



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

**PARLIAMENT AND THE PEOPLE: PARTICIPATION,  
REPRESENTATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**FRIDAY, 11 JULY 2008**

**Brisbane**

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### Conference met at 9.10 am

**Ms MALONE:** Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests, one and all. It is my very great pleasure to welcome you to the 2008 Australasian Study of Parliament Group Conference, Parliament and the People: Participation, Representation and Engagement. We are very grateful to have such a wonderful turnout for this conference; thank you all for attending. I would like to pay my respects at this stage to the traditional owners of the land on which we meet and especially to pay my respects to Uncle Joe Kirk, who has come to give a welcome for us this morning.

For those who have not had an association with the Australasian Study of Parliament Group before, the Australasian Study of Parliament Group was formed with a charter to bring together parliamentarians, academics, members of the media, parliamentary staff and other interested persons to foster research and debate about our parliamentary institutions. The conference that we are holding will certainly contribute to that debate and has stimulated considerable research. The proceedings for this conference are being recorded by Hansard and will be available in August on the ASPG web site. It is now my very pleasant duty to introduce to you the Deputy Speaker of the Queensland parliament, Mr John English.

**Mr ENGLISH:** Thank you very much. It is a pleasure to be here this morning. Before I give you my official welcome, it is much more important that I introduce Uncle Joe Kirk, one of the Turrbul elders, to give you a formal welcome to country. Please welcome Uncle Joe.

**UNCLE JOE KIRK:** Good morning, everyone. I will give you a little bit of information about myself from the Turrbul people in the Brisbane area. I was born and raised in the Cherbourg Aboriginal community in the South Burnett, which is only a 2½ hour drive from here. I left the community at the age of 15 after 13 years of living there and then I moved to Brisbane where my family is now living at Inala and Ipswich. I live in Ipswich at the moment, but I have been around the Brisbane area now for over 28 years. I was around in the old days—in the rock n' roll days—when Cloudland existed and we would go ballroom dancing and do our traditional dances as well. So I have been around in this area, which is the area of Turrbul and the Jagera people across the river, for many years.

In saying that, I would like to give you a bit of information about the Turrbul people and my family. My mother was part of the stolen generation. She was moved from the Ayr area in north Queensland and moved to Cherbourg as a young woman. My father was taken from St George. He is part of the Kamilaroi people and he was moved to Cherbourg also. He walked from the Woodford area to Kilcoy. They walked and it took them over six weeks to walk to Cherbourg in the South Burnett. My father's mother was Eliza Lane and she was part of the Turrbul elders. My mother is from the Fisher family which is Birri Gubbi from north Queensland. My mother and father met on Cherbourg many years ago. She was a housemaid in Murgon and my father worked on the state forestry in Wondai. Later on they then moved into other areas as they became older and had children.

From this area and the Turrbul people, my grandmother in our Dreamtime would tell us stories about the great river in Brisbane and about the great fire that Brisbane had. They can remember way back in the early days when Brisbane's Queen Street caught on fire and many of the shops and businesses were burnt down. There are eight tribes all told for the Brisbane area and they all lived in harmony with one another. They had their differences of opinion. Just like parliament does today, they used to meet. If you know Brisbane at all, they used to meet at the old flour mill on Wickham Terrace on the hill. They used to congregate, too, at the old Newstead hotel and motel. They also used to go out to Mount Coot-tha and on Coronation Drive down the Brisbane River and canoe and raft across the Brisbane River to the southbound people. They had a really enjoyable time. They lived in harmony with many of the tribes around here, even when the Waka Waka people from the South Burnett would come down and the Birri Gubbi people would come down. They would have celebrations down here and share their language and their traditions with one another.

On behalf of the traditional owners and my ancestors in the Dreaming, I would like to welcome you here today to Parliament House and hope you have a terrific time acknowledging what goes on here, like we do as traditional owners. I am involved also in social justice in Ipswich. I am part of the elders group in Ipswich and in Brisbane here sitting on the bench of the Murri Court. We relay to the magistrate the things that Indigenous people can benefit from by having their own Indigenous court. It has been a wonderful time in that process of acknowledgement in the justice system so that now the Aboriginal people have a voice with community elders sitting on the bench and making things a little bit better for the justice system across-the-board, because we know that the justice system is important to all families and the court is open because we have mixed marriages in Aboriginal culture now too. So it is not only a Murri court. Murri is a word for Aboriginal within this state and it is Kurris in New South Wales. In saying that, I would like to welcome you all to this traditional land of ours.

*Uncle Joe Kirk then gave a traditional welcome.*

That means hello and welcome to this land and parliament today. Thank you very much.

**Mr ENGLISH:** Thank you very much. I respectfully acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which this event is taking place and the custodians of the sacred land of our state.

I would like to acknowledge honourable members of parliament from across Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea. I would like to acknowledge the Hon. Kev Rozzoli, ASPG President; Nonie Malone, ASPG Queensland Chapter chair and the conference organiser, and I will be saying more about Nonie's hard work soon; Dr Elaine Thompson, the ASPG journal editor; parliamentary staff; academics; distinguished guests; ladies and gentlemen. I am here representing the Speaker this morning. As is usual, I have been provided with a speech. It is quite lengthy. I had a look at it to see if I could do some editing. However, I have to say that I found it difficult to edit because there are some acknowledgements of people's hard work, which of course you cannot edit out.

Queensland is unique in that we are the only unicameral parliament. So I think it is important that I try to work my way through this speech. I hope I do not bore you this morning, but I found the speech interesting and I hope you do too. Welcome to the 25th annual ASPG national conference, the fourth such ASPG conference to be held here in Queensland. In particular, I wish to welcome everyone who has travelled from interstate and internationally to be here today. I am sure you will enjoy your time here in Queensland. The theme of this conference is Parliament and the People: Participation, Representation and Engagement.

I am here to welcome you to the Queensland parliament today in my capacity as Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly. The Speaker, Mr Mike Reynolds, is returning from Adelaide this morning after attending the 39th Presiding Officers and Clerks Conference. I am sure we are going to have a better time here than he had in poor old Adelaide! My apologies to the South Australian representatives. The Speaker has asked me to pass on his apologies to you all for not being able to deliver this welcome. However, he will be joining us during the day to participate in the conference. As the member whose electorate covers Carbrook, you will understand that I have other matters on my plate at the moment and I will not be joining you for the conference, so my apologies for that. I am very happy to be here in Mr Speaker's place and welcome you all to Brisbane on this lovely winter's day. I trust that you all enjoyed the reception at Government House last night and enjoyed meeting our Governor and our soon to be future Governor-General. The next two days promise to be action packed and thought provoking.

At the outset, I wish to congratulate Nonie Malone and her team of conference organisers for putting together such a diverse and interesting conference program. Nonie has been the ASPG Queensland Chapter chair for five years. She has done a fantastic job of organising a number of functions each year. But I am sure she will acknowledge that the organisation of this conference has been her biggest achievement to date.

Nonie's term of chairing the ASPG Queensland Chapter followed on from Dr Paul Reynolds who founded the chapter and was its inaugural chair from 1993 to 2003. I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to Dr Reynolds for his continuing involvement in the ASPG and also wish him well in his retirement. For anyone who is not aware, Paul retired from his position at the University of Queensland a few weeks ago after over 30 years of service. Paul's contribution to political science in Queensland has been without peer. Those he has taught over the years have gone on to become members of parliament, journalists, academics. I again wish to pay tribute to his great contribution to political science in Queensland. Thank you, Paul.

I am very happy to see that a number of speakers over the next two days will be addressing the topic of community engagement. As many of you may know, the Speaker has brought to the position his vision for the parliament to engage with all people of Queensland whatever their age, location, race, religion or gender. Since 2007 the parliament of Queensland has embarked on this mission through the creation of a Community Engagement Unit to coordinate and promote parliamentary education, media, multimedia and publications, Indigenous liaison, protocol and parliamentary history. I know that the Speaker is very proud of the great achievements that have taken place in this regard over the last two years in the Queensland parliament.

As well as the seven sessions of the conference, there is a dinner tonight in the Premier's Hall. The session that I am most looking forward to is the parliamentarians versus media debate tomorrow afternoon. That promises to be very entertaining indeed. With the politicians defending the media and the media defending the politicians it should be challenging.

Before we commence the first session this morning I am here to welcome you all to the Queensland parliament. It is an exciting time to be involved with the government and the parliament in Queensland. Next year will mark the 150th anniversary of Queensland's statehood. There will be much historical celebration and debate occurring throughout our 150th celebration. Following the separation of Queensland from New South Wales on 6 June 1859, elections were first held in early 1860. The first Queensland parliament then sat on 22 May 1860. So the parliament will follow Queensland's 150th anniversary next year in celebrating its 150th in 2010.

For those who have travelled from interstate to be here, I will give you a brief history of the Queensland parliament. I apologise in advance to all the locals who I am sure know more about this than I do. From 1860 to 1868 the Queensland parliament sat in a building located in Queen Street in the city's centre. It was opposite where the Myer Centre now stands in the Queen Street Mall. The building was the old convict barracks. Some have seen it as an interesting location to house the early parliamentarians.

After a few years the government decided that a new and more dignified building was required for the parliament and so construction of this marvellous building commenced in 1864. Unfortunately, depression hit the colony in 1866. This impacted greatly on public works, including the ongoing construction of this building. Even though this wing of parliament was not completed until the late 1880s, the Legislative Assembly, our lower house, first met here in this very room on 4 August 1868.

When the parliament first met in here the ground floor was still occupied by workmen. The staircase had only a temporary railing and the plaster was wet. The daily newspaper of the day, the *Moreton Bay Courier*, rather acidly commented, 'The parliament is sitting in their half-finished chamber in the centre of a vast pile of debris, with the noise of a whole army of workmen ringing in their ears from all directions—seen to be perfectly in character with the ministry and all their proceedings.' I do not think things have changed.

The Legislative Assembly has continued to meet in this room since 1868, apart from on three occasions. The first of these was from 1980 to 1982 when the parliament sat in the Annexe building in the room where the conference will be held tomorrow. Parliament sat there for two years while renovations occurred in this chamber. The only other times when our parliament has not sat in this room were during the two weeks of regional sittings that have occurred in recent years. The first of these regional sittings of parliament was held in Townsville in 2002 and the second in Rockhampton in 2005. In October this year parliament will be sitting in Cairns.

So there is a lot of history in this important room. I am sure that you will all enjoy being in here today. From 1860 to 1922 Queensland had an upper house, the Legislative Council. The Legislative Council chamber is located down the hallway behind you. It has famously been said that Queensland is different. On 27 October 1921 the Council voted to abolish itself. Abolition of the Upper House was the policy of successive Labor governments in Queensland and for several decades prior to it actually being achieved. Like many early upper houses in the Westminster system, the members of the Queensland Legislative Council were appointed for life and were mainly drawn from the colony's elite squattocracy.

