-represented in settler societies so that potential for tension existed and the likelihood of attitudes to the new country not shared with the more 'class' conscious English.¹² It can be argued that with the focus on multiculturalism and on Asian arrivals, despite books like Patrick O'Farrell's *The Irish in Australia*, which argues that the Irish were a dynamic factor in our history, a constant galvanizing force, this blind spot remains common.¹³ The Scots too, even if, as Malcolm Prentis sees them, 'invisible immigrants', were a vital ingredient in the development of an egalitarian and democratic Australia.¹⁴

One of the things that helped keep them distinct was language—at the time of Federation Scottish and Irish Gaelic made up the largest ethnic language in Australia. There were a significant number of Welsh and Cornish speakers, indeed as Cornish was revived in Cornwall, Cornish speakers in South Australia contributed to the debate. Less identifiable but equally important was the Lowlands Scottish and Irish dialect that was only deceptively like English and which contributed to some of the distinctive features of Australian language and culture.

It should perhaps be noted in passing that other ethnic groups were also airbrushed out. These included Germans, who had gone to South Australia from 1839 onwards and who in 1900 constituted 10 per cent of the population of that colony, many of whom still spoke German and used it in their schools, and Italians, all of whom had quietly contributed to the culture.¹⁵ The Chinese too, 30,000 of them in 1900, had language and attitudes that distinguished them from the English but contributed to the wider culture.¹⁶

Horne's Objectives

These were peripheral matters to Donald Horne in 1964. He briefly praised

the people of Australia with the comments that they were ‘adaptable’, ‘fulfilling their aspirations’ and ‘developing a style’. He wrote of religious strife without reflecting on the impact of the wave of new Italian immigrants on a community influenced by a deeply hierarchical church. He seems to have largely accepted the myth of Australian identity, its classlessness (in contrast to the British ‘stratified society with a fairly powerful Establishment’) ¹⁷ the egalitarian, she’ll do, mateship propaganda without discussing where the egalitarianism had come from.

His focus was on other things. Decisions were being made that were to determine the course of Australia’s future for the next 50 years especially the decision Menzies had already taken in the 1950s about Maralinga and the one Holt was about to take about Pine Gap—decisions that were to tie Australia (and still tie it) to a semi-dependent permanent support for British and USA politics. Aspirations to global independence for a country with a large area and a small population may have been and may remain unrealistic. As Defence Minister, Stephen Smith, recently admitted on 26 June 2013 ‘the facility at Pine Gap provides Australia a world class capability which we could not independently develop’. ¹⁸ How far this matters in a transnational age is another matter.

In 1964 Horne was engaged in promoting, along with others, a view of Australian history that would assist changes to Australian politics, especially a move to republicanism, pressure to increase intellectual life and culture in Australia and to see an end to the White Australia policy. As a man who thought that Australia should become a republic Horne paid no attention to the fact that the Australian republican tradition was developed not by Englishmen but by a Scot, John Dunmore Lang, and two Irishmen, Charles Harpur who has been described as the best Australian poet of the 19th century, and Daniel Henry Deniehy. ¹⁹

In attacking the lack of vision in those who ‘ran the country’ Horne chose to ignore what might be seen as worthy achievements—benefits including such things as minimum working hours, widows’ pensions, maternity allowances, funeral benefits, and unemployment and sickness benefits. Many of these were legislated by Celts, men like Andrew Fisher (born in Ayrshire).

Parliamentary reforms in banking, industrial safety, workers' compensation, land and employment, a graduated income tax, control of monopolies and state ownership of certain enterprises were pushed through by John Curtin whose Irish descent influenced his approach to politics.²⁰ Whichever side of politics they represented, Celtic politicians had tended to support ideas such as women's rights, equal-pay, to promote youth education and employment and to advocate the extension of the basic wage to Aboriginal workers. Cultural background was of course only one of the factors shaping the approach of the politicians that Horne decried, but it was not insignificant. If one runs through the list of the Prime Ministers from 1901 to 1964 it reveals there were two English, two Welsh, six Irish and three Scots; not exactly an English majority. More than their representative share were Celtic in origin. Ideas that were primarily Scottish, Irish, Welsh or Cornish can be seen in most of them.

State governments varied, from the paradise of dissent that was South Australia to the business venture that eschewed high democratic ideals that was Queensland.²¹ These dramatic differences²² may be partly accounted for by very different expectations of state government held by different ethnic groups. The possibilities, or problems, in the work of more local government people were not examined by Horne or anyone else although in writing of the South Sydney Junior Leagues Club he missed an opportunity to consider it.²³

The different contributions of ethnic groups at state level were noticeable. Queensland was very Celtic. Of the 28 Queensland premiers only eight were English.²⁴ Of the 38 Victorian premiers down to 1964 more were identifiable as Celtic in origin than English.²⁵ Tasmania had started with English premiers but as time passed more and more were Irish and Scots.²⁶ The balance in New South Wales was more towards the English.²⁷

South Australia however was dramatically different. Of the 38 premiers all were English except two Scots, four Cornish and one Irish.²⁸ Perhaps the relatively high level of family relationships amongst the parliamentarians helps explain it.

Western Australia was also different, a number made no claims to be other

than Australian born and bred.²⁹

Cultural background of course did not dictate political approach—the Celtic premiers came from all corners of the political spectrum but it can be suggested that their origins gave them some distinct assumptions. At the lower level of MPs the numbers of Celts seems if anything to increase and to form a network. For example, in Sydney, the president of the Legislative Council, Sir John Hay, (1816-1892) was also president of the Highland society and five of its seven vice presidents were also Scottish MPs.³⁰ Similar institutions elsewhere had the same sort of links.

Horne stressed in derogatory terms not only politicians but also the Canberra bureaucrats who had a ‘tendency to look down on the rest of Australia as crude, self-interested, troublesome and ignorant’.³¹ It is a hard definition of the ‘seven dwarfs’ whose individual enthusiasm for Aboriginal advancement, scientific research and women’s rights made a big difference to at least some aspects of Australian society. These were the second rate people who by the appearance of the fifth edition in 1998 were still destroying the real potential of the country although by then, the ‘bureaucrats’ were quite different people with quite different attitudes and motives.

Populate or Perish

The critical domestic political problem in 1964 was population. The shift that was to lead to the abandonment of the White Australia policy in the 1970s had started twenty years before when Arthur Calwell (of Irish descent) made his important speech to parliament in August 1945 extending to all parts of Europe the Government’s funding of migration. It raised issues of citizenship that had not previously worried Australians. In 1948 the Federal parliament had passed the Nationality and Citizenship Act, an Act that established Australian citizenship for the first time.

In 1949 the unfamiliar naturalisation ceremonies whereby aliens became citizens were carefully orchestrated. The first in Canberra which was broadcast to the nation and attended by the Prime Minister and Calwell had seven, one representing each state and different nationalities—a Greek (Victoria), a Spaniard (Queensland), a Dane (New South Wales), a

Frenchman (South Australia), a Norwegian (Tasmania), a Yugoslav (Western Australia) and a Czech (Commonwealth Territory).³² An Australian passport was still apparently issued as if to a British citizen. Australia's passport dropped 'British' from its cover in 1967, and after 1984 became a badge of a national identity for an increasingly multi-ethnic country.³³ This raised the question of identity for Celts—were you a Welshman living in the empire as your fathers had before you or had you discarded that *persona*?

In 1944 John Curtin had clearly seen no distinction between those of British descent living in the United Kingdom and those living elsewhere when he claimed that

We shall hold this country and keep it as a citadel for the British speaking race and as a place where civilisation will persist ... [and] Australian people are a replica of Britain and the way of life in Britain ... a British community as trustees for the British way of life.³⁴

By the 1970s Australians saw themselves as different although writers like Horne still maintained the curious belief that there was a single British way of life.

This has remained an obsession in academic debate. For most of the 21st century global shifts in the residence of ethnic groups have led to increasingly anxious analysis of the relationship between national identity and the passport³⁵ and attempts to preserve the more distant cultural traditions that people still value.³⁶

Horne and Australian Identity in 1964

That the distinctive strands of Celtic culture had contributed to the creation of what was claimed to be an Australian identity (and was certainly not purely British) and that they arguably were the source for the particular democratic approach which was apparent in Australian institutions was, and remained, unimportant to Horne. His assumption of a single tradition, distorts the starting point for the changes encapsulated in the movement to 'multiculturalism' that was to be promoted as a means of permitting longstanding different races to live together in relative harmony. By ignoring the rivalry between Scots and English and the bitterness of the Irish towards

the English, which might have some significance in the creation of a society in which toleration was a requirement he lost an opportunity to investigate how integration was already working in 1964 and how far even long established groups had maintained their particular domestic and familial behaviour.

There was a long survival of a distinctive Scottish sub-culture³⁷ and characteristics that reinforced other Celtic cultural distinctions such as the maintenance in the Irish community of traditions of marrying in. Indeed, one might recognise that an indirect way for the non-British to assimilate might be to claim a Celtic link as one can see from a piece that the Australian war poet, of Hungarian descent, Leon Gellert³⁸ wrote in 1950. Intended to entertain, it makes nonetheless a serious point. He gives an account of revelries in the rooms of the Lower Burran Avenue Scottish Society and how not being able to claim a clan he is allowed to start a new one. 'And of course a Scotsman is, after all, a Scotsman and we live or fall by it. We are loyal to the members of our clan and we are true to the glorious heritage of our homeland. But his lineage must be impeccable'—as he goes on to explain how his neighbours are now Mr. MacLukas, Mr. MacFrith, Mr. MacLevi, Mr. MacIsaacs, Mr. MacWetterspoon, and Mr. MacAbrahams.³⁹ All of whose wives have, of course, their own family recipe for the haggis.

Although Horne included a chapter on the new Australian migrants and the contribution that they had already made to Australia, his representation of who originally constituted Australians and Australian political culture continues in the arguments recently expressed by Miriam Dixon in *The Imaginary Australian: Anglo-Celts and Identity, 1788 to the Present* published in 1999 where she consigns the Irish culture to a dated sideline, an irrelevancy that will be absorbed by the 'core culture', and to Stuart MacIntyre's *Concise History* where religious conflict is largely ignored. As David Dutton, discussing citizenship has remarked this effacing of Anglo-Irish tension and other sectarian divisions misrepresents the reality.⁴⁰

The subject has not been clarified in the recent global debates on citizenship and its values and responsibilities. This largely passes over issues of ethnicity. It is focused on whether citizens should be seen as 'passive

recipients or as actors in their own cause' and how far identity comes into play in determining what is a citizen.⁴¹

Menzies and the Idealism of the 1960s

In *The Death of the Lucky Country* and in later editions of *The Lucky Country* and other works Horne identified Menzies as the 'patron saint' of the flawed Australian rulers although Menzies shared many of his ideas such as the need for 'a few uncommon men. Great rulers Prime Minister, Presidents, ministers of state, must be men who are above the ordinary. A greater democratic parliament must provide the leaders of the people, not merely an average reflection of a fleeting popular will.' Menzies also thought 'When the war is won, for every hundred boys and girls who now pass into higher schools and universities there must be a thousand. Lack of money must be no impediment to bright minds'. Is this not the intellectual development that Horne hoped for?

Menzies however was a deeply controversial person, mostly unpopular with those on the left like Manning Clark. Even so, the *Sydney Morning Herald* that had fallen out with Menzies on numerous occasions when he died wrote

Robert Gordon Menzies was the greatest of our politicians ... He changed his country. He took most of the ideology out of its politics. With great skill and with some stealth he brought his party to the centre of the road and kept it there, retaining and developing, however imperfectly, a welfare state within a free enterprise economy. He did more for Australia's standing abroad than any other statesman ... For his natural gifts, his record of success, his moral courage and the extraordinary contradictions surrounding him, he will be remembered as the most remarkable leader we have seen.⁴²

We must remember that he was a Scot, willing to boast of it and to promote Scottish characteristics 'which endure, which the world values and which mankind needs'. He thought that 'the independence of the sons and grandsons of Caledonia would be important for the development and growth and stability of society in the future'.⁴³ Certainly a traditionalist but one who thought about who were Australians, as he said in his speech on the forgotten people:

... salary-earners, shopkeepers, skilled artisans, professional men and women,

farmers and so on. These are, in the political and economic sense, the middle class. They are for the most part ... the backbone of the nation.⁴⁴

They were, in short, the typical mainly urban Scottish migrants listed in the ship's manifests, the jewellers, gardeners, miners, clerks, shopkeepers, printers, publishers, bakers, butchers, cooks, barbers, saddlers, wigmakers and portrait painters.

Did Horne feel perhaps that he was amongst those whom Menzies went on to attack as people who

... discourage ambition, ... envy success, ... have achieved superiority, ... distrust independent thought, ... sneer at and impute false motives to public service—these are the maladies of modern democracy, and of Australian democracy in particular. Yet ambition, effort, thinking, and readiness to serve are not only the design and objectives of self-government but are the essential conditions of its success.⁴⁵

Menzies' ideas were moulded by a Scottish tradition. When Menzies wrote of democracy he noted 'it is a spirit. It is based upon the Christian conception that there is in every human soul a spark of the divine; that, with all their inequalities of mind and body, the souls of men stand equal in the sight of God.' John Knox and George Buchanan would rise from their graves to applaud. Menzies was also well aware of the ethnic differences between the British. He said:

Take three people from one or more of which most of us have sprung. 'Scots have a dry, pawky wit, as a rule solemnly pronounced and full of a lingering after flavour. They have a rare quality of delivering their best shafts at themselves, and are the authors of most of the anti-Scottish tales. The Irish have an iridescent wit, light and buoyant. They have what to many people is an almost incomprehensible quality of being angry and amused at the same thing at the same time. But they do not, as a rule, joke about themselves. The Englishman, to the outsider, is a matter-of-fact, commercial fellow, with an unemotional face and an unadventurous mind. This is a shallow picture. True, he has as a rule very little merely verbal wit, though the moment you say so the ghosts of a dozen Birkenheads will come to vex you. But he has—and I now speak of the average man—a deep, chuckling humour, which is of the very stuff of his character, and one of the secrets of his mastery.'

The Celts in Pre-1964 Australian Society

In 1950, there were 123 Scottish societies in Australia and 70 Highland Pipe Bands.⁴⁶ Scottish celebrations on St Andrews day had started in Sydney by at

least 1804 when the Gazette recorded their less admirable aspects.⁴⁷ These associations organised a variety of activities, including aid for ill or widowed Scots, social gatherings, sporting meets, and concerts. The ritual of the meetings on St Andrews day were highly formalised and always included if not an account of Bannockburn then at least a toast that included it. Scots were not allowed to forget the moment that, tradition asserted, liberty was established. From the start, they also included accounts and examples of Scots in Australia showing the same spirit of freedom of conscience and opposition to the trammels of tyranny.

Similar Irish groups—generally in associations called St Patricks associations—were in existence from at least the 1860s and could be found in every state. It is important to stress that these groups saw themselves as clearly distinguishable from the mainstream of British culture. They were able to participate in Australian politics without being challenged on the grounds of cultural difference being all British citizens but they maintained their own traditions.

Fifty Years of Population Change

The opening of Australia to migrants from Asia in the 1970s and the sudden rush of refugees from Vietnam which raised the numbers of Vietnamese in Victoria from 385 to over 12,000 in the five years between 1976 and 1981 raised in an acute form the question of assimilation. The newcomers inevitably clustered in particular areas where they could talk to one another, buy familiar goods and practice their culture. The differences in their traditions and their rituals and ceremonies led to anxiety. While some aspects of the essentials that were common to Buddhism and Confucianism duty, loyalty, honour, filial piety, respect for age and seniority, and sincerity were not too dissimilar from Christian ideas, personal freedom and independence in Australian terms were difficult as the individual is seen as secondary to the group—whether the family, school or company.

The government started to put money into incorporating the different new groups into a law abiding Australian society. The needs of the continuing inflow of those with a Celtic background were not seen as requiring such

funding. After all they spoke English and it was assumed they would slip seamlessly into a not-unfamiliar Australian way of life. This was the moment when established Australians of Celtic origin started to fear that all they stood for would be pressed into ideas about 'the mainstream' and a widespread movement to preserve their distinct individuality and their separate role in the creation of 'Australia' began. Older minority groups, including the Chinese, also began to take steps to maintain and foster their links and the heritage in which they took pride. If as Benedict Anderson claimed our common identity has to be 'imagined' rather than experienced they sought to preserve their 'imagined' inclusion as the founders of the Australian identity.

Government and Multiculturalism

Focus on integrating new cultures inevitably led to disagreement about the best things to do. Consultants were called in (and mopped up a lot of the money). Should \$60,000 be spent on a Geoffrey Robertson 'Hypothetical' on Multiculturalism and the law? Or on Burson and Marsteller Pty Ltd, who claim to assist when the stakes are high and during any period of fundamental change or transition? They received \$370,487 'to assist in the launch and marketing of the National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia'.⁴⁸ The campaign to promote multiculturalism was duly launched in 1982 with a booklet by Professor Jerzy Zubrzycki, arguing for equal responsibility, commitment and participation.⁴⁹

Amongst the questions bitterly debated were: should Asian languages be taught in primary schools? Would this (somehow) threaten multiculturalism? Could these people become 'dinkum Aussies'? The RSL thought not; but some spoke up to claim they already were; that they shared the qualities required.

... "dinkum Aussie", I thought, is one who is hospitable, ready to help those in need, ready to share when times are difficult, ready to accept someone on his own merits and to understand the beliefs and customs of others.⁵⁰

None of this was particularly relevant to the Celts and they largely refrained from participating, retreating to their well-established centres. Their position was occasionally at issue. In October 1983, for instance, Donald Horne spoke to the Institute of Multicultural affairs enthusiastically

arguing that people from the British Isles were just another ethnic group and that Anglocentricity was dangerous. Michael Kirby rebuked him for holding 'old-fashioned views'. Kirby suggested that the whole idea of tolerance that led people from war-ravaged Europe to come to Australia was 'precisely because we could offer them the stability of British-type parliaments, the independence of the British-type judge and the respect for individual rights which is the fundamental distinguishing feature of English-speaking societies.'⁵¹

Did the government efforts produce good results? Economist Stephen Rimmer in a book called *The Cost of Multiculturalism* thought the whole system was an economic disaster. The president of the Australian chamber of commerce thought multiculturalism 'a dangerously misguided policy which had resulted in social divisions between new Australians and longer-term residents'.⁵²

One problem was the perceived importation of racial quarrels into the country. While the divisions between the Celts over religion had largely been abandoned fighting between Macedonians and Croatians, Yugoslavs and others suggested that harmony was still some distance away.⁵³

Multiculturalism became a program that newer arrivals amongst the ethnic groups could exploit while the older groups, especially the Celts, found the terms on which grants could be obtained effectively excluded them. Migrants of European background only slowly rose to the political forefront and participating as MPs was evidently not high in their priorities. Not until 1988 did New South Wales have its first European premier—Nick Greiner, born in Hungary. The many Europeans who came to be politically influential, evidently preferred to do it from the sidelines of parliament which made them none the less powerful and some were outstanding before Horne wrote. Some individuals of recent Celtic background—Julia Gillard for example—continued to be important in politics, but more leaders described themselves simply as Australian.

The long established, primarily state based Irish and Highland societies, largely avoided any participation in the bitter disagreement over multiculturalism. The Aisling societies in the different states, made their

objectives plain. The Melbourne Society in the 1940s aimed ‘to keep alive among Irish people a knowledge of the past, a pride in their heritage and a hope for the future ... desire to place Ireland and her culture, and her relationship with Australia, at the forefront of Australian consciousness’ and drew in members from many professions and trades. They quietly maintained their links to people in many different professions, but especially the law and tried to attract new migrants from their original homelands. The Sydney society founded in 1954, did the same. Specialist Societies, such as the Scottish Gaelic Society of Victoria, which had been founded in 1905 to keep the language and its music known, found an upsurge in interest in learning the language. The formation of cultural associations had long been a crucial way in which communities maintained and fostered cultural traditions. Commonly their objects include such things as:

- To foster taste for all (insert the relevant name, for example Irish) culture, including music and sport.
- To promote brotherhood and good fellowship amongst its members.
- To provide advice and assistance to (insert the relevant name, for example Scottish) folk from overseas.

New societies arose as specific needs were identified. In 1986 Irish-born business people in Australia established the Lansdowne Club to assist and ‘to introduce them to the fantastic Irish business network developed by its members over the last 26 years’.⁵⁴ In 1995 Peter Gray spoke of keeping ‘alive that Irish cast of mind, or as it has truly been described, that Irish genius, which has proven so vital in Australia’s journey towards its own mature individuality, a journey now gathering pace’. A man like Gray followed so many others in finding no conflict between loyalty to Australia and commitment to, in his case, ‘the heart of the kingdom itself, Knocknagoshel, one of the nations of the earth’. In contradistinction to Horne, he claimed ‘the *uncompromising* pursuit of excellence, [was] coupled with the assumption that that is the natural and appropriate way for an Irish-based society to go about its affairs’.⁵⁵

The Celts, setting aside their own differences, got together in Celtic

Councils to help reiterate the stories of their people, the literature and music, dance and theatre, myth and history that had made them what they were. Associations to preserve the Australian sites of the different Celtic heritages also appeared. New monuments to provide a focus were erected—the standing stones at Glen Innes and the Cairn at Mossman—erected in time for the bicentenary with a stone from every Scottish parish.

All of this ran alongside the movement for republicanism in the early 1990s that seemed to involve Australia redefining itself in the interests of independence and abandoning the old ‘national type’ as a myth that resulted from discrimination against Aborigines and women, oppression and imperialism.⁵⁶ The optimistic view was that a republic would mean the incorporation of the best of the entire non-Anglo heritage. The pessimists thought that multiculturalism on the contrary was ‘blowing Australians apart into ethnic groups’ (or in other letters to the papers ‘ghettos’) creating a tribal system ‘completely foreign to our way of life’.⁵⁷

At the beginning of the 21st century 22 per cent of the Australian population was overseas born, 20 per cent were the children of migrants, the highest immigration proportion of any developed country except Israel. This was not only a rise from the 16.9 per cent in 1961 but a distinct shift in the place of origin of the incomers. The balance has not changed much since then. Overseas writers in 2000 saw this as a unique Australian problem and the loss of the ability to appeal to a sense of shared ethnic heritage. Hence, it seemed multiculturalism.⁵⁸ This however did not become universally accepted and the vision of newcomers as a threat to national identity (however now defined) and security remained powerful.⁵⁹ There is still a dominance of those of British origin in the country even though there are many success stories from the incoming Asian communities.⁶⁰ And the Celtic societies, with assistance from the embassies and consulates of their nations, but largely without access to Australian government funds, are still struggling to maintain their independent traditions.

Conclusions

The debate over Horne’s arguments goes on as the popularity of different

approaches waxes and wanes.⁶¹ In 2006 Ken Turner and Michael Hogan edited a book that provided a sympathetic account of a number of politicians who devoted themselves to genuine public service as they saw it.⁶² Indeed, overall the contributors suggest that New South Wales has been one of the best governed, most peaceful and most prosperous of societies over the past 150 years: a successful, working democracy. They do not claim that those they describe are first rate, instead they say they are ‘unsung heroes’ individuals who took representing their constituents seriously.

Perhaps the most damaging recent destruction of Horne’s approach, however, is the current fashion for transnational history—world systems theory—ways in which past lives and events were shaped by processes that have crossed national boundaries so that local, regional, interregional, national, continental and global interact.⁶³ The attempt to write Australian history as important and distinct in itself, is seen as misguided. Those, on the other hand, who have since put more emphasis on the desirability of an open relatively classless people, most obviously Nick Cater, find the increase in an educated layer of society as fostering beliefs that are destructive of the community and likely to contribute to the reappearance of a class society.⁶⁴

These approaches once again complicate the part ethnic groups are seen as playing in the various levels of the process. Meanwhile, alongside this, the many ethnically structured societies continue to maintain knowledge of their more traditional history by annual festivities, competitions, language and literature promotion and publications.

¹ <http://menziesvirtualmuseum.org.au/transcripts/the-forgotten-people/91-chapter-33-the-nature-of-democracy> retrieved 28 September 2014, Sydney, Adelaide.

² Douglas Pike, *Australia: The Quiet Continent*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1962, p 223.

³ See Richard White, *Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688–1980*, Allan and Unwin, Sydney, 1981, and Catriona Elder, *Being Australian, Narratives of National Identity*, Allan and Unwin 2007. It is perhaps ironic that 2014 is also the fiftieth anniversary of the internationally important department for this subject the

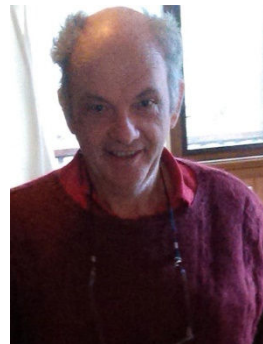
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- 'Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies', which was axed by that university in 2002.
- ⁴ James Jupp, *The English in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004, pp 104, 187-9.
 - ⁵ Oral communication to Celtic council 24 October 2014.
 - ⁶ See T M Devine, *To the Ends of the Earth: Scotland's Global Diaspora, 1750-2010*, Penguin, UK, 2011.
 - ⁷ Arthur Herman, *How the Scots Invented the Modern World and everything in it*, Crown Publishing Group a division of Random House, New York, 2001.
 - ⁸ Ken McGoogan, *How the Scots invented Canada*, Harper Collins, Toronto, 2010.
 - ⁹ A James Hammerton, "'We're not Poms": the shifting identities of Scottish Migrants to Australia', ch 9 in Angela McCarthy (ed), *A Global Clan: Scottish Migrant Networks and Identity Since the Eighteenth Century*, I B Tauris, London and New York, 2006.
 - ¹⁰ T M Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000*, Penguin, UK 2001, chapter on the New Scots; see also Murray Watson, *Being English in Scotland*, Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 2003.
 - ¹¹ Simon Gikandi, *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996.
 - ¹² John Griffith, *Imperial Culture in Antipodean Cities, 1880-1939* Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, New York, 2014 pp 8,10.
 - ¹³ Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney, 1986, rev. 3rd ed. 2001.
 - ¹⁴ Malcolm David Prentis, *The Scots in Australia*, University of NSW Press, Sydney, 2012, p 286.
 - ¹⁵ Gordon Young, 'Early German Settlement in South Australia', *Australian Historical Archaeology*, vol 3 1985; W D Borrie, *Italians and Germans Historical Archaeology*, vol 3, 1985; W D Borrie *Italians and Germans in Australia : A study in Assimilation* Cheshire, Melbourne, 1954; R J Hauser, *The Patriarchs: A History of Australian Lutheran Schooling 1839-1919* Doctor Zed Publishing, 2009; Desmond O'Connor, *No Need to be Afraid: Italian Settlers in South Australia Between 1839 and the second world war*, Wakefield Press, South Australia, 1996.
 - ¹⁶ John Fitzgerald, *Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia* UNSW Press, 2007 pp 28-9
 - ¹⁷ Richard Hoggart, *Speaking to each other: About society*, vol 1, Chatto & Windus. London, 1970, p 140.
 - ¹⁸ Hansard (Australia) Wednesday, 26 June 2013 p 7071

- ¹⁹ David John Headon, Elizabeth Perkins, eds *Our First Republicans: John Dunmore Lang, Charles Harpur, Daniel Henry Deniehy*, Selected Writings, 1840-1860, Federation Press, Sydney, 1998.
- ²⁰ See his biography in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*
- ²¹ John Wanna, Tracey Arklay, *The Ayes Have It: The History of the Queensland Parliament 1957-1989*, ANU e Press, 2010, p10.
- ²² Chisholm also calculated this and came up with slightly different answers. At least 25 Premiers, and a host of other ministers in Victoria and Queensland, in particular, have 'specialized' in Caledonian leadership. Aside from the over-all figure for Victoria (and Premier John Allan claimed in 1924 that 12 of his 27 predecessors were Scots), the Premiership from 1883 to 1890 was held by three Scots in succession, and had an Irishman and an Englishman not inconsiderately intervened the line would have stretched out (through another Scottish Premier) to 1900. As for Queensland, in its first 50 years of government that area had 25 Ministries, and no fewer than 12 of those were led by men from Scotland All my figures are taken from the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entries.
- ²³ Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country* Penguin Books, 5th ed, ch 1 'The Australian Dream', 1998.
- ²⁴ D J Murphy and R B Joyce, *Queensland Political portraits*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1978.
- ²⁵ Raymond Wright, *A People's Counsel. A History of the Parliament of Victoria, 1856-1990* Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992; Paul Strangio, Brian J Costar, (eds) *The Victorian Premiers, 1856-2006* Federation Press, Annandale, Sydney, 2006.
- ²⁶ F C Green (ed), *A Century of Responsible Government 1856-1956* Hobart, 1956.
- ²⁷ David Clune, Ken Turner eds *The Premiers of New South Wales, 1856-2005: 1856-1901* Federation Press, Annandale, Sydney, 2006.
- ²⁸ *Responsible Government in South Australia*, Volume 1, Wakefield Press, Adelaide, 2009.
- ²⁹ Gordon Stanley and Margaret R Oliver, *The Premiers of Western Australia 1890-1982*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, Western Australia, 1982.
- ³⁰ Prentis, *The Scots in Australia*, ch 11.
- ³¹ Horne, *The Lucky Country*.
- ³² <http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/captchaForm?target=ocr&ct=1411903047679> *West Australian* 28 January 1949.
- ³³ Jane Doulman and David Lee, *A History of the Australian Passport*, Federation Press, Annandale, Sydney, 2008, chapter 7.
- ³⁴ James Curran, *Curtin's Empire*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2011, p 115.
- ³⁵ For the Australian development see Doulman and Lee, *Australian Passport*.
- ³⁶ Starting perhaps from Wayne Hudson and John Kane, eds, *Rethinking Australian*

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- Citizenship*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000.
- ³⁷ Prentis, *The Scots in Australia*, ch 11.
- ³⁸ Gavin Souter, *A Torrent of Words: Leon Gellert: A Writer's Life: the autobiography of Australia's finest war poet*, first published Brindabella Press, Canberra, 1996, p 21.
- ³⁹ *Sunday Herald* 1 Jan 1950 p 2.
- ⁴⁰ David Dutton, *One of Us?: A Century of Australian Citizenship* University of NSW Press, Sydney, 2002, p 154.
- ⁴¹ Wayne Hudson, John Kane, eds, *Rethinking Australian Citizenship*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2000, p6.
- ⁴² *Sydney Morning Herald* May 20, 1978.
- ⁴³ Alec H Chisholm, *Scots Wha Hae, history of The Royal Caledonian Society of Melbourne*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1950, Introduction.
- ⁴⁴ Judith Brett Robert Menzies' *Forgotten People* Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2007; George Edgar Holt, in *Politics is People*, thought he 'had the most lucid and disciplined intellect in parliament, and...the best debater.' Angus and Robertson 1969, p106.
- ⁴⁵ www.liberals.net/theforgottenpeople.htm retrieved 28 Sept2014. Menzies suggested in the foreword to Chisholm that the 'prominence of the Scots depends on two characteristics: the sense of continuity which gives "pride in the past and a sense of responsibility for the future," and a spirit of independence which "is to-day in the twilight," because, unfortunately "we have learned to lean, to criticise, to expect, to see our neighbour's duty much more clearly than our own".'
- ⁴⁶ Chisholm, *Scots Wha Hae*.
- ⁴⁷ The first documented appearance of Caledonian societies in Victoria occurred after the discovery of gold—the Comunn Na Feinne in Geelong (1856), the Highland Society of Maryborough (1857), the Caledonian Society of Victoria (1858, reconstituted in 1884 as the Caledonian Society of Melbourne), and the Caledonian Societies of Ballarat (1858) and Bendigo (1859).
- ⁴⁸ *Canberra Times*, 4 Sept 1990, p 1.
- ⁴⁹ *Canberra Times*, 17 June 1982, p 10.
- ⁵⁰ *Canberra Times*, 17 Oct 1983, p 2.
- ⁵¹ *Canberra Times*, 9 Nov 1983, p 7.
- ⁵² *Canberra Times*, 25 Jan 1988, p 1.
- ⁵³ *Canberra Times*, 29 Nov 1988, p 8.
- ⁵⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Lansdowne-Club-Australia/130471816975671> retrieved 27 September 2014.
- ⁵⁵ www.dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/aisling_society retrieved 26September 2014.
- ⁵⁶ Graeme Turner, *Making it National: Nationalism and Australian Popular Culture*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, Sydney, 1994.