In 1861, after just one year of operation, the Council had its vocal critics. The *Moreton Bay Courier* denigrated the Council and its members by stating that they were 'brainless gobmoshes, political drones, servile renegades and needy vampires waiting to suck the nation's blood.' For those of you wondering what a gobmosh is, it is defined as a fly swallower or someone who keeps their mouth open.

After continually frustrating the early Labor governments by blocking its bills, Labor began its revenge on the Upper House in 1917 by appointing 13 new members to the Council who were known as the suicide squad. With their numbers bolstered, Labor's Upper House appointees were able to pass the Constitutional Act Amendment Bill in 1921 to abolish the Upper House. In introducing the bill, one of the Labor appointees said, 'Today we advocate the abolition of the Council because of its uselessness. Until we had a majority in here it was objective. Now that we have a majority here it is useless.'

Since the abolition of the Upper House, Queensland has remained the only state in Australia with a unicameral parliament. As I have said, Queensland is different. It is nice to have some delegates and members here from the New Zealand parliament, one of the few other unicameral parliaments in the world.

I mentioned earlier that the Queensland parliament has twice in its history sat in regional areas of Queensland—Townsville and Rockhampton. In October this year the parliament will travel to Cairns in far-north Queensland for a full sitting week. We expect several thousand schoolchildren and members of the public to come and view the parliamentary proceedings throughout the week.

The record for the most number of people to attend a sitting of a session of an Australian parliament occurred in Townsville in 2002. During the first regional parliament over 1,000 people attended question time at the Townsville Entertainment Centre. It would be great if this record was broken this year in Cairns. I understand that the Cairns regional sitting will also draw observers from the Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu parliaments. Can I take this opportunity to extend an invitation to you all to book yourself a holiday in sunny Cairns this October and be part of the Queensland parliament's historic sittings. If you not are able to be there in person you can watch it live over the internet.

The live broadcast of the Queensland parliament over the internet is another recent development that we are very proud of. A live audio broadcast commenced in 2002 and the visual stream began in June 2007. Queenslanders and others around the world with an internet connection therefore have access to every minute of every day of the Queensland parliament.

In conclusion, I take great pleasure in again welcoming you all to the Queensland parliament for this ASPG conference and wish all delegates a successful and inspirational conference. Thank you. I hand over to the Hon. Kevin Rozzoli, the ASPG president, to chair the first session. Please welcome Kevin.

**Mr ROZZOLI:** Since I have been president I have been up here on numerous occasions to attend wonderful seminars which are held in the other place. So the other place might have been regarded as useless at one stage but the other place does have some uses these days. We now move on to the first session. We have three speakers. I acknowledge the arrival a few moments ago of Colin James who has just flown in. We go to no end of trouble to secure our speakers who are of the best and highest calibre.

To start off the first session on representation, participation and engagement we have three very illustrious speakers—the first of whom is Dr David Gow of the University of Queensland School of Business. David is going to talk about what the Australian Election Study reveals about people. I think that will be a fascinating start for the conference. I welcome David.

**Dr GOW:** Thank you very much for the invitation to be here this morning. My purpose is a fairly simple one. I hope to introduce at least a few controversial discussion points. The basis for my invitation, I imagine, is my involvement in the Australian Election Study. Let me briefly describe what the Australian Election Study is about.

Essentially, many people here of a political bent would recognise the public opinion poll. We like to think the Australian Election Study is the grand-daddy of them all. It commenced in 1987 and has now been conducted at eight federal elections. What it constitutes is a fairly good representative sample of the Australian electorate. It entails a vast array of questions. At each election there is a standard array of questions that are proposed to the electorate as well as special thematic issues. For example, in 1987 the Election Study focused on assessments of the economy and attributions of blame and responsibility for the performance of the economy.

Although the talk is organised principally around the most recent election, the 2007 election, I want to cast a very broad brush. By that I mean I do not want to discuss it simply in isolation. I want, as academics are wont to do, to try to cast it as a specific instance of a large and general trend in Australian electoral behaviour. To be sure, we will be talking about some of the elements of the 2007 election but we are also going to give it a fairly broad brush.

In particular, I want to raise a question that has troubled me for some time. Let me share that with you. At the time I was a sceptic. I did not approve of the question; I thought it was misconceived. I thought it was an after-the-event explanation. The question is this: could it be the case in Australian electoral tendencies that there is a natural life cycle—a period when Australian governments can rise and dominate the scene but somehow inevitably move into decay? If we were going to try to place a boundary around that life cycle, would we indeed use something like 10, 12, 14 or 15 years as the length of the life cycle? I have in mind three or four elections.

Those with a historical bent would immediately move to criticise this because there are lots of instances in which governments have lasted for much shorter times. Probably the most well known and notorious one is the events of the early 1970s with the election and subsequent dismissal of the Whitlam government. We can certainly agree that if there is such a tendency it is not immune to external events—shocks that impose themselves upon the political system from time to time. But, notwithstanding these kinds of shocks, could there be an underlying trend that gives a rise and fall of Australian governments?

Let me start by giving a brief review of the events as they were immediately after the 2004 federal election. I want to focus particularly on party leaders. The importance of party leaders is clear. Increasingly, there has been a presidentialisation of Australian elections. By that I mean the elevation of the party leader to simply not being a standard-bearer but in many ways the very personification of the party itself. Indeed, in some instances this elevation of the party leader takes on the form where it is known as the 'Rudd government' rather than the 'Rudd Labor government'.

Let us go back to 2004 and the events in the immediate aftermath of that election. Let us start at the top. Let us start with John Howard and briefly discuss Mark Latham. I want to provide a thumbnail sketch of these events because they provide the foundation of my analysis. John Howard had been elected Prime Minister. In January 2005 there was a sequence of events that I am at a loss to describe. I can only use the words 'Mark Latham's meltdown'. I am unsure what their roots were. Quite clearly they are troubling events to him and to many members of the party.

The war in Iraq was going okay. It was designed, you may recall, to locate weapons of mass destruction and to rid of us of Saddam Hussein. The key question, at least on many people's minds, was how long John Howard would go for. If you recall, they had been elected some eight years earlier in 1996. He previously intimated that he would leave office or consider his position on his 64th birthday. That was in 2003. But he remained in office and led the coalition to victory in 2004 and the speculation continued. Would he stay or would he go, and if he did stay when would he go? Perhaps in 2006 many people suggested after 10 years in the Lodge.

Let us review the situation that confronted John Howard. No. 1: he is pre-eminent in his own party; he had won four elections in a row. Some were even using the Menzies-esque dimensions as the benchmark for his performance. More importantly, there were no real challengers in his party. They were on the sideline. No. 2: the opposition at the time, having lost its fourth election on the trot, was in a state of disarray, particularly following Mark Latham's implosion. No. 3: the economy was performing well. Interest rates had been declining, unemployment was trending downwards, tax revenues were up and there was a river of gold flowing into the coffers of the government. It was easy to have a surplus and, more importantly, it meant that policy making was easy. There were not the normal or usual budget constraints which governments have to struggle with in order to task scarce dollars amongst competing priorities.

No. 4: there were rain clouds on the horizon. The war in the Middle East and the GWOT—the global war on terrorism—were going okay but were not going as well as was originally anticipated. At least, we were assured that we were safer now and, more importantly, the worst of the worst—the ringleaders—had been captured, or most had been captured and quarantined in Guantanamo Bay. No. 5: John Howard seemed to have established a close personal relationship with George Bush, the notional leader of the free world, and he benefited from their exchanges. No. 6: the most important event that occurred in early 2005 was that the Liberal Party not only won the election—by that I mean it retained government by winning a majority in the House—but more importantly it won the Senate. It was an unexpected bonus but undoubtedly the most important element of the 2004 federal election.

This element of the coalition's 2004 victory was a poisoned chalice. The election cut the Senate's minor parties out of the legislative process in a meaningful way. In my view, it sowed the seeds for some of the events that we are going to describe. Ultimately, I think it contributed significantly to the demise of the Liberal Party some three years later.

So there you have a thumbnail sketch of some of the key features of the political economic circumstance as it was in 2004. We are still left with the question: was John Howard going to go or going to stay? My own view at the time was that John Howard was never going to walk away from the unique set of circumstances, the unique opportunities that now confronted him. It was a fantasy scenario—prominent in his own party, chaos in the opposition, complete control of the legislative process, money that freed them from the budget constraints and free and available to be allocated to any policy initiative. It was the best of all political worlds for a long-time politico of John Howard's style. In fact, notwithstanding the speculation, he was no more likely to pack up and move out of Kirribilli House than Hugh Hefner was likely to pack up and move out of the Playboy Mansion.

Given this characterisation—the thumbnail sketch—how is it that in these apparently halcyon days it was possible to lose an election? Is it the case that there were key events that contributed, or was this a life cycle—that is, a government that was gradually losing support? It is rare for a government to be defeated at a time when the economy is running relatively smoothly, unemployment is low and interest rates are low. To be sure, there were some rain clouds on the horizon but nothing of any significance.

Let us then turn to an assessment of the leaders, and I start off by simply presenting you with a characterisation of a sample survey assessment of a variety of political leaders at the time of the 2007 election. As I indicated, one of the key important elements of the political process is the elevation of the party leaders to presidential status. There we have the ratings on a 10-point scale. Basically, 10 respondents are asked to make an assessment of how they feel about the candidates. So it is a general affective kind of question. Really, it is a likeability question. The key point is that Kevin Rudd has the most positive rating of 6.31, John Howard's rating is 5.14 and Peter Costello's is 4.13. The metric is not that important here; it is the relative standings of the party leaders on these dimensions.

If we want to put this in historical context—and I think it is important to do so—then we have to look at an analysis of all of the election studies that have been conducted since 1987. That is a rather difficult diagram to read, the reason being of course that party leaders come and go with an increasing degree of frequency. If we move to the very right to the 2007 scale, you will see a small golden dot with 6.31, and that of course is the rating of none other than Kevin Rudd. The line of purplish quality that runs for four or five elections is the evaluations of John Howard over the time of his leadership from 1996 to 2007.

Let us put this in historical context. The far left—the highest line there—shows the ratings of then Leader of the Labor Party Bob Hawke and immediately below that the purple line shows the ratings of John Howard in his then role as Leader of the Opposition and below that the green line shows the ratings of Paul Keating which have always been at the bottom end of the scale. He was never particularly liked, although in many instances I think he was well respected but not liked.

So let us put this in historical context. Point No. 1 is that the rating of Kevin Rudd is the highest that has ever been recorded in the election studies since they were commenced in 1987. John Howard has tended to track down. Over the most recent election his rating of 5.1 was the lowest that he had recorded in his period in office. So we are confronted with two types of trends of note: one is the apparent attractiveness or appeal of Kevin Rudd and the other is the relative diminished performance of John Howard.

As part of an argument I am going to make, I am going to suggest that the 2007 election was a most curious election in which the Labor Party took advantage of this old and ageing government and was able to exploit it with a new and a fresh candidate, and this has resulted in several trends which I think are worthy of note. I have coupled to the Australian election studies some election studies that were carried out in the 1960s which formally are not election studies but is data available which allows us to make the following point. By and large, the interest in the election in 2007 was an all-time record high except for earlier periods in the late 1980s and 1990s. Similarly, when asked the question if people care a great deal about who wins the election, there was once again an elevated interest in the 2007 election in comparison with those that were immediately before it.

There was a fair amount of engagement in 2007 that ran against a long-term trend. If we look at people's willingness to follow the election in the mass media, once again there has been a long-term trend, whether they are following it in television, radio or newspaper, the exception being the early stages of an interest in following the election on the internet. But you will note that there is a turn-up in 2007 when you use 2004 as the baseline. My point once again is that there was an increasing degree of engagement by many people in 2007 that ran against the long-term trend over some 20 or 30 years or more. The attribution I want to make for that is the particular style and type of campaign that the then Leader of the Opposition, Kevin Rudd, ran.

If we look at who watched the leaders' debate, leaders' debates have frankly become really set displays of mastery of a party tape—well-rehearsed answers to questions and very few opportunities to really make an error. So they are conceived now as fairly safe events. Notwithstanding that, the purplish line at the bottom indicates an increase of people's interest in 2007 in comparison with a general decline,

and the gold line on the top is for those who did not watch and consequently it declines. Once again, that is evidence of a further engagement in 2007 that ran counter to some of the long-term trends over recent elections.

I want to move beyond the leaders themselves, and I think the picture is fairly clear. Kevin Rudd was a fairly attractive and engaging candidate. He contributed in many ways to raising the level of interest in the election, and that ran counter to a long-term trend that was set in place. Similarly, John Howard's performance as it was assessed by the voters was fairly mediocre when compared with even his own ratings in earlier elections. These are the considerations in the voting election that people make—that is, what is important to them in the election—and No. 1 is of course the policy issues, No. 2 is the party leaders, No. 3 is the candidates in your electorate and No. 4 is parties taken as a whole.

Let me help you interpret the line. If you can see this as a rather blurred diagram, as I would if I were sitting in the back, in many ways that is perhaps the best way to see it. That is the long-term trend that we are talking about here rather than any specific statistics. So it is the direction and the shape of the lines rather than the actual numerical values that I think are important in the telling of the story as I want to tell it. Essentially, then, at the very bottom you have the candidates in the electorate and the kinds of percentages that are associated with the single-digit fives and sixes et cetera. The next line rising from the base is a purple line, and that represents the policy issues. Above that, the third line is the parties as a whole and finally at the very top most electors purport or represent their decision as being driven by policies. My own view is that that represents a fairly optimistic self-assessment and it is considerations of the leader and party kind that are really the key elements there.

Notwithstanding the levels of engagement about which I have spoken, there are one or two pieces or elements of counterevidence that in my own mind I cannot make sense of. This is a question asked of the respondents to report whether they discussed the election campaign with others. At the top line we can see by and large that, putting aside the fluctuations that occurred with sample surveys from year to year, there has been a modest decline in people's willingness to discuss politics. This runs contrary to the kind of earlier claim that I was making. There is a fair amount of stability there but a modest decline. Secondly, the bottom line refers to the question about whether you sought to persuade others how to vote, and you can see once again there is a decline there. So while on one hand we are confronted with higher levels of engagement and people using the media, the press et cetera, more effectively in following and tracking politics, their willingness to discuss or persuade others is declining to some extent. I do not have a coherent explanation for that particular trend.

Let us continue to move on and talk about the issues. You may recall how the campaign emerged. By and large, although not a unique characterisation, the Labor Party's campaign was disciplined, it was well organised, it stayed on message and it was informed by a tremendous amount of political polling of quite considerable proportions. When we turn to the particular assessments of where the parties stood on the policy issues, you may recall that the Labor Party ran—well, I do not mean to disparage it too much—an organised campaign that mirrored or reflected many of the positions that were taken by the Liberal Party. Sometimes many people called it a 'me too' campaign. But there were some important points of differentiation, and what I want to show you is once again the long-term trends and the points of differentiation and their impact on electors' votes.

The purplish line at the top—perhaps I might call it pinkish, but that would have been a characterisation of the Labor Party many decades ago—represents the respondents' assessment of their preferred political party on health. The immediate gold line below that represents the assessment of the coalition, and the very bottom line is where respondents report little or no difference on the particular policy issue. On the area of health, it is quite clear that the coalition is regarded as significantly closer to the positions or the ideal points of many of the respondents. There was also a decline in the Liberal Party's proximity to the preferred policies of the electors on that particular issue.

The No. 2 issue is environment. Once again, the purple line represents the respondents' statement that this is the party that is closest to them. You can see the marked, significant build-up between 2004 and 2007 in the ALP's position on the environment. I suspect that is probably a proxy for global warming. On the bottom of the scale you can also see a decline in the gold, representing the assessment of the coalition as not being close to the preferred positions of many of the electors.

The terrorism policy in the early part of this century was one which was dominated by the coalition. In 2001, following the events of 9-11, the coalition was well known for its strong stance. That continued through to 2004, but by 2007 the gap had closed. There are probably two reasons for the closing of the gap. One is that the Labor Party's position was not markedly different on any of the issues, but I also think there was a waning of confidence in the war on terrorism as it was conducted, particularly in the Middle East.

The preferred position on education—the fourth issue we are going to discuss here—once again yields a similar trend. The dominance of the Labor Party is clear. I am going to quickly move through to one or two of the economic issues. Industrial relations, once again, is probably the most prominent economic issue where the Labor Party stood out. On unemployment, there were modest differences between them. In the area of taxation there was a modest difference between them, reflecting the mirror image and the 'me too' policies that were being put forward by the Labor Party. Education probably represents a mark of significant difference.

The points of discussion that I think are relevant from my brief overview of over 20 years of political polling in an attempt to make some sense of them include whether there is a life span for political leaders or governments—is it two, three or four elections?—where they lose their freshness or their newness and become rather tired. This is not a statement of the people themselves but it is the perceptions of the voters. If so, what is the average length of this life span? What is the role or functions of the opposition in activating this life span?

Let me make that point a little clearer. From our assessments of Kim Beazley at the early part of this period I was talking about, it was quite clear that he was not able to activate this sense of tiredness in a way that Kevin Rudd was able to activate it. My sense is that he was regarded as old-style politics. He was being tarred with the same brush that the government itself was being tarred with, notwithstanding the fact that he was Leader of the Opposition.

The other point that I think is worth noting here is the impact of external events—events like 9-11 or *Tampa*—that can be used strategically and that have a way of being able to extend the length of a government which otherwise, in my view, would have been regarded as tired and not electable. Thank you very much.

**Mr ROZZOLI:** We will move on fairly quickly because we are running a little behind time. Our next speaker is Colin James, who is a political journalist and analyst from the *New Zealand Herald*. Colin also has the distinction of being the President of the New Zealand Chapter and for quite some time has been trying to engage a stronger link between ASPG and the media. It is with very great pleasure that I welcome Colin here. He is a great contributor and he has a great dedication to the system. I am sure you will find his remarks fascinating.

**Mr JAMES:** I will offer some thoughts on the Election Study, which I was reminded I helped set up but had forgotten. New Zealand has run an Election Study since 1987 and, as Editor of the *National Business Review Magazine* at the time, I was instrumental, apparently, in putting some money its way. The 2005 Election Study lacked the money for publication and processing, so there is a lot of raw data but very little of it is in processed form. So I can offer you some thoughts from the 2005 election data. I will lay a platform for the 2008 election from that.

First, I will make some comments. It is good to be in a unicameral parliament. We took rather longer about it than you did. It was certainly useless by the time it was fired in 1950. We took 43 years to replace it with proportional representation. I will come back to that in a moment.

I am fascinated to see that Labor has gone purple under Rudd. I thought purple was the regal colour, so I look forward to that. I will pick up on the natural life cycle first. I query the natural life cycle, and I would query it on the grounds of the experience in both our countries. From 1950 to the mid-1980s we were dominated by Conservative parties with occasional interludes from the Labor Party—one in your case and two in ours. Then we ran in sync for a while with the Conservatives, and with the Labor Party being a reforming government in both Australia and New Zealand, and then we got out of sync again. We have had a peculiar arrangement in the last nine years in New Zealand of tracking, until recently, a conservative government in Australia, with a small 'c' Conservative Labour Party in New Zealand except in one particular area—in social liberal legislation.

I will pick up on another point from the presentation we have just heard. The poisoned chalice in New Zealand for the Labour Party I think might have been the 2002 election, which it won with a huge majority over the National Party. That led some people in the Labour movement to think that it might be possible to set up a Scandinavian model in New Zealand with a dominant Social Democratic Party and a fragmented Right. That did not happen. In 2005 the National Party reassembled the vote on the Right and was able to challenge Labour quite significantly at the time, which was one of economic boom.

I will say one more thing before I go on to my notes, and it is about policy issues. I often think that public opinion polls and surveys focus on the wrong thing when they ask about policy issues. They focus on what is wrong when actually there are things also that are right. Certainly in New Zealand in 2002 and 2005 the economy was an issue. People did not really nominate it as an issue or a problem but it was certainly a strong tailwind for the Labour Party, as it was for the Liberal coalition here, I think. If you translate that line showing a great interest in policy issues to be what people generally think the party will do in office, then I think that is how most people think of policy. They might have some specific ideas, but essentially I think policy is what they think a government will do. If it does things more or less okay, then it can be forgiven for a lot else.

I mentioned the long parallel of Conservative domination from 1950 through to the mid-1980s in both countries and then the reforming Labor governments in both countries. Then if I look at the parallel from 1999 between Helen Clark and John Howard, there were similarities in style between the two. Both set out to command the Centre after a period of reform. Both came adrift from the Centre, in part by pursuing ideological policies of varying sorts. Both were assisted in staying in office, as I mentioned before, by debt-fuelled asset booms and by indifferent leadership in the opposition party. I think Mark Latham actually redefined 'indifferent'. He was fascinating to watch. That gave them easy targets. Howard could knock out 'latte' Labor and Clark could knock the rational economic and pronuclear National. Helen Clark actually studied John Howard's values based electoral methods. Her study, however, ended when John Howard proved unable to handle Kevin Rudd and there were no clues there for her in dealing with John Key.