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- ⁵⁷ *Canberra Times* 22 September 1995, p 8.
- ⁵⁸ Gianni Zappala and Stephen Castles 'Citizenship and Immigration in Australia' pp 32-77, in Douglas B. Klusmeyer, Thomas Alexander Aleinikoff, eds *From Migrants to Citizens: Membership in a Changing World*, Carnegie Endowment For Universal Peace, Washington, 2000, pp 34-6.
- ⁵⁹ Stephen Castles, Elie Vasta and Derya Ozkul, 'Australia a classical Immigration Country in transition' pp128-152 in James Hollifield, Philip Martin, Pia Orrenius, eds *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective* 3rd ed Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2014.
- ⁶⁰ See Carolyn Ford, *Who Brought the Luck to the Lucky Country?: Great Australian Migrant Business*, Red Dog Books, Fitzroy Victoria, 2011.
- ⁶¹ See Graeme Turner, *What's Become of Cultural Studies?* Sage, London, 2012.
- ⁶² Ken Turner and Michael Hogan, eds, *The Worldly Art of Politics*, Federation Press, Annandale, Sydney, 2006.
- ⁶³ Hsu Ming Teo and Richard White, eds *Cultural History in Australia*, University of NSW Press, Sydney, 2003; Anne Curthoys, Marilyn Lake, (eds) *Connected Worlds: History in Transnational Perspective*, ANU Press, Canberra, 2005.
- ⁶⁴ Nick Cater, *The Lucky Culture and the Rise of an Australian Ruling Class* Harper Collins Publishers (Australia) Pty Ltd, Sydney, 2013.

JOY WALLACE
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IN SEARCH OF POETRY IN THE LUCKY COUNTRY

THE ARTS IN DONALD HORNE'S VISION OF 'AUSTRALIA IN THE SIXTIES'

VERSIONS OF THE 'AUSTRALIAN MIND'

Australia, Donald Horne wrote, was that unfortunate thing, 'a nation without a mind'.¹ Clearly he did not quite believe that, but his book levelled devastating accusations of mediocrity at the intellectual and bureaucratic elites of the day. Horne's *The Lucky Country* has rightly been recognised as an important book in the popular auto-critique of Australian political, social, and cultural life. Horne's journalistic background lent his work its tendency to swinging generalisations, populist controversial hooks, and genial combativeness. The book is better organised than most books of that kind, and he deepened his inquiries in subsequent books that he wrote, especially *The Next Australia*.² For all these reasons, fifty years later, whatever our criticisms, we still read and discuss this seminal work in Australian social and cultural self-criticism.

A year after the initial appearance of *The Lucky Country*, Horne augmented his text with further detail about Australian society. He wrote new chapters and bolstered accounts in existing ones. In 1965 another book of criticism was published, to rather less public notice, namely *Preoccupations in Australian Poetry* by the distinguished poet and critic, Judith Wright.³ Wright's book's ambit is narrower than Horne's, tracing the seam of Australian cultural self-awareness using the evidence of its literary works. Unlike Horne, whose

strengths lay in social and political commentary, Wright is a culturally sensitive commentator; where Horne spoke of a nation without a mind, she suggested a mind internally divided, between those who felt nostalgia for an ancestral European home and those who sought innovative roots in the new land. Wright's picture of the Australian mind is carefully historicised and particularised through a chronologically ordered analysis of poets and poems from the mid-nineteenth century through to the mid-twentieth century. She takes poetry as her example but argues that the case be made also for prose fiction. Whilst clearly distinguishing the two strains she finds—conservative and radical—she shows also how they interweave and make complex the development of poetry in Australia. As a result, her depiction of the Australian mind is very different from the static, one-dimensional phenomenon that Horne presents.

In this article, we bring these two varieties of criticism together, and do so in a kind of sympathetic critique of the book that Horne wrote. We recognise the Australia he criticised, and the contribution he made by offering the nation-changing commentary he did. In revaluing it, though, we use the works of Wright and some of her literary peers, like Vance Palmer and Eleanor Dark, to grasp aspects of his cultural politics, to resituate his contribution to our cultural life. We bring the work of these critics together, partially to offer a kind of completion to Horne's critique but also, to show what is missing from that kind of commentary. Horne's book had, and still has, the capacity to grab attention, to inflame debate, but in many respects it skews our view of what kinds of commentary are possible, and were possible, when he wrote it. The richness of Wright's commentary suggests that Horne's tendency to leave the arts—and poetry in particular—out of his sketch of the Australian mind distorts the picture he presents. For all that, while our search for the poetry that would have enriched Horne's account of the Australian mind proves elusive in *The Lucky Country* itself, we did manage to find it elsewhere in his writing and editing work. In the course of our exploration into Horne's writings before and after he wrote *The Lucky Country*, we found a deeper sympathy between journalist and poet than we had felt when we set out.

Horne: Political Order and Public Life

Horne opens his book with a series of apparently flattering images of Australian social and political life: it is socio-culturally egalitarian,⁴ wealthy,⁵ has universal suffrage,⁶ and is stable and open in its style.⁷ 'Why', he asks, 'write a book about such a happy country?'⁸ If the answers are now well known, it is worth citing his response in order to make clear that only those who did not read the book could have imagined he was writing a book of praise:

One reason is that in some ways it is not so happy: one can learn something about happiness by examining Australia—its lingering Puritanism, the frustrations and resentments of a triumphant mediocrity, and the sheer dullness of life for many of its ordinary people ... whatever intellectual excitement there may be down below, at the top the tone is so banal that to a sophisticated observer the flavour of democratic life in Australia might seem depraved, a victory of the anti-mind.⁹

This, Horne suggests, is hardly a country that can count itself 'happy' except in the basest sense. Horne is on the record as early as 1945 for the criticisms he makes of those 'second-hand cultural elites' he later lambasted in *The Lucky Country*.¹⁰ Horne's public advocacy itself played a role, as did his noteworthy intervention at *The Bulletin*, to remove the 'Australia for the White Man' banner, yet Horne, in accepting the editorial brief given him by Sir Frank Packer, was more a moderniser of the *Bulletin* than an anti-racist campaigner.¹¹

Making sense of Horne's contribution involves seeing how he himself grew as a cultural critic. Many assume nowadays that he was always a critic of the arts from the left side of politics. However, this is not the case. Early in his career he poured scorn on '*Meanjin's* callow flirtation with ... anti-capitalist vocabulary'.¹² Commentators just after the time of *The Lucky Country* perhaps saw this 'Donald Horne' in different ways from those we see nowadays. Indeed, John Docker's *Australian Cultural Elites*, written in the 1970s, launched a ferocious attack on Horne's views and his role in public life. Docker accused Horne of fostering 'the growth generally in Australia of the new or 'radical right', with specific attitudes to defence, Asia, and New Guinea', all of which, Docker contended, formed 'a dominant political orthodoxy in the 'fifties' period, 1949-1964'.¹³ Docker is also scathing about

what he says is Horne's role in falsely reifying and then demonising the power of the intellectual left of the day, especially its influence on government policy.¹⁴ Perhaps this view of Horne's work was reasonable in the period immediately following its impact, but there are good reasons to qualify it both because Horne's own views developed and because we now have a less foreshortened view of his great book than Docker and others of the time did.

Culture and History: Insight and Omission

Yet, despite the many felicities of his comments on politics, trade, Australia's relationships with its Asian neighbours and its treatment of its Indigenous peoples, Horne is weaker in his account of culture and history. In particular, he underestimates the psychological effects of World War II on Australians and the part the war years played in determining attitudes and tendencies in the post-war period that fed into the 'Australia in the Sixties' that he discusses in *The Lucky Country*. This ahistoricity manifests itself in the impression that he gives throughout *The Lucky Country* that the Australian mind is fixed and unchanging—and indeed that it was never actually in the process of development. Nowhere does this manifest itself more starkly than when he deals with the culture of the war years themselves.

We will in due course take up Judith Wright's very different interpretation of these war years, but even before we turn to her, we can show what we mean, through the case of the engaged novel, a phenomenon of the 1930s and 1940s, which not only presented current social issues but also futurities. The works of Dymphna Cusack, Katherine Prichard, M. Barnard Eldershaw, and Eleanor Dark stand out in this regard, and are part of a horizon of Australian self-interrogation. This context can be sketched in any number of ways, but it can be indicated by brief reference to Eleanor Dark's wartime work, *The Little Company*.¹⁵ This book, like others (and we think especially of Barnard Eldershaw here) portrayed an inadequate intellectual class epitomised by the patriarchal figure of Gilbert. Dark's apparent protagonist is paralysed by the war and unable to respond creatively. Dark shows him to be derivative and deceitful in his artwork, and his creative spark, if such it is, is only ignited once the war is over and once he has stolen his

leading idea from a writer for whom he acted as reader and whose work he condemned to oblivion. That the literati, both creative and in terms of commentariat, were inadequate is a dominant theme in Dark's book, yet it is itself an example of powerful self-critique.

Dark wrote during the years in which Australia was most threatened as a nation. In the second revised edition Horne himself cites Vance Palmer, but does so as if out of a vacuum. In the context of Australia under threat, Horne looks to Palmer as an exemplar of what good critical commentary should be:

What is the sense in there being an Australia at all? When it looked as if the Japanese might conquer Australia early in 1942 Vance Palmer wrote in *Meanjin*, 'The next few months may decide not only whether we are to survive as a nation, but whether we deserve to survive ... Australia ... has something to contribute to the world. Not emphatically in the arts as yet, but in arenas of action, and in ideas for the creation of that egalitarian democracy that will have to be the basis for all civilised societies in the future. That is the Australia we are called upon to save'. This was an unusual burst of rhetoric even in a wartime Australia that feared it might be destroyed.¹⁶

Horne has done well to locate this passage, but he does not really comment very well on it, talking instead about how Australia's laconic ability to deal with surprise and good fortune have so far kept the country in good stead. Yet Palmer's comments, brave in nature, were far from unique. Horne writes as if books like Dark's (and many others) did not exist, as if this conversation had not taken place. Instead, literary artists worried about the very value of Australia, its arts, and its culture even when it was under threat of decimation.

In our view, therefore, there is a real disconnect between Horne's rational analysis of World War II, on the one hand, and its effect on Australians, on the other—he knows what 'happened' in broad terms, particularly the turn from Britain to America as articulated in John Curtin's speech, which Horne cites—but he seem to have no understanding of what the war meant, psychologically, to Australians. In *The Lucky Country*, the material in Chapter 9 is particularly dismissive in this regard.

At this point, there is real value in drawing Judith Wright's work into our analysis for the first time. We might compare the beginning of Horne's

Chapter 9 with Wright's chapter on 'Poets of the 40s and 50s':

No doubt it was in part the stimulation of danger and of the war years that set off the burst of poetic activity of the early 'forties—which carried on until the end of the war, and beyond.¹⁷

Wright continues,

Perhaps that war was the last in which there will be time for poetry to seem important. The universal uprooting, the deprivation, and the sharpened sense of what this country had come to mean to its new, and hitherto spiritually divided, inhabitants, all combined to force out of us poetry that for the first time began to accept Australia not as a political ideal, nor as a makeshift home, but as the ground of our seeing and feeling. That is perhaps what is meant when it is sometimes said that during the war years and after, Australian writing "came of age". Of course, it had been adult enough long before, in Brennan and Neilson at least. But only now was Australia—its presentation to sight and hearing and feeling—taken as an absolute, not a relative, condition of our lives.¹⁸

Horne also trivialises the kinds of fear that creative intellectuals like Wright, or Eleanor Dark, experienced and expressed during the war. In many of the poems published in her 1946 volume, *The Moving Image*, as well as in her later criticism, Wright gives voice to the sense of dislocation of space and time that affected people—not only artists—during the war. There was also a special anguish for the artist. Deeper than the fear of threats to material security and national identity that Horne treats so lightly were the truly internationalist and existential fears about the future of civilisation itself and the horror of the artist's powerlessness in the face of—if not also implication in—global destruction. Veronica Brady notes that Wright and her partner, Jack McKinney (who had served in the trenches of WW1 and still suffered psychologically as a consequence) worried deeply that Australians were relieved at the bombing of Hiroshima, because it ended the war, instead of being appalled at what the bombing signified in terms of a perverted rationality.¹⁹

This case for the absence of historical perspective and the limitation the absence introduces into Horne's analysis is validated by what Horne himself says in *The Next Australia*. In the Preface explaining 'Why this is a New Book' instead of merely another edition of *The Lucky Country*, Horne says he has 'tried in the present book to give some broader, more historical perspectives'²⁰

and that by contrast

The Lucky Country was a kind of album of snapshots of how things seemed in the last years of The Age of Menzies ... It seemed an appropriate method at the time. It could be very misleading now. I have tried to open the subject out, point to other directions Australians have followed in the past, different from those that seemed set as hard as concrete in the Menzies era.²¹

Horne's views developed, and even if publishers and the public were intent on viewing him through the prism of *The Lucky Country*, his view of Australian culture and society developed in subsequent books. Nowhere is all this truer than in the field of the arts.

Horne on the Arts

The absence of history in *The Lucky Country* persists when Horne turns explicitly to the arts, where—if not the absence—the merely shadowy presence of all the arts is imbricated with the lack of any historical perspective on their making, of the kind Wright offers so richly in *Preoccupations in Australian Poetry*. Perhaps the greatest difference between Horne and Wright is that while Wright seeks to grasp the arts on their own terms Horne merely deploys them to aid his political argument. The charge of being 'misleading' that we saw Horne subsequently level at his treatment of history in his 1964 book could also be directed at his account of what the arts contributed to the Australia of the 1960s.

Of the creative arts, Horne singles out Australian film for scathing commentary. 'No one makes any feature films', he says.²² He cites the raw numbers of films as evidence, a basis which would make the Hindi film industry consistently larger than Hollywood.²³ But Horne follows the line of critics of the day that the Australian feature industry was stone dead, and as a result, he overplays the claim. After all, features such as *Jedda* (1955), *Walk into Paradise* (1956), and *The Sundowners* (1960) all came out in this period. While it is true that actors left because of a lack of local opportunity, and also that Hollywood was making films set in Australia, Horne himself swallowed the critical line of those he derides as 'knocking'.²⁴

In the other arts, as with film, Horne's observations skitter across the surface of what he discusses and are often inadequate. Few individual painters

are cited. An interesting, even peculiar, exception is the account of Russell Drysdale. Horne praises Drysdale, but does not use his own words to do so. Instead, he cites Max Harris whose words anticipate aspects of Wright's social comment on the arts:

There is no alienation in Drysdale's canvasses ... the loneliness is expressive of self containment, of a kind of inner quietness ... Drysdale feels, as does every bush dweller, complete identity with the landscape. This identity, the belongingness of man and environment, is the rich and rewarding return of the condition of Australian loneliness.²⁵

The passage goes on, but all Horne is able to do with it is offer a strange paraphrase in terms of a 'sudden desire for quiet' which is 'not shyness but a sense that this is all there is: man and his environment'.²⁶ And for Horne this is not 'what all the books promise' but there is 'a pattern in it, and an interest in it; and it's all there is'.²⁷ Now whatever it is Horne is trying to say that Harris is saying, we suggest this is a pretty inadequate grasp of the quite searching comment made by Harris (who, we should recall, brought Sidney Nolan to popular attention in the *Angry Penguins* debacle). That Harris's comment is probably itself a Romanticisation of the landscape is quite beside the point: Horne seems to have the capacity to find profound remarks on Australian culture, but he seems quite unable to interpret them.

This brings us to literature and drama. *The Lucky Country* shows only passing knowledge of Australian poetry (barely more than AD Hope), playwriting (repeated references to one play *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*), and even novels, with references mainly to Patrick White. At this time, Horne was actually the editor of *Quadrant*, but for all the literature he saw in that capacity, it seems little was worthy of inclusion in the *Lucky Country*'s cursory commentary. Instead, there are generalisations about literature and plays alike. Of the theatre, he remarks that

In Sydney or Melbourne at least one can usually see fairly quickly whatever is being talked about overseas, even if it is sometimes in an indifferent performance. There are fourteen theatres in Sydney, including the firmly established little theatres. The success of the *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* started demands for a renaissance in Australian drama, but renaissances are hard to organize. There have been five or six good plays put on since then, but this has not satisfied Australians, whose standards seem to be those of Shakespeare's London.²⁸

In this passage, Horne does not look at what the five or six plays reveal about Australia, instead attacking the general audience for its failure to take to the local fare.

In contextualising Horne's account of the culture of Australia in the 'sixties, however, we need to look beyond what he said about the arts in the pages of the book itself. In the next section, we glance both backwards and forwards in Horne's writing career, to suggest what knowledge and valuation of the arts he brought to writing *The Lucky Country*, and how his thinking developed afterwards.

Horne and *The Observer*

Horne wrote *The Lucky Country* from a position of considerable knowledge about Australian culture and history, even though he had himself been out of the country for some time after the war. From February 1958 until March 1961, he edited the fortnightly publication of Australian Associated Press, *The Observer*. This periodical was subsumed in *The Bulletin* when Horne took over the editorship of the latter. Horne edited *The Bulletin* during 1961-1963 and 1967-1972. During the interim years, and while he was writing *The Lucky Country*, he edited *Quadrant*.

It was suggested to us that *The Observer*, in particular, would provide valuable supplementary context for the material about the arts that appears in *The Lucky Country*.²⁹ A perusal of its pages certainly reveals a much more prominent place for the arts in Australian intellectual life, and a far broader and deeper historical perspective than we would suspect from the fairly brusque remarks in Horne's book. From the beginning to end of its life *The Observer* mounted a substantial 'Reviews' section, with coverage of theatre, film, exhibitions of art works, ballet and music. From the first number in February, 1958 to December, 1959, there was a separate section titled 'Books', starting with a page-length lead review and followed by a substantial number of shorter reviews. While in the later numbers, the 'Books' section was subsumed typographically into the 'Reviews' section and 'Books' given the same size heading as the other arts, the coverage of new books remained solid. Under Horne's stewardship *The Observer* makes a compelling case for the

importance of the arts to Australian intellectual life, making the comparatively slight treatment of the arts in *The Lucky Country* appears more, rather than less, puzzling.

The importance Horne gave to history and culture is reflected in the fact that in many numbers in the first year of publication, 1958, Horne himself wrote the longest lead article in the 'Books' section of the 'Reviews' and contributed the lead article in subsequent years when a book—often a historical study—was of particular interest to him. In terms of his editorial policy and what it suggests about his commitment to the arts as a vital component of the life of the mind, we should note that articles about Australian writers, in particular, quite often escaped the bounds of the 'Reviews' section and were given prominent place on the cover and as feature articles. On two separate occasions, in September, 1959 and in September, 1960, *The Observer* announced a series of articles devoted to Australian writers. In *The Observer*, from first to last, there is vigorous debate about the merits of individual writers and about 'Australian' writing and culture in general. Yet, despite the depth and breadth of coverage the pages of the periodical also reveal an ambivalence about the arts that goes some way to explaining what came later in his book.

A key to this ambivalence is provided in a feature article Horne wrote in 1958 called 'AD Hope: Portrait of an Un-Australian'.³⁰ We have seen already that Horne singles out Hope in *The Lucky Country* and virtually ignores other Australian poets. *The Observer* article reveals that Horne values Hope precisely because he finds in his poetry features atypical of Australian creative writing in general. This suggests that for Horne, there is good writing and not so good writing and that Australian creative writing in general falls into the second category. Further, in a review of Brecht's *The Threepenny Opera*, Horne reveals suspiciousness about literariness *per se* that seems premonitory of the lowly place creative arts are given in *The Lucky Country*.³¹ He was also clearly critical of Australian academic scholarship more generally. In his, 'Meeting Professor Manning Clark', he criticises the historian for making unwarranted generalisations about the Soviets based upon a mere three weeks' visit to the Soviet Union.³²

In such instances the ambivalence in Horne's work towards the Australian academy and the arts suggests a kind of reverse snobbery—a suspicion of the highbrow in which creative productions and academic commentary are readily conflated. In *The Lucky Country*, while he does not give much space to artists and writers or mention many of them, Horne does not attack poets or playwrights or painters themselves. Instead, he condemns the critical establishment, especially the academics, and finds universities empty of real commitment to intellectual endeavour and educational responsibility.³³

In the end, it becomes quite difficult to discern what kind of culture Horne does want to see. While he professes to dislike the highbrow, he also moves uneasily between a critique of Australian popular culture and a celebration of it. This pattern (with the benefit of retrospect) is typical of critical commentary of the time, especially in left-wing varieties of sociology and the yet-to-emerge cultural studies. Yet while Horne seems at times to stand with the ordinary folk against what he saw as second-rate political and cultural leadership, he is also at times dismissive of populist hedonism and thoughtlessness in cultural pursuits, broadly speaking.

Horne himself noticed some of these limitations to his account of the Australian mind, and sought to correct them. In the sequel to *The Lucky Country*, *The Next Australia* (published in 1970), Horne writes beneath the sub-heading, 'Breakthrough in the arts',

As yet the intellect may only be seeping through in Australia, but in the arts there has been a series of breakthroughs—at least by the test of military intelligence that there have been signs of increasing activity. (My division of the intellect from the arts is deliberate. In Australia the arts often share in other part of the nation's 'anti-intellectualism', and perhaps for the same reasons: creative artists in Australia have been more successful than the culture-learners in feeling their way towards a sense of the distinctive in their society.)³⁴

While these are somewhat baffling lines, they do suggest that he knew his earlier account had been inadequate, and they foreshadow the direction his work took afterwards.

Wright on Australian Poetry

We now turn back to Judith Wright's *Preoccupations in Australian Poetry*, for

a quite different analysis of Australian culture. Wright's account is valuable precisely because it admits the tendencies to derivativeness and stereotypical thinking that Horne deprecates, but seeks to understand this tendency historically and to argue for another, more optimistic and creative impulse. She suggests there are two tendencies that shade in and out of each other as successive generations of poets try to write poetry that feels authentic to the Australian experience. She shows that the hopeful strain in poetry that had started out by seeing Australia as new and exciting could harden rather quickly into the kind of hollow rhetoric that both she and Horne dislike. The great strength of Wright's approach is that she puts herself into the heart of the writers of the poems and understands the process by which the stereotypical thinking has come about. This empathy with the writing process also enables her to introduce subtle modulations into her schema of Australian culture. While in her Introduction, she isolates two tendencies as she works her way through a careful and perceptive reading of the chosen poets, she complicates the picture so that the resulting analysis reveals a cross-crossing of optimistic and pessimistic, conservative and reformist tendencies and also, isolates different sources of both pessimism and optimism. This offers us a much richer understanding than that afforded by Horne who does not pause to inquire into the different strains and influences that have informed thinking in Australia.

This, even in 1964, suggests that Horne's charge that the Australian mind is 'derivative' might be challenged. Such a charge trivialises the influence of tradition as something merely second-hand and imitative. Of course, the influence of tradition can deteriorate into parroting, as Wright acknowledges when she discusses the balladists, but she shows in the case of Brennan, for example, that he is alive to the broader European strands of thinking and that the pessimism and despair that are revealed in his poetry come from a reflective reading of Nietzsche, rather than any slavish imitation of colonial masters (Wright, *Preoccupations*, 80-97). Likewise, even when addressing the influence of English tradition on Australian poets, Wright distinguishes between the more vigorous, creative influence of the early Romantics and what she sees as the flaccid effect of dependence on late Victorian poetic

idiom.³⁵

Wright locates the source of the abstract nature of much early Australian poetry—and of the ungrounded nature of much early verse that frustrates the reader who is looking for a picture of what actually living in Australia was like. She suggests that the most important of the difficulties facing Australian writers has been 'the lack of any living link with the country itself'. She contends that for transported or at best transplanted peoples, it was difficult to develop any love of the land. What was easier to grasp was an abstraction—the freedom the country afforded. Wright isolates the ethos of exploitation at the heart of the Australian colonial mentality that hinders the growth of 'deep emotional feeling for the land itself. She says '... Australian writers have found themselves without a true local idiom or feeling in their audience or themselves. This perhaps more than any other factor has turned Australian literature from the direction of interpretive, sensitive and experimental writing towards a more obvious and vigorous descriptiveness, in accord with the material 'tough-mindedness' of their culture.'³⁶

Where Horne took a long time to move beyond the assimilationist view of Indigenous Australia, Wright was already beginning to critique the settler culture's inability to recognise Indigenous Australian culture as the source of a way of feeling at home in Australia. She points out that the civilising mission of an invading people blinds it to what is valuable about the world-view of indigenous inhabitants:

The aboriginal culture was based apparently not upon active mastery but on passive acceptance of the environment—a static, Stone-Age adaptation (whose real riches in legend and in emotional interpretation of the country remained long unrecognized and were in course of time largely lost as the aborigines disappeared before the white advance.³⁷

Even if these views are themselves only partially formed, we can see that Wright sees the need to recognise Indigenous art, a tendency that intensified in her work in the 1970s. By contrast, Horne took time to drop his openly pro-assimilationist views. In terms of the writing itself, Wright argues that poets, unable to see the possibility even of developing an Australian idiom could only turn to the forms, structures and styles they knew. Her way of putting it, though, imputes a more active and even creative aspect to the use

of tradition than Horne acknowledges. The problem, as these writers felt it to exist, was not that of adapting English verse-forms in the wholly new and strange country in which they found themselves but rather that of forcing its essence into the forms already known to them—that of writing English verse about Australia.³⁸

Conclusion

Yet, for all their differences, we can find some common ground between Donald Horne and Judith Wright. To be sure, Wright's book is focused on literature, and offers a sensitivity to poetry that Horne in *The Lucky Country* with its broader perspective could not. Wright grasps the creative tension between tradition and innovation, and what it gives to Australian poetry in the century or so from Harpur to the poets of the 1940s and 1950s with which she concludes *Preoccupations*. Horne was imprisoned by the success of his views in the mid-1960s, which he subsequently recognised, when he saw a need to move beyond what he called the 'static' and 'circular' schema that he had applied to Australian political and cultural life in *The Lucky Country*.³⁹ In terms of context, too, we need to recall that Wright's book comes from lectures she gave in the 1950s.⁴⁰

In order to bring this comparative examination of Wright and Horne to a close and to understand something of the direction Australian poetry would take, we see value in looking at a strain of Australian poetry that Wright only mentions in passing, as indeed it was only emerging while she was working on her lectures and the anthology of verse in the mid-1950s. In the final chapter of *Preoccupations*, on the poets of the 40s and 50s, Wright discusses two poets that she clearly feels represent ways forward for Australian poetry. She suggests that these poets (John Blight and Francis Webb) in a sense are writing across the grain—for example, that Blight's poems are 'extremely unfashionable in the Australia of the 'sixties, in which Hope's polish and McAuley's plaintive grace are at present the strongest influence'.⁴¹ The fact that Wright positions the two at the end of her volume and argues in the last paragraph of the book, that while one is Catholic and one not, both are essentially writing poetry of the spirit in which 'their subject is not so much

creation as Creation' implies that she considers them to hold the key to the further advance of Australian poetry.

In this claim for the future territories of Australian poetry, does Wright perhaps miss something that Horne is alive to, albeit in his later book, *The Next Australia* and not in *The Lucky Country* itself? In *The Lucky Country*, Horne had deprecated the paucity of 'urban literature that deals with ordinary Australians as if they were observable human beings'.⁴² But in the 1970 book, as we have mentioned, Horne includes a section on 'Breakthrough in the arts'. Of Australian poetry, Horne has this to say:

It was the disturbances to old patterns of the new industrial metropolises that seemed to provide one of the mainsprings of 'modern' poetry when it started a hundred years ago, but apart from an occasional bus or wet city street there is not much to be seen of the cities in Australian verse. Even less of the suburbs, except for an extraordinary sequence of James McAuley's in which an Australian poet for the first time moved towards what are the deep springs of action or memory for so many Australians.⁴³

Here, we glimpse the Donald Horne who, as a young man, wanted to be a poet. This is an appreciative acknowledgement of the 'suburban' strand in Australian poetry that Wright dismissed rather quickly, implying that it was more fashionable than valuable. Horne does not name the sequence of McAuley's poems that he admires, but it must be the sequence, 'On the Western Line', published as part of McAuley's 1969 volume, *Surprises of the Sun*.

That Horne might just have been prescient in his assessment of the sequence is borne out by an essay published in *Quadrant* in 2011, and it is fitting that we end this article honouring Horne in the fiftieth year since the publication of his seminal work by citing something from a publication to which he contributed so much as editor over the years. In the *Quadrant* essay, Clive James gives a finely appreciative reading of McAuley's 'Because', part of the sequence admired by Horne. James suggests that the value of the poem to Australian ears is precisely that it captures, in an idiom that we recognise, a facet of experience that is also recognisable. This making poetry out of the way we live now was the unifying objective of the Melbourne-based suburban poets that Wright refers to somewhat parenthetically. Yet it just might be

they and the later McAuley, admired by Horne and James, who do finally banish the old binary of the city or the bush that for so many years, by drawing on a borrowed pastoral ethos, pre-empted a modern urban and suburban poetic tradition.

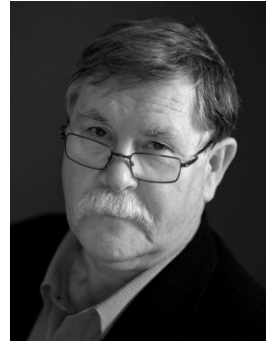
In this sequence of poems, McAuley shows his understanding of David Campbell's perception that 'the Murray's source is in the mind'⁴⁴: in other words, that Australian poets will be better served by abandoning a literal transcription of their physical surroundings and looking within their own experience for the source of their poems.⁴⁵ James suggests that a truly Australian poetic voice developed when poets stopped trying to sound Australian—it was the tone of voice before anything that embodied the Australianness and the value of the poems produced. James suggests that the experience is in fact international—that Les Murray's sandstorm, for example, could be anywhere in the world.⁴⁶ In 'Terra Australis', James comments, McAuley reminds us that 'Your Australia is within you, as a land of imagination: "There you come home"'.⁴⁷ So, by drawing on a poem admired by Donald Horne, James offers an affirmation of a value that surely Judith Wright would have endorsed: 'a fully developed poetic language is the essence of the only patriotism that matters'.

In the end, therefore, we think it's fairest to see Horne and Wright as complementing each other, each offering some piercing insights into the Australian mind of the 1950s-1960s. Who could reflect on the building of the Sydney Opera House and the treatment of its Danish architect, Jørn Utzon, without applauding the devastating accuracy of Horne's analysis of the threat posed to artistic excellence by the bureaucratic mindset in mid-twentieth century Australia? Yet, who could read the poetry of James McAuley, or of Judith Wright herself, and not also feel that Horne had left something vital out of his account of a mind missing in action in the Australia of the sixties?

¹ Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country: Australia in the Sixties*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1964, p 16.

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- ² Donald Horne, *The Next Australia*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1970.
- ³ Judith Wright, *Preoccupations in Australian Poetry*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1965.
- ⁴ Horne, *The Lucky Country*, p 11.
- ⁵ Horne, *The Lucky Country* pp 12-13.
- ⁶ Horne, *The Lucky Country* p 13.
- ⁷ Horne, *The Lucky Country* pp 14-15.
- ⁸ Horne, *The Lucky Country* p 16.
- ⁹ Horne, *The Lucky Country* p 16.
- ¹⁰ Lynne Strahan, *Just City and the Mirrors: Meanjin Quarterly and the Intellectual Front 1940-1965*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, p. 27n.
- ¹¹ Migration Heritage Centre, 'Objects Through Time: *The Bulletin* magazine', [NSW Powerhouse Museum], Viewed 13 August 2014, < Migrationheritage.nsw.gov.au>
- ¹² Strahan, p. 27.
- ¹³ John Docker, *In a Critical Condition: Reading Australian Literature*, Penguin, Ringwood, 1984, pp 144-45.
- ¹⁴ Docker, p 152.
- ¹⁵ Eleanor Dark, *The Little Company*, Collins, Sydney, 1945.
- ¹⁶ Horne, *The Lucky Country*, 2nd rev. ed. *The Lucky Country: Australia in the Sixties*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, p 218.
- ¹⁷ Wright, p 202.
- ¹⁸ Wright, p 202.
- ¹⁹ Veronica Brady, *South of My Days: a Biography of Judith Wright*, Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1998, p 127.
- ²⁰ Horne, *The Next Australia*, p v.
- ²¹ Horne, *The Next Australia*, p v.
- ²² Horne, *The Lucky Country*, p 65.
- ²³ Horne, *The Lucky Country* pp 64-65.
- ²⁴ Horne, *The Lucky Country* p 65.
- ²⁵ Horne, *The Lucky Country* p 69.
- ²⁶ Horne, *The Lucky Country* p 64.
- ²⁷ Horne, *The Lucky Country* p 69.
- ²⁸ Horne, *The Lucky Country* p. 64.
- ²⁹ By Associate Professor Julia Horne, pers. comm. at the ISAA conference, October, 2014.
- ³⁰ Horne, 'A.D. Hope: Portrait of an Un-Australian', *The Observer*, 4 October, 1958, pp. 517-18.
- ³¹ Horne, review of *The Threepenny Opera*, in *The Observer*, 28 June, 1958, p 311.