That leads me to my general point—and I will have some things to say about the 2005 Election Study very briefly. My general point is that in New Zealand for sure—and I suspect here as well—we are going through a political generational change. By that I mean that half of the electorate is under 47 and that half of the electorate and the people who come from that age group who are active in politics have a different frame of reference against which they have developed their policy thinking and their ideology. The last such generational shift—and again I think it is in both of our countries, but I will speak just for New Zealand—was from the late 1970s to the late 1980s. In New Zealand, the pivotal election for that was 1984. What followed after that was what I think is rightly described as a revolution. I call it the Independents revolution. There was massive policy reform.

For that generation—essentially the baby boomers—their political instincts and positioning were developed in a frame of arguments about the Vietnam War, about environmentalism, the rise of feminism, the antinuclear debate in New Zealand, apartheid and Rugby tours, which were big in New Zealand, the related issue of Indigenous rights, which is much bigger in New Zealand than here, although it has developed here now, and economic regulation. That was the frame of reference against which people formed their ideas. It did not define the ideas, because you would come from Labour or National, or from a dissident group, but you had a different way of dealing with that tradition from your forebears if you were in that new group. They thought differently, otherwise they certainly would not have been reforming.

That was the last generational change. The next generation has a very different frame of reference. Almost all of those points I have raised have been dealt with. They may be lingering on and they may still have unfinished business, but essentially those issues that formed the frame for the baby boomers, in my view, have now gone and it is a different frame of reference. Again, it does not define the specific positions of individual politicians, but it does change the way in which the politicians and the people who vote for or against the parties develop their own ideas in line with whether you are Left or Right or Green, or whatever.

I think the frame of reference for the under 47s—and that is not an arbitrary, rigid time; you might be under 50 or you might be under 45, or whatever, but somewhere around about that time—is globalisation; the internet; the rise of China; mass migration, and in New Zealand in particular Chinese immigration in the 1990s and now all up 11 per cent of New Zealand residents are Asian; how far the Treaty of Waitangi and Indigenous rights should reach in policy; the rise of inequality, which I think is a case in both of our countries and it is definitely an issue in New Zealand; and how far deregulation should go. It is a very different frame of reference. So you would expect a different policy response and you would expect the people of those age groups to look for a different policy response—not necessarily radically different but different from the older people.

This brings us back to: was John Howard out of date? Yes, he was. His ideas were formed in an older frame of reference from Kevin Rudd's. I think that that played a part in the Australian election, but I am not an expert on that. I wonder if it is playing a part in Gordon Brown's problems in the UK at the moment. I think it did play a part—and a large part—in Obama's defeat of Clinton in the United States. But certainly, in my view, it is operating in New Zealand now.

The irony is that if you look within the two major parties, Labour is showing greater evidence in its ranks outside parliament, and to some extent inside parliament, of that generational change than the National Party. The difference, however, is that at the peak, as between the two leaders, John Key is 46 and Helen Clark is 58. She is the person of the past frame of reference; John Key is the person of the emerging frame of reference.

If I look at the small parties—and in New Zealand we have to bother a lot about the small parties—there are eight parties in parliament at the moment plus a couple of Independents, both of whom claim to represent parties. The Greens, I think you would say, are probably in the old frame of reference. The evidence of regeneration and of new generational emergence in the Greens is limited and they tend to be the younger, active Greens rather than parliamentary politics. For New Zealand First, the populist party—our answer to Pauline Hanson, but definitely much longer lived—if you are 60, you are young in New Zealand First. The Maori Party, which won four of the seven special seats set aside for Maori in the 2005 election and might well win five, six or seven this coming election, are arguing about rights issues at the very time when I think the Maori argument is really much more about development than about rights. So again, you might say the Maori Party is on the downside of the generational change. Then there are two very small parties: ACT argues a very libertarian economic position—and that really is a past argument in New Zealand—and United Future, a very tiny party as well, has likewise, I think, been left behind.

The latest the election in New Zealand can be is 15 November, and 8 November is the likely date. If not, then you will have to go forward to 18 October because our Labour Day weekend is the following weekend and people do not like campaigning for an election very near a holiday weekend. That election, in my view, may well be seen in retrospect as the pivotal election in another political generational change. It is an argument I have made and I am going to keep making it until someone knocks me off.

If I then look at the platform that comes off the 2005 election from the study and such numbers as we have—and it has been semiprocessed for the 2008 election—there are some indicators. The two big parties have a disproportionately higher party identification than the small parties. That is what you would expect. That is quite logical. In fact, Labour has the stronger identification in the Election Study than National. That may be part of the result of a skew in the sample, but that does seem to hold.

Of those who say they identify with the party, three-quarters say they identify with it strongly or very strongly. Only 60 per cent had understood we have this amazing two-vote system. I am very grateful, as a journalist, for the change to our particular form of proportional representation, which I think is an odd one but it creates a lot of interesting quirks for people like me. In 2005, only 60 per cent of voters had understood that the party vote of the two votes was the more important. In terms of deciding when they cast their vote, one-third said before election year, one-fifth in 2005 but before the campaign, one-fifth during the campaign but before the last week, one-eighth in election week and one-11th on election day. Even the rolling average, I might say, of polls bounced around a lot—not just the individual polls but the rolling average in the last few months. It actually came out bang on if you drew the trends through them. That suggested there was a lot of volatility. But I suspect that overstates the volatility. I think there is probably an underlying lean that develops in a voter's mind that sharpens up as election day approaches. Only four-fifths, however, knew that Labour was in government, which is a bit of a worry. I am not sure whether that is the same right now. The lessons for party strategists out of that are that this time Labour might be able to claw back votes during the campaign with a strong campaign. The other lesson is if the Labour vote frays, small parties could get pickings, and notably the Green Party and New Zealand First would be the beneficiaries of that.

Also from that survey non-voters, that is those who did not vote, said that if they had voted they would have split more strongly to Labour than National than the actual voters did. That indicates for 2008 an opportunity for Labour to make sure it gets more of its vote out. It did some of that last time, very well. It should be able to do that better on this coming occasion. Twice the proportion of those who said they did not vote in 2002 said they voted Labour in 2005. That does indicate that they had worked on that latent support quite effectively. Twice the proportion of those who voted Labour in 2002 said they voted Labour in 2005 and those who voted National in 2002 said they voted National. That is interesting, giving the National a recovery of quite a lot of its vote. The National gains came equally from non-vote, Labour, New Zealand First and the small ACT Party, and a bit less from the middling United Future Party.

As I said before, in effect what the National Party was doing was reassembling the vote on the Right. In 2002, the Nationals' nationalist vote collapsed, principally into the populist New Zealand First Party and the centrist United Future Party. My reading of that was that people were looking for a leg rope for what they were sure was going to be a Labour-led government. The lesson for the main party strategists from that in 2008 is that the National Party must win its next tranche of votes off Labour. It has reassembled the base on the Right. It seems to be doing that. Labour has to shore up its support and get out more of the non-vote.

If I come to the leaders—and we certainly have encapsulation of the parties in leaders now as in Australia and in many other countries—Helen Clark was disliked in 2005 by 35 per cent but liked by 55 per cent. Don Brash, who was the National Party leader, was disliked by 42 per cent and liked by 43. So you can see a large difference there. Helen Clark was seen as strong by 90 per cent and trustworthy by 62 per cent, and the corresponding figures for Don Brash were 51 per cent and 48 per cent. Helen Clark was seen as arrogant by 59 per cent and Don Brash by 43 per cent. Those are very strong advantages that Labour had at the leader level going into the campaign.

It is also notable that Helen Clark's ratings are still remarkably high. While the Labour Party's polling at the moment is terrible, the recognition or respect for Helen Clark is still quite high. The lesson for the main party strategists in 2008 from this: if National has a less dislikeable leader than Don Brash, who was disliked, that could be enough on its own, and even more so if it has a likeable leader. In fact, that is what it does have. It has a leader who is attractive to voters. Any increase in the perception that Helen Clark is arrogant is damaging to Labour. I think that has happened to some extent as well.

If one looks at Left/Right measurements to the extent that that is relevant these days, 25 of the respondents said they were Left and 54 per cent said they were Right. That fits with the notion that both electorates in both of our countries are essentially small 'c' Conservative and they quite liked the small 'c' Conservative Clark government over a period in the early part of the time. Labour was seen as Left, however, by 59 per cent in 2005. The electorate lent to the Right but Labour lent to the Left. It is remarkable that Labour still was in office. The Green Party is seen, by the way, as Left by 58 per cent and ACT as Right by 67 per cent. Maybe the public has a general sense of where the parties fit in a more or less accurate general sense.

If I take the economy, just looking towards the coming election, the right track/wrong track measure, which I do not think is done in Australia, a very interesting chart is done by UMR in New Zealand. It was mostly positive in New Zealand over a long period. Just before the last election, or four months out from the last election, it was net positive 17 per cent. It is now net negative 13 per cent. Consumer confidence was 122 where 100 is neutral on Westpac four months out from the 2005 election; it is 82 now. Those numbers are very bad for the current government. In 2005 it was boom time; in 2008 it is bust time.

On the plus side for Labour: Indigenous rights was a hot issue and held against the Labour Party in 2005 in the wake of an argument over foreshore and seabed, which was very complicated. It was our common law argument much like your Mabo, rather than a tree based argument. That issue is less hot now. Also working against the government is a notion of social engineering. I do not like the phrase, but it is a useful shorthand. This Labour-led government has done prostitution reform and it has done several union bills. They were both divisive debates, although in my view there were clear majorities in the electorate for them. That was in the 2002-05 term. In the 2005-08 term that has continued with a Green bill

that the Labour Party supported to remove a defence of reasonable force in smacking your children, which again was very divisive, although again I think there was a clear majority for it in the electorate. Then there was a botched bill to tighten laws on electoral finance, which allowed its opponents to suggest that Labour was trying to shut down free speech. That is an Achilles heel that gradually worked against the Labour government.

How proportional was the vote in 2005? Labour got 41.65 per cent of the effective vote and it got 41.67 per cent of the 121 seats. National was 39.62 and 40.00. New Zealand First was 5.79 and 5.83, and so it runs down. I will not go through them. When we come to ethnic breakdown, 15 per cent of the population is Maori and they have 17 per cent of the seats. Pacifica is seven per cent and 2.5 per cent of the seats. Asians at that stage were nine per cent and 2.5 per cent of the vote. Women are 51 per cent and 31 per cent. So we have not quite got there yet.