- ³² Horne, 'Meeting Professor Manning Clark', *The Observer*, 19 March, 1958, pp. 22-25.
- ³³ Horne, *The Lucky Country* p 196.
- ³⁴ Horne, *The Next Australia*, p 92.
- ³⁵ Wright, ed. and introd. *A Book of Australian Verse*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1956, pp 6-7.
- ³⁶ Wright, introd. pp 2-3.
- ³⁷ Wright, introd. p 4.
- ³⁸ Wright, introd. p 3.
- ³⁹ Horne, *The Next Australia*, p v.
- ⁴⁰ Brady, pp 196-97.
- ⁴¹ Wright, *Preoccupations*, p 210.
- ⁴² Horne, *The Lucky Country* p 68.
- ⁴³ Horne, *The Next Australia*, p 97.
- ⁴⁴ Cited by Wright, p 202.
- ⁴⁵ Clive James, 'There You Come Home', *Quadrant*, vol. 55, no. 4, 2011, p 14.
- ⁴⁶ James, p 14.
- ⁴⁷ James, p 14.



THE EVICTION AT NEWTOWN

19 JUNE 1931

The aim of this presentation is to examine a home eviction that took place in Newtown, Sydney, on Friday June 19 1931, an eviction recognised at the time as violent enough to deserve the title Bloody Friday. True to the theme of this conference, I will attempt to place this incident in a context that relates to some of Donald Horne's key ideas in *The Lucky Country*. The research is derived particularly from material gathered in 1931 by Sydney activist Phil Thorne, whose collection is now held in the Noel Butlin Archives Centre at the ANU.¹ Phil Thorne was a member of the Communist Party of Australia in the 1930s, and secretary of the Spanish Relief Committee. His collection of documents relating to the Newtown riot includes the case files of solicitor Miss Christian Jollie-Smith, who was acting for the International Class-War Prisoners' Aid Society.

Donald Horne was ten years old in December 1931. By way of sketching a background to the Newtown incident, and to stress the importance of recognising the great complexity of the past, a view that I have previously argued in the ISAA Review,² let us consider what the world was like for ten year old Donald Horne and those who fought the 'battle of Newtown'.

The world seemed to be shrinking in 1931. It was an era of pioneering achievements in aviation and exploration, marked by the achievements of people such as Charles Kingsford Smith, Amy Johnson, Amelia Earhart and Douglas Mawson. This was also the jazz age, with popular entertainers such as Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller. The cinema was immensely popular, radio broadcasts brought the world into suburban homes, and newspapers had daily morning and afternoon editions.

Don Bradman was arguably at the height of his career in 1930/31. His batting achievements were to lead the English to develop the famous 'bodyline' strategy. Phar Lap, born in Timaru, New Zealand, dominated the racetrack, winning 14 races in a row in the 1930/31 season.

In 1931 many world economies were already in the grip of a paralysing depression. The US president, Herbert Hoover, had been elected a few months before the stock market crash of 1929. Catastrophic levels of unemployment became the most distinctive feature of life in this era.

The rejection of democracy and the rise of totalitarian government was also a significant feature of the time. Mussolini had already established totalitarian fascist government in Italy a decade earlier. Adolf Hitler, now leader of the third largest party in the Reichstag, had not yet been appointed Chancellor. Stalin had consolidated his autocracy in the USSR and would soon embark on a massive purge of the Russian communist party. Political action in Asia was not isolated from these developments. In Japan, Prime Minister Wakatsuki struggled to control the army, which would embark on the conquest of Manchuria. In China, Chiang Kai Shek, succeeding Sun Yat Sen in 1925, broke with the Chinese communist party led by Chou En Lai and Mao Tse Tung. Omar Muktah led an unsuccessful rebellion against Italian imperialism in Libya. Reza Shah Pavli was the ruler of Iran during the time of the Women's Awakening, which sought the elimination of the Islamic veil from Iranian working society. Mahatma Ghandi intrigued London society during his visit to discuss Indian self-rule.

In 1931 Australia was a self-governing dominion within the British Empire, owing allegiance to King George V. In December of that year the British Government passed the Statute of Westminster, which made the Dominions legislatively independent of the United Kingdom. The Act was not, however, formally adopted by the Australian Government until 1942. James Scullin, Prime Minister of Australia in 1931, had led the Australian Labor Party to victory in the 1929 Federal election. Scullin attempted to solve Australia's debt crisis in 1930 with a program of stimulus spending and expansionist monetary policy. In New South Wales, Jack Lang had become Premier for the second time in a landslide victory in late 1930. To cope with

the economic difficulties of the time, he refused to cut government salaries and spending. Early in 1931 he produced the 'Lang Plan' in opposition to a plan agreed to by the Federal Labor Government and the other state Premiers. In order to balance the budget the so-called 'Melbourne Plan' called for stringent cuts to government spending.

Sydney was about to be united by a steel bridge, begun in 1923 to be completed in 1932. The busy streets of the city had no road markings, no traffic lights, and it seems only a loose idea of traffic order. The inner suburbs were characterised by narrow lanes and dilapidated houses, the homes of the poor. Sam Hood, a well-known Sydney photographer of the era, has left memorable images of relief workers, dole queues, and political rallies.

One of the most distressing aspects of the depressed economic climate was the growing incidence of evictions. This image of an evicted tenant in 1930 is entitled: *William Roberts, a veteran of Gallipoli*.

At present there are, I suppose, thousands of houses to let. One cannot go into any suburb without finding the 'To Let' notice in, perhaps, one out of every five or six cases, in those cottages which are usually let to people of small means. Men who have fought for their country have been 'emptied out' onto the street.³

Phyllis Acland recalled her family eviction:

My father was an invalid pensioner and things were desperate at home. We'd come from Lismore to bring my brother down for treatment. He had polio. My mother went up to Newtown one day shopping and when she came home they'd come in and taken all the furniture for the twenty-two pound she owed. It was the law.⁴

There seem to have been many thousands of Orders to Quit during the course of 1930 onwards, but four Sydney evictions in particular have been remembered for the violence associated with them. These evictions occurred during the first half of 1931 at Douglas Street, Redfern, Starling Street, Leichhardt, Brancourt Avenue, Bankstown and Union Street, Newtown, each of them opposed by the Unemployed Workers' Movement and each one increasingly violent. These four eviction battles were all reported in the contemporary press and have attracted some attention from scholars and historians of the era. In an article for *Twentieth Century Sydney: Studies in Urban and Social History*, Nadia Wheatley gives a brief outline of the anti-eviction movement.⁵ Wheatley also undertook a study of the same topic in an unpublished thesis at Macquarie University.⁶ Another important study of

this topic can be found in the December 2008 edition of *the Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, which focuses on the eviction in Brancourt Avenue, Bankstown.

The last eviction, said to be the most violent, was the eviction at 143 Union Street Newtown. We can reconstruct this particular incident in some detail from three principal sources of material. First of all, there are the newspapers. The *Sydney Morning Herald* published a detailed account on the day following the eviction, Saturday June 20, under the headline: 'Desperate Fighting: Communists and Police'. It described the incident as 'the most sensational eviction battle Sydney has ever known.' This same account also appeared in metropolitan papers in other states. An alternative account, however, was given a week later, on Friday June 26, by the *Workers' Weekly*, the official organ of the Communist Party of Australia. The *Workers' Weekly* referred to the incident as 'Bloody Friday at Newtown' and headlined the article with: 'Lang, at behest of Landlords, shoots Sydney workers'.

The second source of information is the actual residence itself. Number 143 Union Street is still an inner city two storey semi-detached terrace building like so many others in Sydney. It is possible to walk through the scene of the eviction as it would have been in 1931.

The third source of information is quite unique. It consists of the case records of Christian Jollie-Smith, the solicitor who represented the defendants arrested that day. These records are preserved in the Phil Thorne collection of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre at the ANU. The Thorne collection includes individual statements by each of the defendants, several witness statements by people who were in the crowd watching the action, and statements by prosecution witnesses. In this paper I will focus on the statements of defendants Percy Riley, Leonard Emmerton, and John Stace, the evidence of witnesses Lucy de Saily, Edward Mills, Jane Smith and William Hawkins, and statements by prosecution witnesses William Ryan (clerk) and William Gibbons, PC.

The evidence reveals a number of contradictory or contentious issues, that can be summarised in two questions: 1. Who initiated the violence? 2. Did the police assault the defendants after arrest? No attempt is made to

determine the actual events inside the house. As the *Workers' Weekly* stated: 'What happened inside is known only to those who were there.'

The *Sydney Morning Herald* blames the defendants for the initial violence:

Police cars drew up some distance from the house and 40 police and detectives, under Inspectors Farley and Smith, approached the building. When the police reached the pavement outside the front fence of the building, at a signal given by the leader of the defenders, a terrible shower of stones rained down on to their heads.⁷

The *Workers Weekly*, on the other hand, accuses the police of initiating the violence.

The bus drove straight at the crowd ... As it came opposite 143 Union St the police jumped out with revolvers drawn and at once opened fire on the balcony of the house ... Murphy was shot before a stone was thrown or any resistance offered. It was after this that the defenders fought back.⁸

Clearly, the two accounts could hardly be more different. What does the evidence of the Phil Thorne collection tell us?

Riley, Emmerton and Stace all claim that police commenced firing on the house before any resistance was offered by the defenders. According to Leonard Emmerton: 'I was in the back room downstairs. I heard the shout "here they come" then I heard shooting in the front of the house.' John Stace testified:

I was in the front room upstairs when I heard someone call out the police. I looked out and saw the street full of police with revolvers firing at the house. I did not see inspector Farley waving anything in his hand or hear him call out. Garbutt was near me when he said "I am hit". I then dropped on my hands and knees to get out of the range of the bullets which were hitting the wall.⁹

Constable William Gibbon makes no mention of police fire in his statement, but the testimony of the defendants is confirmed by eyewitnesses and even by one of the witnesses for the prosecution.

Lucy de Sailly, of 21 Iredale Street Newtown, stated: 'I was in the street listening to meeting. Edwards was speaking ... Never saw a stone thrown but I saw the police fire up at balcony. Nothing had happened at house at all up to then.' In a handwritten addition to her testimony, we read: 'Rushed out of bus with their revolvers and commenced firing at the balcony before any stones were thrown at all.'

Jane Smith, of 22 Dixon Street Newtown, stated: 'I was away getting food for pickets. Bus came round. I was standing inside garden. I saw the police shooting at the house.'

William Ryan, whose testimony was presumably offered by the prosecution, stated: 'I am a clerk employed by N.J. Buzzacott, estate agents at 47 Lord Street Newtown ... The police went to go to the front door and some stones were thrown at the Police from the balcony. Some shots were fired.'

There is hardly any doubt that firearms were used in the eviction. A handwritten note in the collection states: 'A reporter—Monks by name of the "*Truth*" tells me that he personally picked up 14 (fourteen) empty shells at Union St after the fight.'

Constable Gibbons stated that the stones were thrown as soon as the police arrived at the house. His statement reads: 'I went to 143 Union Street Newtown and on arrival there were a number of men on the front balcony and they commenced throwing stones and those stones hit several policemen. I left and went to the rear of 143 and assisted in breaking in the back door.'

Gibbons describes the back door attack but does not state that any shots were fired. According to Gibbons, it took a whole fifteen minutes to break in through the back door. He claims he was struck in the right eye then hit on the shoulder and back of the head by John Murphy, and he said there were only three police in the back room.

There is no doubt that the police used firearms in their attack on 143 Union Street. It is not so certain, however, that they initiated the violence. Although defendants and witnesses testified to this effect, there are two problems with such a conclusion. First of all, it is quite plausible that the police would open fire in response to a show of resistance on the part of the occupants. None of the defendants testified that any stones were thrown, but this is hardly surprising. However, even the witnesses support their testimony. William Hawkins, of 121 Rochford Street Erskineville, an elderly man, stated: 'I didn't see any stones thrown from the house.' Lucy de Sailly's testimony supports this: 'Never saw a stone thrown.'

These contradictions leave us with two possibilities: either the police fired in response to stones thrown by the occupants, and the witnesses are therefore overly partisan, or that the police fire was intended to cover their entry into the house. Despite the evidence of the defendants and their witnesses, it is impossible to say whether any stones were thrown before the police began firing, so this is certainly a possibility. On the other hand, the fact that there were only two occupants who suffered gunshot wounds, neither wound of which was serious, suggests that the police were attempting to cover their entry into the house and had therefore initiated the violence. Circumstantial evidence also supports this latter interpretation. Two days earlier, an eviction at Bankstown had been more violent than previous evictions, giving the police an understandable motive for their actions.

Did the police assault the defendants after their arrest? This is certainly the account given by the *Workers' Weekly*: 'these workers were bashed after they were arrested and while in the police station'. The *Sydney Morning Herald* makes no mention of this, presumably therefore implying that no such behaviour took place.

All defendants claim they were assaulted, and there is a consistent pattern to their evidence. Percy Riley, for example, stated:

After a while I was handcuffed, both hands behind the back. While being taken out to the back I was made a target of by the police. I was punched all over the face. One blow dropped me to my knees. I was jerked to my feet and taken out to the yard. After a while were taken and put in the patrol van and taken to the station. While in the charge room I received another blow on the jaw and was knocked down. I lay there until the ambulance came and we were taken to hospital and put to bed.

John Stace testified:

I was handcuffed and as soon as I was handcuffed I was hit on the jaw. Blood was everywhere I looked. Someone was being bashed with the batons on the floor and screaming. I was taken outside. The police kicked us when we were in the yard and several of them said Lang should pass a bill to shoot the lot of us at sight. I was taken to the Patrol and to the Charge room. We were all kicked and punched all the way from the patrol to the room. As I was walking through the charge room handcuffed I received a blow on the nose which half dazed me.

Given that the witnesses were not in a position to observe what happened inside the police station, we do not have any independent testimony to support the defendants' allegations. Can their accusations be supported by examining the injuries treated at the hospital?

Amongst the papers in the Phil Thorne collection is a handwritten note on the back of an envelope, which lists the injuries to some of the defendants:

Emmertson: cerebral concussion. Fracture to back of skull; Joshua: Cerebral concussion; Fractured skull; Goldberg: cerebral concussion; Fractured jaw. Riley: Cerebral concussion. Ubransky: Cerebral concussion. Murphy: cerebral concussion and gunshot wound to the skull.

No mention is made of Garbutt (Gabriel), who is said to have been shot in the arm. Other defendants mentioned as injured also do not appear in this list. Storen, Clarke, Dare, Hawkins, Hayley are not listed on the envelope.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* has a more extensive list: Joe Gabriel, 36, of May Street Newtown, gunshot wound in the left arm; Bruno Ubranski, 50, of Bourke Street Surry Hills, head injuries; Patrick Storen, 26, of Fitzroy Street Surry hills, fractured left hand; John Murphy, 39, of Phillip Street Enmore, head injuries; Robert Clarke, 27 of Hynes street Darlington, head injuries; Percy Riley 33 of Victoria Street Lewisham, concussion and lacerations to the head; Raymond Dare, 26 of Alice Street Newtown, head injuries; Len Emmerton 39 of Regent Street Newtown, head injuries; Reg Hawkins, 33, of Rochford Street Erskineville, head injuries; Henry Hayley, 20, of Adelaide Street Surry Hills, head injuries; Percy Joshua, 29, of Great Buckingham Street Redfern, head injuries, Leslie Goldberg, 31, fractured skull.

The *Herald* also gives the names of injured police:

Sergeant Phillips, Constables Knowes, Jenkins, Duncan, Gillmore, Patterson, Parsons, Stewart, Wilson, Toms, Jones and Hollier received injuries to practically every part of their bodies. Constables Kelly and Proud were taken to hospital in police motor cars.

These injuries clearly prove that there was a good deal of violence on 19 June 1931. They do not, however, confirm subsequent police brutality after the arrests. For this we have only the testimonies of the accused. The *Workers' Weekly* is right to claim that 'What happened inside is known only to those who were there.' The same could be said for subsequent events at

Newtown police station. It is quite possible that the men arrested were assaulted after arrest, but there is no conclusive proof that this happened. The injuries could be explained as a result of the melee that took place at the time of arrest.

What was the result of these arrests? One of the most interesting items in the Phil Thorne collection is this letter to Christian Jollie-Smith from the Clerk of the Peace, which states that the Attorney-General 'declined to proceed further against the accused'. This seems very odd, given that the charge of Common Law Riot would seem to be easily proven. Why was the case dropped?

Before attempting to answer this question, consider the relevance of this incident to Donald Horne's statement: 'Australia is a lucky country run mainly by second-rate people who share its luck.'

Donald Horne is not alone in voicing this idea. Thirty years before, George Meudell, a banking and political figure, had written: 'Australia is a good country badly managed.'¹⁰

Meudell made his views clear: 'Most of the heads of banks and alleged able leaders of finance and capitalists I have met or heard about are a pretty poor lot of ordinary men and very few of them are educated or intellectual.'

The interesting part of both these views is the assumption that Australia is 'managed' or 'run' by leaders. Their explanation for a perceived failure to achieve a notion of excellence in social life is due to the poor quality of this leadership. This notion was echoed by A D Hope:

And since historical research
Has lost the name of noble action
Proved most ideas in state and church
Mere subterfuge of greed and faction
That great men do not lead: they lurch
Between rebellion and reaction
By documented texts it can
Abolish the uncommon man.¹¹

What does Hope mean by the 'uncommon man'? More importantly, what is the role of the 'common man' in history? How do both notions apply to the events in Newtown in June 1931?

Who were the leaders in the events in Union Street, Newtown? According to our documents, the police were led by Inspectors Farley and Hughes. Insofar as the occupants of the house were concerned, there is no mention of any particular leader. In fact, Percy Riley's testimony suggests that the nineteen men in the house were a loose group who came and went: 'About 11 o'clock on Friday June 19th I went to an eviction meeting in Union St Newtown. After listening to some of the speakers I climbed up on to the balcony of the house to see some of my mates who were inside.'

The defendants seem to have been united by a common desire to oppose the actions of the landlord, by a shared belief in the injustice and cruelty of evicting a tenant while the house promises to remain empty. Certainly, even today we can easily sympathise with the tenants who were evicted and with those who were prepared to resist such evictions:

When arrears of rent caused the eviction yesterday of Mrs Jessie Compt and her four children from a house in Spring St, Fitzroy, her few pieces of furniture were piled in a back lane ... There, huddled about a fire which burned in a dustbin, the family kept a cold and dreary vigil last night, while the thermometer dropped to a minimum of 41 degrees. ... To add to Mrs Compt's distress she had the worry of nursing a child aged 18 months suffering from pneumonia.¹²

Neither Horne nor Meudell seem interested in examining Australian life as anything other than the actions of individuals. Yet, what seems at work in the Newtown incident is something deeper than personal motivations or the actions of leaders. The issue has more to do with economic and social systems, as was clearly recognised at the time:

The first eviction I saw had a devastating effect on me, and I think probably it and a few other experiences then were what finished the capitalist system as far as I was concerned.¹³

It is quite clear that, if housing is seen as a form of capital, in which private ownership controls tenancy, periods of economic stress will lead to evictions. The fundamental driving force behind the Newtown eviction was the economic system which allowed private ownership of housing. We can see this even today in the actions of governments who have progressively degraded the level and even the idea of 'public housing,' replacing the socialist view that government should provide shelter as a human right with a notion

of 'welfare housing', in the same way that a guaranteed minimum income is seen as a 'dole'.

It is important to point out that a great many evictions were successfully prevented, and few involved the occupation of property. According to Wheatley¹⁴ occupation and resistance was only one of the tactics employed by the UWM. She lists the following ascending order of action:

1. deputations to the landlord or agent;
2. tactic 1, plus protest meetings at the landlord/agent's premises;
3. direct action (interference in the process) plus protest meeting at the threatened premises;
4. large scale picketing for days or weeks outside the threatened house;
5. occupation of the house plus mass meetings outside the house and resistance to the eviction.

Interference could include preventing or restoring the denial of gas services, social ostracism and abuse of small landlords, damage to landlord's home or agent's shop.

The resistance to evictions during 1930 and 1931, of which Newtown was the final act, seems to have been a mass movement, fed by the growing number of unemployed men and an increasing community sympathy for those evicted. In response, the forces of law and order responded with escalating levels of violence.

The most revealing aspect of the eviction incidents is the action of the crowds that gathered. This was particularly evident at Newtown, where the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported:

A crowd, hostile to the police, numbering many thousands, gathered in Union Street. They filled the street for a quarter of a mile on each side of the building until squads of police drove them back about 200 yards, and police cordons were thrown across the roadway. At times the huge crowd threatened to get out of hand. It was definitely hostile to the police. When constables emerged from the back of the building with their faces covered in blood, the crowd hooted and shouted insulting remarks. When one patrol wagon ... was being driven away, people ... hurled stones at the police driver'¹⁵

The crowd that gathered in Union Street was perhaps the largest spontaneous demonstration in Sydney in the thirties. Wheatley regards it as



143 Union Street in 1980.

‘the most militant gathering of ordinary Sydney people in the decade.’¹⁶

Strangely, it was also the last. Within a week of the Newtown riot, the NSW Attorney-General tabled a Fair Rents and Lessees’ Relief Bill. Public sympathy and mass action had convinced the Lang government to at least demonstrate a commitment to solving the problem of evictions.

In an 1891 essay entitled ‘The Soul of Man under Socialism’, Oscar Wilde argues that the true purpose of socialism is to provide all members of society with sufficient resources to enable them to realise their true individual potential, to achieve ‘individualism’ as opposed to ‘authoritarian socialism’. One could argue that Australians in the sixties had begun to approach that ideal, that what

Horne sees as a ‘cultural wilderness’ was in fact the realisation of that individualism applauded by Wilde. Even in 1931, these boys display some of the qualities Horne attributes to Australians of the sixties.

In the face of imminent invasion in 1941, Vance Palmer asked of Australian civilization: what have we done to deserve to survive the possible overthrow of our way of life? His answer, it seems to me, is perfectly relevant to our discussion today: Australia, he wrote ‘has something to contribute to the world. Not emphatically in the arts as yet, but ... in arenas of action, and in ideas for the creation of that egalitarian democracy that will have to be the basis for all civilized societies in the future ...’

This is an interesting thought, echoed by many other writers before and since. The notion that ‘uncommon’ individuals determine the quality of Australian life and achievements, that the ordinary Australian depends on

the inspiration (or lack of inspiration) of great leaders to guide action in public life is, essentially, an assumption. 'Leadership' may be a term that disguises the true situation, that leaders are actually followers of the opinions held by the so-called 'common man'. Much is written of the values of a 'fair go' and equality in the Australian character, values that are not dictated by national leaders. Public figures, it could be argued, derive their authority and success by appealing to these values.

In summary, despite Donald Horne's misgivings over the quality of leadership in Australian public life, the resistance to evictions in 1931 can be seen as one expression of that instinct for egalitarianism and democratic decision-making that seems to be so much a part of the Australian national character.



Union Street.

¹ Phil Thorne Collection. Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU. Also listed in: Symons, Beverley, 1999, *Communism in Australia, A Resource Bibliography*, Aust Nat Lib.

² J Hood, 'History and the Curriculum', in *ISAA Review*, Volume 13, Number 1, 2014.

³ NSW Parliamentary Proceedings 1930-33.

⁴ W Lowenstein, (ed), *Weevils in the Flour: An oral record of Australia in the Depression*. Hyland House/Scribe. Testimony of Phyllis Acland, 1978.

⁵ N Wheatley, 'Meeting them at the door: radicalism, militancy, and the Sydney anti-eviction campaign of 1931', in J. Roe (ed.), *Twentieth Century Sydney: Studies in urban and social history*, Sydney, Douglas St. Redfern, 1980.

⁶ N Wheatley, 'The Unemployed Who Kicked: A Study of the Political Struggles and Organisations of the New South Wales Unemployed in the Great Depression', unpublished MA thesis, Macquarie University, 1975.

⁷ *Sydney Morning Herald*, Saturday June 20, 1931.

⁸ *The Workers' Weekly*, Friday June 26, 1931.

⁹ Michael Cannon, *The Land Boomers*, MUP Melbourne, 1966.

¹⁰ George Meudell, *The Pleasant Career of a Spendthrift*, Robertson & Mullen, Melbourne, 1929.

¹¹ A D Hope, 'Conversations with Calliope', in *Collected Poems*, Sydney, 1966.

¹² *Labor Call*, 6 Sep 1930.

¹³ Neil Counihan in Lowenstein, *Weevils in the flour*.

¹⁴ Wheatley, MA thesis, 1980.

¹⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, June 20, 1931.

¹⁶ Wheatley, MA thesis, p 228.



MY HISTORY IS NOT YOUR HISTORY

OR, HOW AN 'ETHNIC' AUSTRALIAN VIEWS OUR NATIONAL PAST

The thing about history is that it is not a narrative like a novel, nor is it a dry scientific treatise, that is, a bald description of past events devoid of emotional content. If it were nobody would either study the subject or read historical works. When I was student at the University of Queensland half a century ago historiography was designated *sui generis*, a unique form of narrative distinct from that one normally terms literature. This was recognised by the founder of the discipline of modern history, namely Leopold von Ranke (1795-1886) when he wrote that in contrast to philosophers and those like them who wanted to change the world with their ideas—think of his contemporary, Karl Marx, for example—all von Ranke wanted to do was *to show how it actually was* in the past, that is '*Ich will nur zeigen wie es eigentlich gewesen*'.

Once Ranke had done that he hoped that the reader would be edified (*erbaut*). Ranke's concern was that the historians should keep their personal prejudices to themselves and not let them obtrude upon their narrative. The idea was to be as objective as possible and not to seek to influence the reader one way or the other. Ranke assumed this could be done by assembling the most authentic sources and then by narrating, in the most moderate language, what they tell us. So the historian's task was two-fold: first, assemble the documents, the primary sources, checking for authenticity, and then to communicate what was in them using a language comprehensible to the average educated reader.

All that sounds eminently reasonable but of course it is fraught with difficulties. First, accessing all the relevant sources required to get a true image of the past was problematic because much will have been irretrievably lost. And secondly there is the superhuman challenge of achieving objectivity, the virtual impossibility of laying aside one's inbuilt cultural heritage in order to explain what was going on within another culture at another time. The conclusion we must draw then is that all historiography inevitably bears the stamp of the author's cultural-intellectual formation. Some are better at suppressing their prejudices than others, of course. And this raises the question, what is really 'honest' history?

What I want to do here is draw attention to the impact on individual historians of educational, religious and ideological formations focusing on myself as one who was always made aware of his ethnicity both at school and in the community. My family on my father's side had migrated from what was then Syria as Antiochian Orthodox Christians escaping from the oppressive rule of the Moslem Ottoman Empire back in the 1880's; they finally settled in north Queensland. My mother's family migrated from Scotland in 1920. My paternal grandparents were an early version of political and economic refugees who had chosen to come to this part of the British Empire because they had learned from fellow countrymen and relatives who had already emigrated that here at least was freedom of speech and religion plus the opportunity to make a reasonable living. At first they were hawkers in haberdashery and finally hotel keepers in various Queensland towns, finally settling in Atherton around 1900 where they became Roman Catholics or more accurately 'Irish Catholics' since the Roman Church in the Diocese of Cairns was staffed exclusively in those days by both Irish Roman Catholic clergy (Augustinians) and Irish Sisters of Mercy, who had educated my father and all his siblings and tried to imbue in them a hatred of the British. The indoctrination obviously had not worked in my father's case. Of course, if the Antioch Orthodox church had been there at that time, my life would have been considerably different. So I was a product of a mixed marriage, not so unusual, of course, but in my case the cultural differences between the Syrian (later Lebanese) Roman Catholic side of the family and

the Scottish Episcopalian side from my mother could become at times somewhat volatile.

Such experiences sensitise one to one's ethnic origins. And our town was teeming with other so-called ethnics, mainly Italian, some Greeks, Chinese, a few Germans, Finns and even Swiss people alongside, of course, many Indigenous Australians. In a pub everybody sooner or later shows up. These 'ethnics' were supplementary to the main Anglo-Celtic population. Not surprisingly, the Anglo-Irish tensions of those days were still very much in evidence, something which the then Irish-Roman Church did little to assuage.

And as fate would have it, back in 1948 remote Atherton was actually included on a tour by none other than Mr Eamon de Valera himself, first President of Eire, who was on a state visit to stir up the faithful in Australia. I did not know it at the time but in English law de Valera was a criminal, indeed a murderer, subversive and traitor, indeed someone who would have been shot much earlier had he not been officially a citizen of the United States when he came back to Ireland to advance the cause. So, in the words of our great bush poet Henry Lawson, 'The mighty bush with iron rails was tethered to the world'. Mr de Valera had come up by train from Cairns to Atherton. I was at the station as driver of my father's taxi when the great man arrived. So we in the deep north 'a thousand miles away', were not entirely isolated. We had good rail links and even coastal shipping in those days if you wanted a sea voyage from Cairns to Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne. And we also had acquired an ABC radio station just before the war with Japan that had originally been set up by the Jehovah's Witnesses, but because of their doubtful loyalty to the British Empire the station was taken over by the government so it became a link in the ABC's regional network.

My efforts to get some formal qualifications started with an apprenticeship as a radio mechanic in 1952, completed after five years, and that was followed by several years in an Anglican theological seminary preparing for the priesthood as well as enrolment at the University of Queensland. The College Principal had seen a glimmer of potential in me and so he advised me to study for a BA majoring in History with German, English, Political Science and a

bit of philosophy thrown in. That led to a scholarship to Germany in 1961 where I spent a good five years training under some outstanding German professors, first at Munich for two years and then at Erlangen for three where I took my doctorate at the end of 1965 specialising in the history of German socialist trade unionism.

This was good training because it opened up the world of ideas of the pre-1848 social democrats, of Marx and Engels themselves, and of course, the followers of Ferdinand Lassalle about whom today little is remembered though he was of greater influence on German social democracy than Marx since he actually founded the party that is today's Social Democratic Party. This training led to my doctorate on a German trade union leader and social democrat member of the Reichstag named Carl Legien the founder of the modern German trade union movement.¹ Consequently, since 1966 I taught modern German history at the University of Queensland, wrote and published regularly about German labour history, German colonies in the Pacific and the debate about German war-guilt for the First World War, as well as the church struggle against communism in the German Democratic Republic. All of this I found immensely stimulating, especially during times of study leave in Germany. In the process I mentored a number of post-graduate students all of whom had to acquire fluency in German in order to complete their doctorates which were subsequently published. My own latest publication together with the New Zealand scholar Dr George Davis is about the origins of Anzac commemoration and the key role played in that by an Anglican priest named Canon David John Garland, a remarkable Dubliner who would have to be one of the great organisational geniuses of 20th century Australia. He is honoured by an ADB entry but it would be better to buy our book at the National Library bookshop.²

II

So why is my history different from other Australian historians? It is not just that my subject matter has been different. I think one main reason is that having studied in Germany and comprehended what the Kaiser's power brokers had in mind for the entire British Empire at the time, I came to

appreciate the Empire connection more positively, particularly the fact that Australia is one of the world's outstanding functioning parliamentary democracies. We did not achieve that *ex nihilo*; we inherited the necessary institutions and ideas from Great Britain, as Nick Cater has recalled, and they were appropriated and became an essential part of our political culture. Secondly, on a family level my Syrian ancestors came here precisely because it was a British colony where there was the rule of law and economic opportunity, vastly different from the backward and barbaric Ottoman Empire. My mother's Scottish family made the trip in 1920 under the then operating Empire Settlement Scheme having been nominated by relatives who had already left Britain for Australia years before and who had become established farmers on the Atherton Tableland. When my parents married in 1929 their perception was that they were living in Greater Britain without doubt. My Scottish forbears from damp and foggy Glasgow had simply moved from one part of British jurisdiction to another much warmer and sunnier but also at times a very wet part of Australia.

Growing up in a North Queensland country town in the 1930's was clearly a different experience, say, from that of historians from Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart or Canberra. One's perception of the world had to be different simply by virtue of the fact that North Queensland is so remote from anywhere. And precisely because of that the urge not to be marginalised was very strong, that is to resist the 'tyranny of distance'. For example, I have vivid early memories of the death of King George V, the abdication crisis caused by his heir Edward VIII and the subsequent coronation of his younger brother, George VI. These events were marked by parades through the town by returned servicemen, the Boy Scouts and Cubs, Girl Guides and Brownies accompanied by the town band and sometimes a pipe band. Similar parades took place every Anzac Day each year as long as I can remember.

The town also had a cinema dating from 'pre-talkie' days and every week it seemed that the entire population eagerly attended especially not to miss the news reel. It was our window on the wider world. But we also enjoyed the Hollywood films of the era, especially if my mother judged that they had educational merit. Let us think back to what the main news was of that time.

There was much footage about fascist Italy with images of Il Duce ranting at the crowd in Rome which inspired not a few of the local Italians rather misguidedly, to become fascists. But more particularly it was the time of the triumph of Adolf Hitler and the creation of Nazi Germany. The newsreels of the Führer addressing the Nuremburg Rally caused my mother to remark: 'Where are the Kaiser's sons? They should not be putting up with this.' She did not, of course, understand the full implications of the Nazi movement, but then few people in this country did at first, not even Mr Menzies. Also, by the mid-thirties everybody seemed to be buying radios. The back yards of most houses featured a very tall mast for the aerial. And the big discussion among my peers was how many valves did your wireless have and could it get shortwave from the BBC? So there was among us a gritty determination not to succumb to the tyranny of distance.