There is a whole string of other measures for the period of the Election Study. Measures of whether members of parliament are out of touch have gone down; 'people like me have no say' has gone down; 'politicians do not really care what people think' has gone down; 'government is run by a few interests' has gone down; satisfaction with democracy is the same; 'trust the government to do what is right' has gone up; 'my vote really counts' in the electorate has been roughly the same; trust in a political party is up. All of that sounds like democracy is in pretty healthy shape in New Zealand, despite a lot of the concerns.

My final point: the parallel is continuing. In opposition John Key has studied very carefully Kevin Rudd's strategy of removing all the easy targets and trying to develop two or three differentiating points. Again, it is very much the same. It is very disciplined in the National Party, policies are very much under lock and key, driven from the Centre. It will aim to do some hundred-day actions once it gets into office. But the other question that is beginning to arise, as I hear it, around the Rudd government is, 'What does it really stand for?', and that might kick in. Of course, it has the complications of proportional representation. Even if it wins this election, and I think the odds are that it will and it will lead the next government, it is by no means sure it will do the same in 2011. Thank you.

**Mr ROZZOLI:** Thank you, Colin. We are now going to move on to our final speaker in this section, Glenda Emmerson from the parliament of Queensland who will talk about community engagement. You will recall that in his welcome John English mentioned the particular emphasis on community engagement that has taken place in the Queensland parliament of recent times. Because we are running a bit late we will defer the questions on this session to the second session. If you have questions, please save them until then. I have one other comment to make after Glenda finishes her address. Glenda.

**Ms EMMERSON:** Good morning. Before I begin today I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land upon which we meet. Today we are discussing Parliament and the People: Engagement, Representation and Participation. This morning we have heard from my colleagues about representation and participation and I am going to kick off the discussion about engagement. Specifically, I will be discussing community engagement in a parliamentary context. But who am I to discuss community engagement with you? I am the manager of Queensland parliament's new Community Engagement Unit, which was established in July last year. This unit has staff with skills in the various areas shown on this slide.

Queensland is unique in the Australian parliamentary system as we are currently the only parliament focusing on community engagement where all of the aspects listed here are managed in a coordinated way. Therefore I am in a unique position to discuss today's topic. But what am I actually going to discuss with you? I am going to begin at the beginning and briefly define and explain community engagement. Then I will discuss engagement in a parliamentary environment, illustrated with an example. I will briefly discuss why parliament should undertake engagement and, in conclusion, I will outline the Queensland parliament's vision for the future, so I had better get started.

Community engagement is an emerging discipline, drawing from wide fields of practice including political science and public administration. An increasing amount of information is also being published by engagement practitioners themselves. As a result of its evolving status, whenever a group of community engagement practitioners gather to discuss what is engagement, usually a discussion about diversity of language occurs. This cartoon, therefore, sums up community engagement nicely. Engagement can involve all of the things listed there. It is all of them and more.

Cartoons are fine, but we are a group interested in the scholarly, otherwise we would not be attending a conference held by the Australasian Study of Parliament Group. So what is a scholarly definition of 'community engagement'? As it is an emerging discipline there is currently more than one accepted definition, but within the literature there is broad agreement on basic concepts, principles and good practice approaches. Personally, I believe the most useful definition has been developed by the International Association for Public Participation, also known as IAP2. For this speech the terms 'community engagement' and 'public participation' mean the same.

IAP2 is an organisation that has been developing, supporting and promoting the practice of engagement throughout the world since 1990. It defines 'community engagement' as any process that involves the community in problem solving or decision making, and uses community input to make better decisions. This definition shows us that community engagement is about making decisions and it makes it clear that communities should be engaged about decisions that are yet to be made, not with a view to hard sell decisions already made. Anyone who watched the ABC show *The Hollowmen* on Wednesday night will

know exactly what I mean. Therefore, good community engagement is about ensuring that the community feel that they have been heard, feel comfortable with the process and the basis on which the decision has been made, even if they are not actually happy with the ultimate outcome.

IAP2 has also developed a public participation or community engagement spectrum to demonstrate the levels of engagement possible with communities. I am going to spend a bit of time going through this spectrum, as it really is the heart and soul of community engagement. To community engagement experts in the audience, I beg your indulgence. This spectrum shows an increasing level of public impact as you progress from left to right across the spectrum. At the left there is inform through to empower at the right.

At the 'inform' level, you aim to make the decision-making process transparent by providing balanced and objective information, so you are really just letting people know what you are going to do and how it will be done. Moving up the spectrum to 'consult', you continue to inform the community but now you are seeking feedback and you are promising that you will use that feedback in your decision-making process. At the 'involve' level, you are seeking more than feedback. You are saying that you want to work with the community to generate new ideas. To work at this level of engagement you are acknowledging that you are not the sole source of all information and ideas.

Up until this stage on the community engagement spectrum, the responsibility for making the ultimate decision has rested entirely with the decision maker and not with the community. The relationship now changes as you move further along the spectrum. At the 'collaborate' level you actually want the community to help you make the decision and, therefore, share the responsibility for that decision. Ultimately, at the 'empower' level you are saying that the community only is going to make the decision and will become responsible for its implications and outcomes. Therefore, as you move from left to right along the spectrum the community is invited to have an increasing impact and, therefore, responsibility for the decision to the point at the 'empower' level when the community becomes the decision maker. People tend to think that engagement occurring at the 'inform' level is less difficult than engagement occurring further along the spectrum, but in reality no part of the spectrum is harder or more preferable than another.

This table shows examples of some of the community engagement tools and techniques often used at different levels. At the 'inform' stage the tools are quite familiar to us. They include media releases, open days et cetera, and they change as you move along and the power relationship changes. At the 'involve' level you look at workshops, and committees at the 'collaborate' level, until at the 'empower' level the community becomes responsible for the decision and tools include ballots and delegated decisions.

Most community engagement projects tend to operate at the first three levels: inform, consult and involve. However, there are aspects of a project that may operate at the 'collaborative' or 'empower' levels and it is very important to note that one decision may actually involve the community at different levels of the spectrum for different aspects of the outcome. For example, let us say that we lived in the fictional town of Springfield and the government of Springfield decided to locate a nuclear plant in the community. Some of you may recognise the fictional nuclear power plant from the animated television series *The Simpsons*.

The decision to locate the nuclear plant is now a given, so engagement would occur just to inform the community of what is going to happen. However, to soften the blow the government may decide to undertake further additional engagement to where the community could be empowered on certain aspects of the nuclear power plant placement. They may say, 'Although the nuclear plant is being placed in your community, we will empower you to have the final decision on the flowers we place in the garden outside the reactor.' Obviously this is a facetious and entirely fictional example and would never happen in real life; as if the community would actually be allowed to decide on the flowers! However, this example does demonstrate that within the one project the community may be engaged at different levels of the spectrum during the course of the decision being made. In summary, community engagement can occur at different levels and at different times during the one project.

We have just discussed community engagement and now we will turn our attention to community engagement in a parliamentary context. A good way of doing this is through a practical example. In April this year, a youth parliament for secondary senior students was hosted by Abergowie College in Ingham. For our interstate and overseas visitors, Ingham is in north Queensland between Townsville and Cairns. Over 90 secondary students from three local schools participated. Just like other youth parliaments, the aim was to provide students with a parliamentary experience based on the processes and procedures of the Queensland parliament. This in itself is nothing new. All Australian parliaments undertake similar events each year, but this youth parliament did differ.

Abergowie College's involvement in this event was born out of students making a valuable and I believe enthusiastic contribution to a parliamentary committee inquiry. The Legal, Constitutional and Administrative Review Committee held an inquiry in April 2007 into issues concerning Indigenous Queenslanders. As a result of that inquiry the students requested a youth parliament to explore other issues of importance to youth in the area. To ensure that the students knew that as a parliament we were listening to them and were interested in getting their input on a range of issues, my unit facilitated the youth parliament, in partnership with the Department of Communities.

The students debated a bill and they participated in an adjournment debate in which they were allowed to speak on any youth issue within the Queensland parliament's jurisdiction. Additionally, to extend learning outcomes beyond the Westminster system of government, the parliament's Indigenous liaison officer conducted a yarning circle to model Indigenous governments. During the yarning circle

recommendations from the Youth Violence Task Force report were debated and it emerged that many local students supported the establishment of a police citizen's youth centre in Ingham. All of the debates and information gathered have been provided to the relevant decision makers: the local member, the Department of Communities and the Youth Violence Task Force.

In terms of community engagement, this activity operated at several levels on the IAP2 spectrum. At the 'inform' level it educated students. At the 'consult' level the parliament was able to demonstrate that it would action feedback through the committee process. Further, students were asked to debate and provide input on a number of other youth issues. At the 'involve' engagement level the students' opinions, concerns and aspirations were provided to the relevant decision makers and out of this process the PCYC issue arose. With this event we could possibly even extend it to operating at the 'collaborative' level, as I believe that the local member is now working with the students to ensure that their desire for a PCYC is actually achieved.

Why was Abergowie Youth Parliament a good example of community engagement? It fits the definition of community engagement activity. It involved the community in a decision that was yet to be made where they had influence on the outcome. It was apolitical. It involved local National Party and Labor Party members. It resulted from a committee process. It occurred regionally. The event resulted in 90 students, their teachers and, through the media, other local community members being provided with a better understanding of parliamentary and deliberative processes.

Apparently it was also the first time that the students in the area had worked together. They had only ever competed on the sports field, in the arts and academically. This time they actually worked together and the result was a positive outcome for their community. It involved Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, so it worked as a very helpful reconciliation activity. The event provided the local member with valuable community input which he would not have easily got otherwise. Most importantly, it built capacity and it resulted in better outcomes for the community. It therefore ticks all the community engagement boxes.

I believe this example demonstrates that community engagement activities enable parliaments to play an important, apolitical role in building positive relationships between parliaments, their members and the community. But this is just one activity. There are numerous community engagement activities possible in a parliamentary context. Earlier I showed you some possible tools that could be used at each level along the community engagement spectrum. I now list here tools that can be used to facilitate community engagement in a parliamentary context. I am not going to go through these but they will be in the paper if anyone is interested. The list is certainly not exhaustive and provides only a glimpse of the possible activities that are available to engage with the community. Some of them we already use but they can easily be finetuned to ensure they become more valuable engagement processes.

It encourages involvement between the parliament, its members and the community. Of note you might notice that I have listed members, their electorate officers and committees as the primary tools for engagement between the parliament and the community at all levels of the spectrum except empower. This is because I firmly believe, along with other commentators, that the parliament as an institution has a role in supporting its members in this apolitical way to create opportunities and relationships for directly involving the public in its work.

The previous slide listed actions of possible parliamentary examples of community engagement. I now list for you here examples of activities which we have undertaken in the Queensland parliament over the past year. They are obviously many and varied, starting with the creation of a brand; the development of a web site which lists all the ways that Queenslanders can engage with their parliament; the appointment of an Indigenous liaison officer; surveys at the 'consult' level; youth parliaments; and Indigenous working groups at the 'collaborate' level. Again, this list is certainly not exhaustive and I will be happy to discuss with you some of the specifics of these projects if you are interested.

If we look ahead, activities such as the upcoming regional sitting of parliament in October this year and the 150th sesquicentenary of the parliament in 2010, which follows on from the state's anniversary in 2009 next year, will be the major focus of our future engagement activities. So we have just discussed what is community engagement in a parliamentary environment. Now I am going to quickly touch on why we should undertake community engagement in a parliament.

Many international studies support parliaments undertaking activities which enable a closer link between the community, its members and an institution. In the short time we have available I will discuss just one. In 2005 the UK Hansard Society published a report titled *Neglecting democracy*. In that report, concerns about political engagement were discussed. Specifically, the report acknowledged significant changes were occurring in society as a result of many trends and factors. The report stated, 'Parliament has lost the power while the executive has grown stronger, bigger, more amorphous and less accountable.' The report went on to state, 'Parliament is now ignored by the public and fails to interest the media.' If true, this is a serious situation and should be a concern to all of us here today.

The Hansard Society believes that the political system, especially the parliament, needs to respond and adapt to changes in society. It suggested that to address the problem parliaments needed to be more proactive in asserting themselves as institutions and that they had to explore ways of stimulating public interest in their work, experimenting with methods of directly involving the community in their work. Specifically, the society suggested the development of systems that enabled MPs to listen more to what the public had to say.

Community engagement processes such as those just described are just one way—but a very important way—a parliament can reassert its place as an essential player in the decision-making processes that occur every day. Through community engagement, the parliament can act in an apolitical way to enable the MPs to hear and also act upon what the community has to say.

Where to from here? Through the examples I have discussed, I believe I have been able to demonstrate that the traditional institution of parliament can use the emerging practice of community engagement to empower the community it represents. Importantly, community engagement activities offer an opportunity for parliaments to reposition themselves as a central player in the decision-making process. As they said in *The Hollowmen*, a television series on the ABC, 'Watch this space.' We continue to work on the ways we can incorporate community engagement into the parliamentary environment.

I conclude with the hope that you come away from this discussion this morning with a better understanding of community engagement and an appreciation of how the community engagement process can assist parliament and its members to build more productive and positive relationships with the community. It is my aim in my current role to ensure that community engagement assists the Queensland parliament in returning to its central role in the decision-making processes, thus increasing its relevance to the community to become everyone's parliament. Thank you for your time and attention.

**Mr ROZZOLI:** Thank you, Glenda, and congratulations on the way that you have packed that into the time. It is a splendid address. We will now have a quick break.

**Proceedings suspended from 10.36 am to 11.02 am**

**Prof. COSTAR:** Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you to the second session this morning. My name is Brian Costar from Swinburne University in Melbourne and I am chairing this session. As our whip has informed us, we were a bit slow in the first session. So in this session we will attempt to catch up and give people the opportunity to make comments or ask questions about the speakers in the first session. But initially we will work through our four speakers and take questions and discussion about their papers and then in the time left to us we can have it as an open session.

I introduce our first speaker who is going to talk about the influence of select committee systems. He is also going to combine that with his listed commentaries on parliamentary internships, which is very helpful for us, because that will catch up some time. I introduce Dr Andrew Hindmoor from the University of Queensland.

**Dr HINDMOOR:** Thank you very much. I am going to talk for just 15 minutes on committees and in particular, for reasons that will become apparent, on the influence of the select committees in the UK. Then my colleague from the School of Political Science at UQ, Claire Pomery, will talk for a couple of minutes at the end about the internship program that we run.

The Australian Senate and House of Representatives have both established committee systems. Indeed, the longer version of this paper I am presenting today, which was jointly written with Phil Larkin from the ANU, was originally given just a few months ago at a conference at Parliament House in Canberra to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the House committee system. To quote from the board here, the suggestion is that committees are influential political factors, but how influential and, perhaps more significantly, how can you go about assessing the influence of committees?

The starting point for our paper is an observation of the extent to which Australian and British literature has relied largely upon anecdotal evidence in reaching its assessments. So working with the principal Clerk of the House of Commons, a gentleman by the name of Andrew Kennon, the question Phil and I have addressed in the paper which I am presenting extracts from today is whether it is possible to more formally assess committee influence. The answer to that is kind of, but certainly not perfectly.

Let me take you very quickly through some of our work which relates to the influence of the Education and Skills Committee in the UK on the assumption that many of the issues that I raise in the talk today apply directly to an Australian context. Indeed, it is the Australian context that I will come back to at the end. In the UK there are currently 19 departmental select committees comprising between 11 and 16 MPs, almost always from the backbenchers, with the balance reflecting that of the parties in the House of Commons. This ensures a government majority on all select committees. Chairs, however, are divided between the parties and reflect the balance in the parliament as a whole.

That said, one of the interesting features of the British committee system is that the committees are expected to operate on a largely bipartisan basis, and to an extent that would no doubt surprise many seasoned observers of the Australian system, they by and large manage to achieve that. Rare are the committee reports in the UK which are the subject of committee votes and majority and minority respondent reports. Indeed, one important influence of the committee system in the UK is the degree to which it might be argued that it has taken the edge off partisanship to some of the rougher bits of British politics.

Select committees are responsible in the UK for scrutinising the policy, administration and expenditure of their respective government departments. To this end, they can receive written submissions from interested groups, compel ministers to attend hearings and require relevant documents to be made available. These committees are free to initiate their own inquiries and do not require a reference from the main chamber.

The formal powers of the select committees are actually incredibly limited. Committees cannot amend, veto or propose legislation; they cannot block supply, veto public appointments or even require that an issue be debated on the floor of the main House. The government is required to respond to the recommendations made in select committee reports and to do so at least nominally within three months of their publication, but it is under no obligation to accept or even to formally evaluate recommendations made. Indeed, normally one day before the three-month deadline you see a government responding to a report by saying, 'We are considering the report further.' Yet despite such obvious limitations, select committees are generally judged to have performed well—to be a model that is worth exporting to other countries within the Westminster system.

According to the parliament's own modernisation committee, select committees have served parliament well and have enabled MPs to hold the executive to account. According to a report by the Liaison Committee, select committees have been a source of unbiased information, rational debate and constructive ideas—the implication being that parliamentary debate is not normally any of these things. These are quite impressive claims that have been made, and I could go on with the list here. The problem is that the evidence base used to support them is actually pretty thin. Within both official reports and the academic literature, arguments about the influence of committees rely largely upon the inclusion of positive endorsements from seasoned outside observers, past or present committee members, or, for illustrative purposes, lists of the occasions on which committee recommendations are claimed to have resulted in policy change.

It is not my intention to argue that this sort of evidence ought to be dismissed out of hand. Insiders who have worked around a committee system are in a strong position to comment on the fate of proposals and their opinions should undoubtedly form an important part of any assessment of committee influence. Indeed, in the written version of the paper I am presenting today we go on and do a series of extensive interviews with former government ministers, senior civil servants and committee members to ask them their own opinions about influence. But I am largely focusing upon here today—because of the time constraints—some of the formal measures that we have attempted to devise, some of the empirical measures of committee influence.

What we did here initially was examine government responses to 1,022 recommendations contained within 40 reports published by the education select committee in the UK between 1997 and 2005. Responses were classified by research assistants essentially as either agreeing with the committee's recommendations, indicating that the government already was planning to do something it had been asked to do, promising to consider a recommendation further, or specifically rejecting it.

As the slide here indicates—and the towering one in the second corner I will come to in a moment—there is little evidence of select committees exercising a consistent influence over government. The government rarely rejected committee reports out of hand. That is the final column here. It very rarely happened. But neither did it welcome many of the committee reports with open arms. The far-left column is one where a government says, 'Yes, we agree; this is a good observation. We are going to do as you suggest.' On the vast majority of occasions government simply claims to be already addressing the issues raised by the education committee. This indeed was perfectly consistent with public servants' conviction that select committee reports do not tell them anything that they do not already know. To that extent it would appear that the influence of committees is much like the influence that I have over my kids. I tell them to tidy their room, do their homework or feed our chickens and inevitably what they say is, 'We have already considered that recommendation. It is something we are already proposing to do.'

There are, however, some obvious drawbacks to this simple scorecard approach to assessing committee influence. Firstly and perhaps the most obvious, it cannot distinguish between those situations in which the government says it intends to act upon a recommendation and those in which it actually does so. My kids rarely actually do their homework or feed the chickens. I suspect government is frequently in the same position here.

Secondly, this scorecard approach fails to allow for the possibility that committee influence is subject to a delayed drop effect. That is, while committee recommendations are initially dismissed out of hand, in the fullness of time government comes round to a particular way of thinking. Consequently, and crucially for the short presentation I am giving therefore today, what we sought to test for was committee influence by comparing recommendations contained within education committee proposals with the actual contents of government legislation. It is not the only means of influence by any means, but presumably if select committees are as influential as has been claimed we might expect to see that crucially showing up in the contents of government legislation.

Between 1997 and 2005 the Labour government published 10 education bills using the briefing guides provided by the House of Commons library and various other sources that identified 93 specific policy proposals contained within those various bits of legislation. Then, going back to the select committee reports, we tried to classify to what extent the proposals either corresponded exactly with or showed significant similarities to a recommendation; showed no apparent similarities with any recommendation contained within a report; or committed the government specifically to a course of action that had been rejected within a committee report. By examining this relationship over a 10-year period we hope to overcome the problems inherent in the scorecard approach that I just described to you.

So what are the results of this? At first glance, the story appears to be quite upbeat. On a total of 22 occasions my research assistants judged the government's policy proposals to be identical with, or to show significant similarities to, earlier committee recommendations. On only seven occasions did the

government commit itself to a course of action specifically rejected in a previous committee report. But the evidence of committee influence over the contents of legislation is, however, modest. On 66 occasions the government's legislative proposal showed no apparent similarities with any recommendation contained within any education committee report. In one respect the pattern here is not dissimilar from that found before. There were relatively few occasions on which the government either warmly embraced or rejected out of hand a select committee report. But the difference here is that, instead of simply claiming to be running ahead of the education committee in the sense of having already anticipated and acted upon its recommendations, the government in this case appears to be operating simply in a parallel policy universe.