When I got to the university well after the war, the Professor of history at the University of Queensland since 1949 was Gordon Greenwood, himself a graduate of Sydney under Stephen Henry Roberts, and a post-graduate at the LSE where he had been supervised by the renowned Harold Laski. Greenwood had a distinct concept of his pedagogic role. History for him was the medium in which to train what he called 'men of affairs'. That did not, of course, exclude women. He was keen to get his graduates of both genders into the Department of External Affairs in the belief that history was the best preparation for the foreign service, say in contrast to law or economics. It was a pragmatic view of the essential value of history, not as an antiquarian enterprise, but as a discipline that equipped students to take an active part in public life.

In this regard Greenwood stood in a line of quasi apostolic succession with his mentor Stephen Roberts and his predecessor at Sydney. George Arnold Wood, the foundation professor of history there from 1891 until his death in 1928. First of all, Wood was a committed English Whig who was 'agin' the government if he thought it was acting immorally as he believed it was at the time of the Boer War. He always believed in the rights of small nations and he never betrayed his principles with regard to the English government's treatment of Ireland. But he always thought the English Whig tradition

would straighten things out in the end, so not surprisingly when the Germans invaded Belgium in August 1914, Wood was foremost in condemning Prussian militarism.³ There was no doubt that he was essentially a political historian but one strongly imbued with a Christian conscience. And he had a wide following having mentored dozens of students at Sydney some of whom went on themselves to become significant professorial leaders, the most famous of whom would have been Max Crawford.

Stephen Henry Roberts was from Maldon, Victoria, and he had a mother of German descent. Roberts was very emphatically a political historian of distinctly liberal bent. For many years during the '30s and '40s he wrote an anonymous column for the *Sydney Morning Herald* entitled, 'From our European Correspondent' in which he commented on world affairs. His main contribution came after a long tour of Nazi Germany in 1936 when he wrote an international best seller, *The House that Hitler Built*, the first significant analysis of the sinister nature of National Socialism to be published by anyone.

When I got to Germany in 1961 it was a very different place, a divided and still considerably bombed out country where the Cold War crackled ominously beneath the surface of everyday life. The West was teeming with US troops and there was a British army on the Rhine. In East Germany there were stationed some 400,000 Soviet troops. Both sides had nuclear capability, so the tension was palpable. I had gone to Munich like quite a few Westerners, to study under the great liberal scholar, Professor Franz Schnabel who had been in the resistance and who had been originally chosen for that premier chair in history by the US occupation authorities. His twice-a-week two hour lectures were attended by hundreds of students and the general public who thronged into the Auditorium Maximum hoping to hear what had gone wrong with their fatherland. Schnabel did not openly play the blame game but being a liberal and a Roman Catholic he subtly made it fairly clear that Germany's misfortunes had been self-inflicted and that the root cause of the catastrophe had been the anti-liberal political culture of Prussia that had been imposed on the nation by Bismarck from 1871 onwards.

In this Schnabel was very persuasive although the remnant of patriotic

Prussians in the audience was sometimes incensed to hear their cherished beliefs about the virtues of Prussianism and the reputation of Bismarck being subtly undermined, and they made their displeasure known by hissing loudly whenever Schnabel said anything mildly disparaging about Prussia. I learned a great deal from Schnabel in particular about the political-pedagogic role that historians in all countries play. And that, of course, can be for good or ill. They really need to steer a course between the ideal of Rankean detachment on the one hand and partisan propaganda on the other.

At the University of Erlangen in 1963 I found the ideal doctoral supervisor in Professor Waldemar Besson who encouraged my researches on the history of the German socialist movement, and then with Professor Walter Peter Fuchs a renowned Reformation historian I was transported further into the world of ideas of patriotic political German historians of the 19th and 20th centuries and learned how deeply and adversely they had moulded the political values of generations of students. Professor Fuchs even advanced the idea that if one professor namely Heinrich von Treitschke had not been selected for the premier chair of history in Berlin after von Ranke, that is from 1874 to his death in 1896, Prusso-German history would have been very different. In short, von Treitschke had acted as a one man propaganda agency for unrestrained militarism, imperialism and anti-Semitism and he had influenced many young men who became in their subsequent careers the virulent activists of Pan-Germanism.

To the nations' great sorrow, Treitschke's baleful legacy had been carried over well into the 20th century when his most avid reader had been none other than the former corporal Adolf Hitler before he had begun his political career in earnest after release from Landsberg prison in 1924. Happily, after 1945 there gradually arose a new and humane spirit among West German historians and educators generally and it is to men like Franz Schnabel, Walter Peter Fuchs, Waldemar Besson and most importantly Fritz Fischer, that German historiography has found its true political-pedagogic role in the education system.

Finally, one cannot escape the observation that some Australian historians do seek to exercise a Treitschke-like influence over their students, colleagues

and, of course, their readership generally. Such a pedagogic endeavour is, in my view, not Australian. In a word, they wish to impose their interpretations as the only valid ones. Of course, in a democracy, everyone is entitled to his or her opinion and has a right to express it. But it is a grotesque anomaly if historians use their status to advance their personal prejudices.

And this kind of thing actually happens. From 7 to 11 of July last I attended the Australian Historical Association conference in Brisbane and was dismayed to hear a speaker in a frankly naïve way advance the opinion that Australia had no business becoming involved in the Great War. The fact that that Australia was the object of attack from the German navy in the Pacific was conveniently ignored. Further, the question of what would have happened had the German navy actually succeeded in its objective of destroying the Royal Navy as it very nearly did at the Battle of Jutland at the end of June, 1915 was never posed. With the Royal Navy eliminated as a viable force the Germans would have had the ability with a few battleships to dictate peace terms to all overseas British possessions with the possible exception of Canada. Fortunately, our government of the day understood this and declared solidarity with the mother country, as did also the USA.⁴

The idea that involvement in the Great War impeded Australia's political development to becoming an independent peoples' democracy is frankly dangerously misleading. If we had not fought as part of the Empire we would have lost the right to be defended against the encroachments of Prussianism and all that that implied.

That is 'my history', and thankfully I have the right to express it. Make of it what you will.

¹ The work that eventuated from this endeavour was, *Trade Unionism in Germany from Bismarck to Hitler 1862-1922* 2 vols, London & New York: Barnes and Noble, 1984.

² *Anzac Day Origins: Canon DJ Garland and Trans-Tasman Commemoration* Canberra, Barton Books, 2013, pp 417.

³ I published on Wood what one reviewer designated a 'quirkish' book entitled, *Prussian-German Militarism 1914-1918 in Australian Perspective: the Thought of George Arnold Wood*, Bern, Peter Lang, 1991.

⁴ I recall a lecture by Professor Trevor Wilson of Adelaide held at a conference at Sydney University in 1991 to mark the first seventy-five years since its foundation. Professor Wilson who was speaking about Britain's decision to go to war against imperial Germany was, during question time, attacked by several young women feminist historians who said the First World War was essentially a typical example of immature males fighting about who among them was the strongest. Professor Wilson who had spent years investigating especially the British documents replied, somewhat exasperatedly, "Yes, we had a choice. And it was this: You could choose to lie down and let the enemy march all over you, OR you could stand up to resist the Prussian bully and his wickedness and *fight like men!*" Given the character of the British race, that is what we chose to do.



‘NATION WITHOUT A MIND’ DONALD HORNE’S LUCKY COUNTRY THEN AND NOW

One hundred and sixty one years ago, nineteenth-century Australian republican Daniel Henry Deniehy, in his most celebrated public speech delivered in Sydney’s Victoria Theatre in August 1853, metaphorically paraded before his raucous audience the moral and leadership credentials of an affluent coterie of contemporary politicians and community leaders. These well-known figures, judged according to the extent of their public contributions, included the rum magnate, James Macarthur, and the ever-divisive patrician, William Charles Wentworth. Deniehy caustically labelled the group as ‘Botany Bay magnificoes’, ‘Harlequin aristocrats’, ‘Australian mandarins’—taken together, a ‘bunyip aristocracy’.¹ The huzza-ing crowd roared its approval.

I find myself drawn to the challenge of a task not dissimilar to Deniehy’s, but in this instance to recall—and like Deniehy, to assess—a selection of the recent pronouncements and general behaviour of a handful of our present federal parliamentary representatives, the cream of our legislative crop, today’s doyens of democracy.

Consider first: the incumbent Australian Prime Minister who, last year, when introducing the fresh tenure of our 26th Governor-General, Peter Cosgrove, and in recognition of the shiny new royal title he would bestow upon the G-G, and searching for elevated words commensurate with the occasion, referred to the new man as the ‘knight for rolling up your sleeves’, and, my personal favourite, Australia’s ‘cheerleader-in-chief’.²

This last descriptor seemed at least consistent from a Prime Minister who has stated unequivocally that ‘my position is that everyone has got to be on

Team Australia', and has cautioned that 'you don't migrate to this country unless you want to join our team'. Those in opposition guernseys, to work with the PM's budgey-smuggling metaphors, apparently include not just potentially recalcitrant, non-conformist new arrivals but our own ABC, admonished not so long back by the PM with these words: 'I think it dismays Australians when the national broadcaster appears to take everyone's side but its own'.³

Again, perhaps predictable sentiments from an individual for whom climate change has been dismissed as 'crap', the extraordinary Parliament House art collection as 'avant garde crap', and who has assessed a certain 'repository of all wisdom', utilising his own wit and intelligence, his rapier Rhodes Scholar psyche, as 'the suppository of all wisdom'.⁴

The man has become a comedian's feast, both here and overseas.

Let us also consider: the Prime Minister's right-hand man in the Senate (for they are all men in the present Federal Government cabinet, bar two), Eric Abetz, Employment Minister Abetz, Leader of the Government in the Senate, when applying his social and ethical acumen to the complex and deeply sensitive areas of abortion and breast cancer stated, and I quote exactly: 'I think the studies, and I think they date back from the 1950s, assert that there is a link between abortion and breast cancer'. Experts in the field were outraged by the comment. AMA President, Professor Brian Owler, spoke for many when he stated that 'If he's—[Minister Abetz]—if he's quoting papers from the 1950s, I suspect that's where he's living'.⁵

Let us consider: Minister Abetz's right-hand man in the Senate, the Government's Deputy Leader in the Upper House, Australia's Attorney-General, George Brandis (in an ideal world, a man replete with a sharp legal mind, given the magnitude of his official role and responsibilities) last year explaining the prospect of changes on his watch to the fragile Racial Discrimination Act: 'People do have a right to be bigots you know. In a free country, people do have the right to say things that other people find offensive or insulting, or bigoted'.⁶

Consider: two energetic new members of this Parliament who might well have been energised by Senator Brandis' comments—namely, Palmer United

Party leader, Mr Clive Palmer, and his description of the Chinese Government as ‘bastards’, ‘mongrels’ who ‘shoot their own people’; and Mr Palmer’s feisty former party-member, Senator Jacqui Lambie, stimulated to expand on the remarks of her jolly former leader: ‘If anybody thinks that we should have a national security and defence policy which ignores the threat of a Chinese communist invasion—you’re delusional and got rocks in your head’.⁷

Now, my parade of ‘magnificoes’ of the present day has so far limited itself to choice utterances from the fertile fields of Australian public/political discourse during 2014.

But cast your mind back a little further and consider virtually any of the cowed and cowardly statements concerning the plight of asylum seekers offered up by the then governing Labor Party, as it buckled under a Rupert Murdoch/shock-jock radio barrage, only to seek desperate refuge in the use of evasive, people-smuggler ‘business model’ rhetoric—in the process contravening Australia’s United Nations obligations and blackening our hard-won international status, post-war, as a steady defender of human rights.

And consider: last in our parlous parade, the Coalition Senator not too long ago who resisted the urge to words as she did the ‘Hokey Pokey’ and the ‘Time Warp’ in the Senate chamber, and Labor’s Craig Emerson, not to be outdone, performing his ‘Whyalla Wipe-out’ in the gardens of the Parliament. Who could forget?

Little wonder, grimly entertained by this spectacle of contemporary Australian political life, this theatre of the absurd, that British BBC journalist Nick Bryant, reporting from Australia between 2006 and 2013, could observe in his new book, *The Rise and Fall of Australia: How a Great Nation Lost Its Way*, that ‘the Canberra talent pool now has the depth of a drought-ridden billabong’. Parliamentary debate, writes Bryant, ‘has been reduced to base sloganeering, crude name-calling and intemperate rants. The quarrels have become so repetitive, the rhetoric so recurring, that it would hardly be a surprise if Punxsutawney Phil, the furry star of [the film] ‘Groundhog Day’, emerged from the grassy knoll that covers Parliament House’.⁸

With *Rise and Fall of Australia*, Nick Bryant takes his place in a long line of British observers of Australia (colonial Governors, military men, journalists, scientists and creative writers) ranging from Governor John Hunter in the 1790s to Lachlan Macquarie, Charles Darwin, J A Froude, Rudyard Kipling, Anthony Trollope, Rider Haggard and D H Lawrence. However, while Bryant does cite one or two of his renowned predecessors, there is no doubt about his primary stimulus, Donald Horne's classic 1964 volume, *The Lucky Country*.

Horne's seminal study is variously described by Bryant as 'arguably Australia's most influential post-war book', 'bulls-eye accurate' and a work 'difficult to improve on or challenge'. Most pertinent of all is Bryant's statement that '[Horne's] prologue reads like it could have been penned at any stage over the past five years'.⁹

The observation is not new. Other commentators, and I include myself, have been saying the same thing in print and on radio for quite a while now. The difference is that Bryant's Random House book has been getting considerable publicity nationwide, and it fully deserves the accolades.

But if the behaviour and priorities of a past Australia assessed by Horne, and present-day Australia critiqued by Bryant, have been re-connected—Menzies' Australia and Abbott's Australia—in what areas? Based on what assumptions? Most obvious in what kinds of behaviour?

To answer these questions, we must first clarify the principal claims about Australia made by Donald Horne in the first *Lucky Country* edition of 1964.

For me, there are six. In detailing them, and to mark appropriately this historically significant ISAA conference, I will use Horne's specific words as much as possible

- Firstly, in chapter one of the section sub-titled 'Nation without a mind', we read: 'Australia is not a country of great political dialogue or intense soul-searching after problems'. And, a page or two later: 'There is little of the sophisticated political discourse that can refresh politicians ...'
- Secondly: Australia needs a new generation of leaders who can see 'the new shapes of the future—or the present'.

- Thirdly: Australia needs to find a continuing pride of place for the ‘extraordinary’, visionary individual.
- Fourth, under the prickly sub-headings ‘Lost Bearings’, ‘Looking to Britain’ and ‘Looking to the United States’, Horne writes: ‘The momentum towards concepts of independent nationhood has slowed down, or stopped. Perhaps the world has become too puzzling for Australians ...’
- Fifth: Horne advocates an Australian republic, the first notable Australian to do so since the 1890s. His frustration is barely concealed when he asks: ‘Is Australia alone in the world in being unable to rig up its own head of state? This is backwater colonialism, nervous of its final responsibilities’.
- And, lastly, claim six: the oft-quoted opening sentence of chapter ten: ‘Australia is a lucky country run mainly by second-rate people who share its luck’.¹⁰

Six years before the publication of the Horne book, A A Phillips’ near-classic, *The Australian Tradition*, was published. Donald Horne gifted us the phrase, ‘lucky country’, to use and mostly abuse; Arthur Phillips launched the phrase, ‘the cultural cringe’, into the public arena to describe those Australians—those numerous Australians in the 1950s—who were in awe of anything from overseas, anything non-Australian, especially anything British. For Phillips, too many of his fellow-Australians needed to make ‘progress in the art of being unself-consciously ourselves’. We still needed ‘a relaxed erectness of carriage’.¹¹

It might be unfair to cite just one relevant statement made by Robert Menzies, in his seventeen-year second term as Prime Minister, 1949–1966, but I do so because I had not come across it until recently. It was quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 19 September 1964, almost exactly contemporaneous with *Lucky Country*’s publication. ‘There is something about being a subject of the Queen’, Menzies declared, ‘which distinguished you in a material way from other people’.

Hold that utterance for a moment, because here I need to traverse a few decades to make a point briefly. I have no doubt, nor did Donald Horne, that

Australia evolved rapidly in the 1970s, '80s and 1990s, culturally, politically, ethically and economically. Donald, Joy Hooton and I co-edited a book in 1995, entitled *The Abundant Culture: Meaning and Significance in Everyday Australia*, that promoted this newfound cultural confidence and sophistication with unbridled enthusiasm.¹² But if the 1990s was something of a cultural crescendo decade, I believe 9/11 symbolically commenced a rapid and pervasive deterioration—the re-emergence of an earlier era's worst expressions of timidity, subservience, cronyism and parochialism—from which we as a 21st century, world middle-power nation, are still suffering. As a high-profile group, our national politicians are surely the worst exemplars of this malaise.