I will take a couple of brief things from our interviews. This fitted with the basic view of public servants whom we interviewed who said—and I think I have given this one to you before—that because they were constantly engaging with stakeholders, because they were constantly monitoring the select committee process, by and large they always knew what was going to occur. The select committees could not tell them anything new.

Fitted with the more pointedly dismissive argument as well is that the quality of the analysis underpinning the recommendations of the committee was often poor. Hence they did not rely upon them. With only a handful of staff covering the range of education policy, public servants argued that they simply could not be told anything that they did not know because they had lots of clever people telling them the same thing. One implication for this in an Australian context if we extrapolate across might be that committees need larger staff. They need to get greater policy capacity.

On the other hand, though, part of the story might be that committees need to do a better job of focusing upon writing a smaller number of reports. In the UK, the select committees seemingly have tried to exert their influence by churning out an ever larger number of reports each year. It would appear that the effect of that has been to dilute the influence of any one committee report. Committees need to do less than of what they do than they need to do better.

Indeed, the story here might be even more grim. The comparison I described before between legislation and recommendations might actually overemphasise the influence of committees to the extent that—and this is work that I am currently doing at the moment—the government is pretty good at agenda setting for committees through its early submissions. What we are looking at at the moment is the extent to which through its early submissions the government is able to steer the eventual recommendations reached by select committees. The early evidence—and we are a long way from managing to do that one—is that government has that agenda-setting power. Even where we have limited evidence of influence in that there is a relationship between committee reports and subsequent legislation, a suspicion is that behind the scenes government is actually pulling the strings.

To conclude, is the story in Australia any different? At the conference on the anniversary of the House committee system in Canberra a few months ago—an excellent conference which I have just described to you—nearly all of the participants—all of whom know far more than me about the Australian system—were quite upbeat about the influence of the House committees. Laments about the castration of the Senate committee system in 2006 seemed to be so long and loud precisely because these committees were thought to have exercised real influence. But my inclination here is to be at least somewhat sceptical—in this respect I am probably an anxious, to-be-converted agnostic.

A lot of researchers have also spent a lot of time arguing that the UK select committees have required real policy influence, but so far we have found it quite difficult to detect background traces of this influence either through formal measures or through interviews. I agree that there are many ways that exercise can be influenced, only a small number of which I have touched upon today, some of which might come up in the discussion and some of which we refer to in our paper. But measuring influence is undoubtedly a tricky business, and I worry that it is easier to assert influence than to demonstrate that influence.

**Prof. COSTAR:** As I mentioned at the beginning, Claire Pomery is now going to talk to us about parliamentary internships. Before she does that, I would be remiss if I did not congratulate Andrew on the politeness of his children. I will be taking advice on that matter later.

**Ms POMERY:** I would like to start off today by acknowledging the traditional owners of this land and the Queensland Labor Party. I would like to recommend the internship program to every person here today. When I was an undergraduate at the University of Queensland, I went through what many of my colleagues did at that time, which was a complete disengagement with the political system through the party system. I ended up in a third-year government course when it was suggested to me that maybe I would like to do an internship. I actually did my internship about five metres that way too many years ago now, and what it did for me was create parliament and the political system as a tangible and interesting place to be. While I do not work in the parliament, I do actually work in the political sphere and I am helping other people get involved. I would also like to divulge in this forum that I do DVD the House sittings on the ABC to watch when I get home.

About three years ago when I joined the School of Political Science as an administrator, the school decided to take a strategic step in expanding its engagement of its students with the political environment. We had had for many years through the wonderful education system here at the Queensland parliament a number of our academics do parliamentary internships. We would send six students out to the parliament, they would work with a member of the House—usually a backbencher—they would see what parliament Brisbane



was and they would do research. About three years ago we expanded that greatly. We did it with the help of Professor Roger Scott and Andrew Hindmoor, and we have moved far, far away. We now sit about 60 interns from the University of Queensland all across the Queensland political sphere—from non-government organisations through to the Public Service, to parliamentarians, to federal parliamentarians, to Senators and to the odd interest group.

What we have found is what the literature has been telling us all along. In America the Harvard School of Politics has found that students are disengaging. These are educated young people who are disengaging with the political system. They are no longer writing speeches, they are no longer looking at web sites—anything to do with engagement and not just being involved in the party system. What the literature said in America is that if you can engage these people, if you can show them something tangible, something exciting and something actual, they will get involved again and that is what the school is doing through the internship program. What we are trying to do is engage those who are already engaged.

We use the parliamentary system through the education section here at the Queensland parliament to send out about six students in the second semester of classes but we also have a great network through the parliamentary services outside of the actual parliament, through the Public Service and non-government organisations. We send out students who are some of our best and brightest, and they start to engage with the research and policies that are going on. We select only our finest students to go out. In the case of Queensland, you will not always get someone who is a 7 student or an A-plus student. You will get someone who is interested, entertained and enthusiastic, and most of the time they are actually not from the party politics. These are people who have not fallen into Labor, Liberal, National, Democrat parties. They are people sitting outside that, but are looking for a way to get into politics. Of the approximately 50 students that we sent out last year, 40 are now working in the political environment. That means working for parties, working for public servants or working for interest groups. That is an incredibly high success rate, with 80 per cent going on to work in parliament within a year.

What we have found with our interns is they do not just go within Queensland. We have had some picked up by the Public Service in Canberra and also across the world. What we are encouraging today is that if you are looking at young people wanting to interact with the parliament and wanting to interact with the public sphere, you have to provide them with the opportunities. While I would love every single one of you to come up to me and say, 'We will take an intern from the University of Queensland', that is not a realistic goal. What I would encourage everyone here today to do is actually to contact probably their local university and see whether they have an internship program from which you can take an intern.

There is a great benefit to you in doing this, apart from the ideals of basically encouraging others to do what we all love. You could actually get a great pile of research out of it. You get someone who is dedicated to research, who will work with you for 13 or so weeks and produce a 6,000 to 10,000 word report on something that has been sitting on your desk and that you have wanted an outcome for, for usually one or two years we have found. It is a great opportunity for you and your organisation to get something out of it, but also to look at the future of politics and where it is going in Australia. Thank you.

**Prof. COSTAR:** Thank you, Claire. As someone who has been involved in internships, I can agree with all of that. In our next session, Graham Spindler from the Parliament of New South Wales is going to talk to us about Parliamentary Education Units' Community Engagement. This session will be slightly different. You will notice that the program refers to Graham and education representatives of other parliaments. I think two of those people will participate in this session. Also Graham says to me that on the principle of engagement this session will only work if we engage with him and his colleagues immediately after they have spoken to us. Therefore, this will be slightly different. We will be taking some discussion in the period immediately following the presentation.

**Mr SPINDLER:** Thank you very much for that. Thank you for the opportunity and also for the rationale for actually producing this paper that we are basing a discussion on. Some of my colleagues from other parliaments are here. It would be great if they could join us at the table or close by, so that they can participate in the discussion. During the break we distributed a paper that should be there on all your desks or hopefully in front of you or possibly underneath you at this stage. In the best traditional way, I will start backwards and briefly describe the paper and then open it up to some discussion.

The paper is an attempt to survey the parliamentary education units across the Australian parliaments. In every parliament we have some level of parliamentary education happening. There is a lot of variation but there is also a core that is pretty common. The paper is in three sections. The third part of it, the back part, is a response to the survey. It is in some detail and is divided up into a range of categories. I will not go through that, but if you want to look at it more closely it is there. The second part of the paper is an attempt to summarise some of those outcomes and the first part of the paper is a generalised statement. I guess that is what I will focus on.

With the opportunity of having a conference with this focus it seemed very important that parliamentary education under its various names should be a part of it. I think most education sections probably started from fairly humble beginnings and a general concern about issues in relation to civic engagement and disinterest amongst young people in the parliamentary process, and are an attempt to try to address that in some way. Over time I think they have mostly broadened their roles and certainly changed the range of strategies, resources and approaches that they use.

From an education point of view there is a strong rationale or background to the existence of these units. In the school education part they have a very strong curriculum focus. That has developed in a very substantial way over the years. Beyond that are issues of broader community engagement. I think we should not overlook the fact that the education sector and the students themselves are a very significant part of the community with which the parliament engages, not just in future terms but in present terms as well. As I say, I do not plan to go through this in any great detail but I think that the point we are trying to get to is that the education aspect of parliamentary work is central. The papers that we have been hearing, and particularly the paper from Glenda on community engagement, make the point that if parliaments are going to continue to be relevant—and there have been quite a number of references to this area here—and if they are going to be considered to be important to people, people have to be taken there. They have to believe this. They have to feel that there is some way in which they are really a part of this process and that the process is relevant to them. A lot of people do not believe that, which I think is quite alarming.

Education is one of the ways in which this can be dealt with. It offers some obvious advantages in its political neutrality in that it takes it away from a lot of the political engagement aspects and a lot of the media hype aspects, and can actually focus on the functions of parliament, the work of members and their role in the community. Every parliament would benefit from seeing that as central to their strategies on communications and on engaging with the community.

The middle part of the survey was the overview. We came up with about six types of engagement. The first ones were programs with school students, which of course is where we had the most in common, and there is quite a range of things that happen there. Then there are professional development programs for teachers. While we are perhaps not all engaged in that to the same degree, it is an important part of the process too. Again, we are broadening the community a little bit there. With tertiary studies, we have just heard about the connection with internships, which is a very important part of that process, but there are other ways in which the education sections engage with tertiary institutions.

I think community programs is a growing area for many of us, although there are differences in the natures and structures of the units and their roles, which have a big determination. Obviously in the case of Queensland that area has been the most articulated and the broadest in terms of its areas of interest and areas of impact. We also look very minimally, I think—not too many of us get involved in areas with business and government, although perhaps more government—at providing some sort of educational resources or programs for the business community or other areas of government. Again, Queensland has had a strong tradition here too. We added the sixth category, other parliamentary engagement programs, purely because of the breadth of the Queensland section. Perhaps we are in the right place at the right time to be talking about this issue because for all of us the model in Queensland is an interesting one that I think most parliaments should be looking at closely. But I think all of us want to assert our significance in the whole process of parliaments engaging with the community. So I invite now first of all my colleagues to make any comments and then also anybody from the floor.