Australian actor Judy Davis, in her superb 2003 fourth annual Manning Clark Lecture, entitled 'Fear: The politics of submission in Australian History', argued that a 'politics of submission' had engulfed Australia sometime during John Howard's term as Prime Minister. She, too, regards the 'events of September 11 as a catalyst' as she considers ongoing consequences:

I think Howard's problem is that he believes we no longer have the power to act independently. He believes that Australia's economic survival and long-term security depends on full commitment to the American world vision. We can't afford the big moral debates—the world's too frightening a place ... The great Russian playwright Anton Chekov wrote that he spent all his life fighting the little person inside. "We should be giants", he said ...

And Davis continues: 'The little person in all of us is vindictive, discriminatory and above all, fearful. Fear: it is so often used as a tool of control'. For Judy Davis, overwhelmed by the events of September 11 and determined to understand its impact, Australia became in the first years of the new century 'suddenly unrecognisable'.¹³

In the ten years-plus since Davis delivered her lecture (in this building, as it happens), I would argue that in certain key areas of public behaviour and government policy, evidence of Australia's ethical compass has almost vanished. Australian politicians, as Elizabeth Farrelly recently put it with her typically mordant wit, could do with a bit of moral lap-banding.

Donald Horne's series of judgements a full five decades ago again assumes

relevance. We are experiencing another period of culpable ‘second-rate’ political leadership. We are once again in dire need of a new, refreshed and refreshing generation of political leaders to explore the ‘new shapes of the future’; the world is again a fearful, puzzling place, with too many Australians prepared to let craven politicians explain it to us in simplistic, embarrassing homilies. The republic has retreated again into the far distance, and with it an Australian as Australia’s head of state.

This present political wasteland is probably the result of a number of factors coalescing, a perfect storm of mediocrity and self-inflicted myopia. To name some of the most obvious, in no order of importance: in our glib, poll-driven society, the constricting impact of three-year political terms in office is accentuated as politicians readily eschew the big-picture in favour of their ten-second evening news visual or sound-bite (think: Kevin Rudd ‘catch you later’, or Tony Abbott regularly turning up at any Queanbeyan workplace in ludicrous coloured jacket); all parties, especially the majors, have bent to the right with little or no struggle, in effect removing a credible Labor Left and a credible Coalition core of ‘Wets’ (Petro Georgiou, Judy Moylan and Russell Broadbent, where are you when we need you the most?); the dearth of quality speech-writers; the absence of any politicians who don’t need speech-writers (if we believe Wayne Swan, then Kevin Rudd once asked Labor’s national office to come up with ‘one core belief for him¹⁴’); the near-absence of departmental heads prepared to provide their political bosses with old-school ‘frank and fearless’ advice (where have the Frederick Wheelers, Arthur Tanges, Lenox Hewitts gone? To pastures, every one); the near-absence of women from positions of authority in the ruling government (one in the executive, presently, and four in the junior ministry—meaning just five out of thirty); then there’s the mean and nasty mood prevailing in the parliament, between parties, and, in the case of Labor in recent years, within the party; the toxic methods of pre-selection of candidates in both major parties; and, lastly, the increasingly suspicious, distrusting mood within the ranks of Commonwealth public servants who, according to a leaked Social Media Policy, have now been urged to dob in colleagues who use the internet to criticise politicians, even anonymously.

The net result of all of this is the breed of politician we have at present—not all, but far too many—producing an array of public statements and policies that do make you cringe.

What and who do I have in mind? Where do I start? The May 2014 budget is as good a place as any: Treasurer Joe, 'Sloppy' Joe Hockey's first, a budget that virtually united the Australian public in derision. It was surely the worst in generations, if not ever. The newspaper headlines said it all: 'Ideological Warrior Abbott's budget program a pogrom'; 'Not the Way to Close the Gap'; 'Why the Treasurer's budget is beyond salvation'; 'Team of Bastards'; 'Genuinely Shocking'; and, most apposite of all, Tom Ballard's *Sydney Morning Herald* article, 'Changing the Nation'.¹⁵

This was a budget that indeed threatened to change the fabric of our nation, as most people understood it, a budget constructed to make the poor poorer, and the rich richer.

Immigration, defence, police, national security, all cocooned, and 58 new F-35 Joint Strike Fighter planes committed to, at a cost of \$12.4 billion—while the lowest 10 per cent of Australians, according to ANU research amongst others, would be at least 5 per cent worse off. This budget shamed the nation.

In education it was the same story, as Minister Christopher Pyne (supported by the G8 Vice-Chancellors, chaired by the ANU's Ian Young) sought to de-regulate education further, sending Australia remorselessly down a path similar to the USA—a path, according to American Nobel laureate, Joseph Stiglitz, certain to have dire consequences, leading to a more inequitable society.¹⁶

Then there's climate change. The world's scientists, including the traditionally conservative American association, are virtually united. They know climate change is real. The only questions are: how bad is it, and how do we respond to it. Yet we've now had the demoralising spectacle of a Labor Prime Minister (Rudd), describing climate change as 'the greatest moral, economic and environmental challenge of our generation', and then dropping the issue once a blast of Murdoch media pressure was applied, and declining poll numbers publicised.¹⁷

Presently we have the even more dispiriting spectacle of the other major party in office, a party teeming with flat-earthers. On 20 August 2014, the *New York Times* headed its editorial, 'Australia's Retreat on Emissions', and a week later it gave front-page publicity to the results published jointly by five groups of Australian researchers stating that Australia's savage 2013 heatwaves were 'almost certainly a direct consequence of greenhouse gases released by human activity'. Determined to ignore climate change science if not attack it, this government, when it hosted the G20 leaders' summit late last year, doggedly refused to put the issue on the agenda. In the lead-up to the gathering, President Obama and the rest of the G20 leaders were bemused, the world perplexed, and three former Australians of the Year, including Nobel laureate Peter Doherty, so embarrassed by this culpable behaviour that they signed an open letter insisting that climate change be included on the G20 agenda. The national humiliation continued when both the Chinese and American Presidents had some fun with pro-climate change press releases at the Australian Prime Minister's expense.

It has come to this.

Let me conclude by recalling Dan Deniehy's pithy phrase, the 'bunyip aristocracy', and giving it a 21st century context. I can't imagine that Deniehy and his enthusiastic republican colleagues, the Rev John Dunmore Lang, Adelaide Ironside and Charles Harpur, could have imagined that, a century and a half after their deaths, Australia would still not be a republic, still without a head of state of our own. What's more: knighthoods are back; republicans are accepting them (Quentin Bryce and Marie Bashir, I'm ashamed *for* you); our first female Prime Minister, also a republican, to get a bump in the polls, sat knitting some booties for the royal baby on the front cover of the *Women's Weekly*; and when Prince Harry paid us a visit awhile back, Tony Abbott, on the lawns of Kirribilli, veritably shrieked with delight: 'Prince Harry, I regret to say not everyone in Australia is a monarchist, but today everyone feels like a monarchist'.¹⁸ No, Prime Minister, not everyone. Not then, not ever.

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- ¹ David Headon and Elizabeth Perkins, eds, *Our First Republicans*, The Federation Press, Sydney, 1998, pp.28-9.
- ² See Patrick Lion, 'G-G to be working knight and day', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 August 2014.
- ³ Quoted in Nick Bryant, *The Rise and Fall of Australia: How a great nation lost its way*, Bantam (Random House Pty Ltd), North Sydney, 2014, p 283.
- ⁴ See, for example, Bryant, *Rise and Fall of Australia*, p 271.
- ⁵ Quoted in Laurie Oakes, 'And the Goose of the Week is', *Daily Telegraph*, 9 August 2014.
- ⁶ See, for example, Heath Aston and James Massola, 'PM backs down on race', *Canberra Times*, 6 August 2014; James Massola, 'Dumping race law: meet Tony the pragmatist' and Crispin Hull, 'Labor not needed, thanks to Brandis', both in *Canberra Times*, 9 August 2014.
- ⁷ See James Massola, 'Libs, Labor, business blast Palmer over Chinese "mongrels" comment', *Canberra Times*, 20 August, 2014.
- ⁸ Bryant, *Rise and Fall of Australia*, pp 14-15.
- ⁹ Bryant, *Rise and Fall of Australia*, p 46.
- ¹⁰ The most readily accessible copy of *The Lucky Country* is the 'Fully revised edition': Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country*, Penguin Books, Ringwood (Victoria). The book was reprinted almost every year after 1964, its original publication date, until at least the late 1970s—and many times after that. The reprint includes the 'Preface to the Second Edition'. My pagination comes from the 1971 'Fully revised edition': pp.21, 24, 95, 107, 220, 231.
- ¹¹ See chapter V, 'The Cultural Cringe', in *The Australian Tradition: Studies in a Colonial Culture*, F W Cheshire, Melbourne, pp 89-95.
- ¹² David Headon, Joy Hooton, Donald Horne, eds, *The Abundant Culture: Meaning and Significance in Everyday Australia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1994.
- ¹³ Judy Davis, 'Fear: The politics of submission in Australian history', (Fourth Annual Manning Clark Lecture), Manning Clark House, Canberra, 2003, pp 6, 9, 10.
- ¹⁴ See James Massola, 'Rudd so poll driven', *Canberra Times*, 16 August 2014.
- ¹⁵ Tom Ballard, 'Changing the Nation', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17-18 May 2014.
- ¹⁶ See Joseph Stiglitz, 'Inequality: good reasons to shun the U S model', *Canberra Times*, 7 July 2014.
- ¹⁷ Quoted in Bryant, *Rise and Fall of Australia*, p 133.
- ¹⁸ See Letter to the Editor, *Canberra Times*, 26 August 2014.

ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS

Pat Anderson is an Alyawarre woman known nationally and internationally as a powerful advocate for disadvantaged people, with a particular focus on the health of Australia's First Peoples. She has extensive experience in all aspects of Aboriginal health, including community development, advocacy, policy formation and research ethics. Pat has spoken before the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous People, and currently serves as the Chairperson of The Lowitja Institute: Australia's National Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research. She was a co-author with Rex Wild QC of *Little Children Are Sacred*, a report on the abuse of Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory. In June 2014, Pat was appointed Officer (AO) of the Order of Australia for distinguished service to the Indigenous community as a social justice advocate, particularly through promoting improved health, educational and protection outcomes for children.

Diane Bell is Professor Emerita of Anthropology, The George Washington University, DC, USA and Writer and Editor in Residence at Flinders University, SA. She has undertaken extensive fieldwork in Indigenous communities in northern and south-eastern Australia as well as comparative research in North America; Diane is an award winning author who has published 10 books and numerous articles. She was the first woman professor at Deakin University (1986-8) and then spent 17 years in the USA. On returning to Australia, she worked on the Ngarrindjeri Native Title Claim. Diane continues to write, speak, strategise and advocate for a more just society: a concept that underwrites and unifies the various and varied facets of her feminist anthropological stance on life.

Stephen Darwin is the ACT Secretary of the National Tertiary Education Union. Prior to taking up this role he was an education academic at ANU and education director at the Canberra Institute of Technology. Stephen has completed doctoral research on learning evaluation in higher education and has been widely published on education policy, teaching design and vocational education.

David Headon is a cultural consultant and historian. Formerly Director of the Centre for Australian Cultural Studies (1994-2004), Cultural Adviser to the National Capital Authority (2000-2007), and History and Heritage Adviser for the Centenary of Canberra (2008-13). He was also History and Cultural Adviser in the Chief Minister's Department (ACT Government) and an Adviser to Senator Kate Lundy. He is a regular commentator on cultural, political and social issues on ABC television and radio (regional and national). David has published widely and was the project co-ordinator, editor and co-writer of the national award-winning *The Griffin Legacy* (2001) for which he was awarded the Centenary Medal.

John Hood was educated at Sydney University, 1964-1969, and has taught senior secondary history for more than forty years. From 1970 to 1973 he was employed by the NSW Dept of Education in Tumbarumba. He taught English at the Stratygakis Institute in Athens in 1974, and was later employed as a teacher of history at the Southern Grammar School for Girls, Portsmouth, UK, until 1976. Following this he returned to Australia and was employed by the Commonwealth Teaching Service at Watson High School (1976-82) and Dickson College (1983-2010), where he taught History, Greek and Latin. He has been a Master Teacher in history since 1978.

Julia Horne is University Historian and Principal Research Fellow at the University of Sydney. She has written on the history of universities and the history of landscape and travel. She is the author of *The Pursuit of Wonder* (2005) and, most recently, *Sydney: The Making of a Public University* (with Geoffrey Sherington, 2012). Julia is the daughter of Donald and Myfanwy Horne.

Nick Horne has driven taxis for thirty years.

Sybil Jack was born and educated in the UK with degrees from Oxford. She became a senior tutor in Economic History at Sydney University then a lecturer in History and eventually Associate Professor, for a time dean. In retirement she has lectured at Sydney University for Celtic Studies and worked with the Sydney Society for Scottish History.

Ian Keese has taught in country and outer metropolitan Secondary Schools in NSW, including 15 years as a History Head Teacher. He has been a co-writer of seven secondary history textbooks, including four for the new Australian Curriculum. Ian is a Fellow of the Australian College of Educators and is chair of the College of Educators Policy Committee. He has been NSW Branch Secretary of the College and an assessor in the Quality Teacher Awards.

Ian Lowe AO is emeritus professor of science, technology and society at Griffith University and holds adjunct appointments at two other universities. He directed Australia's Commission for the Future in 1988, chaired the advisory council that produced the first independent national report on the state of the environment in 1996 and was president of the Australian Conservation Foundation from 2004 to 2014. He has filled a wide range of advisory roles in Australia, is author of 12 books and over 100 other publications, and is a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering. He has been a reviewer for the several global environmental studies and in 2009, the International Academy of Sciences, Health and Ecology awarded him the Konrad Lorenz Gold Medal.

John Moses was born in Atherton NQ of a Lebanese Christian (RC) father and a Scottish Episcopalian mother. Educated at the Atherton primary school and afterwards

at All Soul's Anglican boarding school in Charters Towers. Following an apprenticeship as a radio mechanic he trained for the Anglican priesthood at St Francis' College in Brisbane but before ordination he took a B.A. Hons in history as well as courses in German and English. He was awarded a travelling scholarship to study in West Germany, first at Munich and finally at Erlangen and was awarded a doctorate there in 1965. He has written and published numerous books and articles. His most recent books are *Reluctant Revolutionary: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Collision with Prusso-German History* and with George F. Davis, *Anzac Day Origins: Canon DJ Garland and Trans-Tasman Commemoration*. John was ordained by Archbishop Felix Arnott in Brisbane 1978, he served as an auxiliary priest in his local parish and now in the Diocese of Canberra Goulburn at St Paul's, Manuka. He is a professorial associate of St Mark's National Theological Centre, Barton ACT.

John O'Carroll is a researcher in the fields of Australian and Pacific Literature, as well as aspects of social and cultural analysis. He has published many articles on literature, in the Pacific and in Australia. Beyond this, he has a wide range of research interests. He is currently researching cybernetics and cultural history. With Chris Fleming, he has published a chapter in *Kafka's Cages*, a book on Kafka's *Trial*. He has also co-written books, one with Chris McGillion on the lives of priests, and one with Bob Hodge on Australian multiculturalism. Apart from his present position at Charles Sturt, he has worked also at James Cook University, Murdoch University, the University of Western Sydney, and the University of the South Pacific.

Susan Priestley has been an independent historian since 1962 when she embarked on a history of Echuca, submitted as a Master of Arts thesis. The Echuca book was the first of eleven commissioned histories of places and institutions in Victoria that included *Making Their Mark*, one of three volumes marking the State's sesquicentenary. The most recent *Echuca: A History* (2009) is a fully extended and updated edition of the original. The commissions brought invitations to provide seven articles for the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, and one for the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. She is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria. Research over many years in England and Australia came to fruition in 2011 with the publication of *Henrietta Augusta Dugdale: An Activist 1827-1918*.

Joy Wallace is Associate Dean Learning and Teaching in the Faculty of Arts at Charles Sturt University. She is National Convenor of the Australasian Council of Deans of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities Network of Associate Deans Learning and Teaching ((DASSH ADLTN) and Chair of the Australian University Heads of English Learning and Teaching Committee. She has published on medieval literature, nineteenth-century literature, feminist psychoanalytic criticism and avant garde Australian women's writing. Her most recent literary publications are on the work of the

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text-sound artist, Hazel Smith. With John O'Carroll, she has presented several papers on the Australian women writers of the mid-twentieth century who wrote what Jean-Paul Sartre, in the 1940s, termed 'engaged literature'.