**Mr REID:** Chris Reid from the Parliamentary Education Office in Canberra. I think the better approach might be to take questions from the floor immediately. We could reply with some knowledge or expertise in some areas or at least have a discussion about general points. The only point that I would make from a Commonwealth parliament perspective is that beyond engagement and disengagement, we are dealing with a very large country. We are also dealing with the issue of resourcing in a new era in technology to take the parliament to the people. We must do that—as much as we could offer travel opportunities or subsidies. We have enormous input from state members of parliamentary legislative assemblies. The Commonwealth parliament has 226 MPs and their officers who help us do our work and principals, schoolteachers and education officials, but we are relying tremendously on the involvement and the engagement with technology in order to get the message across and it is a tremendous challenge. It is one that is going very well, but I think we would be really interested to hear from you and take questions from the floor.

**Prof. COSTAR:** I think as chair I should take a back seat on this, otherwise there will be too many people asking questions. So I will ask for questions or comments on the issue.

**QUESTIONER:** Given that the model of parliamentary behaviour in most of our parliaments is perceived to be less than desirable, what steps can be taken to address the issue of presenting an alternative to young people? Just recapping very quickly for Hansard's benefit, given that the standard of parliamentary behaviour is below what we would really like it to be, what can be done to address that to create a more positive element with young people that there is a better way of doing it which will in fact function more productively for the community if the standards and the engagement levels of parliament are raised so there is a differential between what they see happening on the floor of the chamber and what might be the aspirational goal of parliamentary behaviour and performance?

**PANELLIST:** Kevin, that is a very good question. The answer probably will not come from me and Nonie. You will notice in the survey that we talk about the role-play, as do others. The role-play is a one-hour program that is run at Parliament House and in other places as well. I am joined by colleagues who in fact teach the role-play. The three o'clock class during sitting weeks can be a bit difficult. It follows question time. I notice that we are joined by at least one federal member and a New South Wales member, so I might leave it to them to respond.

The important thing about that is that the perception about parliament is often created through the prism of a news grab, which is very different from the strict focus of a parliamentary education unit that deals with the functions of the parliament, the issues of representation, law-making and scrutiny of government. That is certainly what we are about and we are not distracted from that. One of the reasons we are not distracted from it is that we distance ourselves from politics, if you like, and the media. Undoubtedly, having prefaced my comments by discussing technology, one of the things about technology that we also have to deal with is the mass communication effect that it has—and it is not always positive. So I do not have an answer to the question. Others might—and Graham might be able to help me out—but certainly it is a great challenge that we do have.

**PANELLIST:** I will just add a point there. What you are alluding to is perhaps the perception of behaviour in the chamber by members, which is one of the reasons people often put forward that they are disengaged. Quite honestly, I think perhaps for that very reason one of our best weapons in this—and the media is not one of them—is to use members. There are plenty of members here from New South Wales who have been involved in our programs in various ways. We do find that, quite honestly, a one-on-one relationship between an individual member or a small group of members and a group from the community, be they kids or adults, is by far the best antidote that we have come up with to that perception.

**Prof. COSTAR:** Our whip has reminded me that when questioners are recognised, could you make sure you turn on the microphone on your desk—and it means turning it to you as well as pressing the button—and for the benefit of Hansard could you give your name, please. I think I saw a questioner.

**Ms COURTO:** My name is Vivienne Courto from the House of Representatives Liaison and Projects Office. I have a comment more than a question, actually. I was interested to see this survey. It is unfortunate that it did not come to our office. What we have done at the LPO is we have approached this back to front inasmuch as the original role of the office was to promote the work of the House and committees chiefly through print media—and we have a web site and so forth. It has now expanded its role into the area of education. In particular, we run a formal course of seminars for business and public servants and so forth. We have also engaged in multimedia products that are available to the broader community and also a web site and a touch-screen kiosk on the House of Representatives side of the parliament building that is focused on general public education. There was also a study guide aimed at secondary and possibly lower tertiary that was associated with our A House for the Nation CD-ROM—a documentary project that we did for the centenary of the House. That has been adopted by a number of Australian universities.

In addition to that, we have been running for a couple of years a series of university lectures which are delivered usually by the Clerk of the House and the Speaker but also by other members. This is basically a promotional speech, really. We have been doing that for the best part of the last decade. As I said, I think it is unfortunate that we were not included in the survey, having come to the education side of things from the other end. But I am very interested to see that a number of the things that are included there we have been doing for some time, for example, our free to the public magazine that promotes the work of the House and the committees and so forth. The circulation of that increases all the time, as does the quality of the product. If you want to have a look at our web site and the House news site and so forth, I might invite you all to do that, because we have been doing quite a lot of work in this area.

**Prof. COSTAR:** Thank you.

**Mr WHAN:** I am Steve Whan and I am the member for Monaro in the New South Wales parliament. Just on the subject that we were talking about before with the kids in the galleries and the behaviour of the MPs, I think that part of the attraction and why there is somebody here who has admitted to actually recording question time in the federal parliament and watching it later on is that parliament is a theatre. I do not think the behaviour is anything to be all that embarrassed about.

When I speak to the kids whom grandmothers bring in I say, 'You will see a lot of passion, you will see strongly held beliefs that are put forward and they are put forward in a vigorous way.' I actually do not think that it is something that we should be at all ashamed of. I think it is part of a healthy democracy. Yes, on occasions it can get out of hand, but I do not actually think there is anything to be worried about with that. I think it is probably part of the reason why people remember the experience of seeing question time and are willing to tune in and see it on television. There is a lot of theatre and I think that is a good thing.

**Prof. COSTAR:** I can only agree with you on that, Steve. One of the arguments that I give when people are raising this, because it does come up all the time, is the idea that where you have nice, well-behaved and compliant parliaments, what you probably do not have is a good democracy.

**Mr HARWIN:** Don Harwin from the New South Wales Upper House. I notice from the survey there is a section in part 6 relating to history. The Queensland parliament has a historical research fellow position enabling research on significant parliamentary events. I wonder if one of the Queenslanders could briefly comment on that. If there is someone from another state who has a similar program but it is not mentioned on the survey, I would be interested in hearing about that as well. Chair, you might even have something to say on what the Victorian parliament does that might be of interest.

**Mrs MILLS:** I am Roylene Mills, an education officer with the Queensland parliament. I will start by pointing out that parliamentary education has been incorporated into the Community Engagement Unit of the Queensland parliament. I think that is important in light of Glenda's paper earlier.

With regard to the historical projects officer, that was part of the creation of the Community Engagement Unit. The historical projects officer had traditionally been with the Parliamentary Library. He came down as part of the new nine-member Community Engagement Unit. He still works on the history of representation, the members' biographies and that sort of thing, but also helps with engagement activities such as a display we are producing at the moment for the regional parliament that is coming up. The display will focus on representation in our regional parliament area. He is on hand to assist with those engagement activities. Does that answer your question? Yes.

**Mr MAXTONE-GRAHAM:** My name is Jamie Maxtone-Graham. I am a member of parliament from Papua New Guinea. Pardon my ignorance and, I am sure, that of my colleagues who are attending this conference, but on the paper that refers to education units, is it the role of the unit to educate the public about the role of parliament and members of parliament? As you may all know, Papua New Guinea is a relatively young country. We are only 33 years old. I understand most of your parliaments are almost 200 years old, so the issues that you are discussing now are out of our depth. We are still basically trying to establish and build up our democratic systems and institutions. I know that we do not have a very good public perception of politicians in PNG, because corruption is an issue and we all get painted with the same brush. It is not a very good time for us, but I understand that this is maybe an attempt to educate people about the role of parliament and members of parliament. Thank you.

**PANELLIST:** I can hear that little bell dinging over there. Thank you very much for those comments. Indeed, what you are raising is certainly our intention. I do not think we can continue much longer, but I think another area where we probably vary a little bit is what we think parliamentary education is. In New South Wales, which I would imagine is not unique, it is now taken as broadly as possible; it is not strictly about parliament at all, but it is about civics and citizenship and engagement in the community. One way or another, in different ways, that is what we are trying to achieve. However, I would like to respect that little dinging bell.

**Prof. COSTAR:** I had better respect it as well. I take it that we want to move to the next speaker. Remember for those of you who have questions, we do not adjourn for lunch until 12.30 so we will have an open session after our next speaker in which people can address questions, not only to the panellists in this session but also those in the earlier sessions.

I now introduce our next speaker, Christopher Pyne, who as you all know is a member of the House of Representatives in the Commonwealth parliament and is the shadow minister for justice and border protection, and he assists the shadow minister for immigration and citizenship. His topic is Restoring the 'Grassroots'.

**Mr PYNE:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. To you and to Kevin Rozzoli, the President of the Australasian Study of Parliament Group nationally, to my parliamentary colleagues and ladies and gentlemen, it is a great pleasure to be at the Australasian Study of Parliament Group. I think it does excellent work in terms of the promotion of a healthy democracy, which we all seek.

Abraham Lincoln, in the famous series of debates with his democratic presidential opponent Steven A. Douglas, said—

... public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed.

Consequently, he who moulds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions. He makes statutes and decisions possible or impossible to be executed.

He was referring to Douglas's indifference to slavery, but the lesson is easily applied to any political issue in any age. Lincoln recognised the importance of engaging the public and attempting to shape the public mood. He recognised that the person who can do that will achieve their policy goals.

Some commentators argue that WorkChoices destroyed the Liberal Party's electoral chances in 2007. Whether or not the policy was a dog is not the point. The point is that the Howard government struggled to shape public sentiment or make the case for industrial changes, leaving public sentiment to be shaped and influenced by the union movement. We failed where previously we had succeeded in selling these tough decisions. Consider the GST, consider the war in Iraq. Once the emotive union fear campaign had captured the public imagination and framed the public debate, it seemed like there was nothing we could do to win it back. A vote for the Liberal Party was unpalatable for many swinging voters in the 2007 election—the same voters who had supported us despite the GST in 1998 and despite the Iraq war in 2004.

The WorkChoices reforms were seen to be hurting working families or, as some called them earlier, Howard's battlers. We had lost their trust. Nothing could be more dire for any political movement than such a circumstance. The Australian Labor Party had successfully created the impression that John Howard had lost touch. During the campaign this attitude was one of the most difficult to overcome around the country. A political party that is perceived to have lost touch will always be punished at the polls. Every politician will claim to have their ear to the ground, to being in touch with his or her own local constituency. Continuing success within the context of a representative democracy depends on demonstrating that the local representative is aware of and acts upon community issues and concerns. Many politicians rely on constituents or community groups making the first contact to become aware of sensitive issues, but it will be vital to the Liberal Party's future success that it proactively engages with the community at a local level as well as a national level. A responsive MP is better than an apathetic one, but a higher standard that must be applied is for MPs to be proactive. Local representatives need to be actively engaged with their community.

Founded in 1944 by Sir Robert Menzies, the Liberal Party was to be a party of progress, a force for change. As he famously wrote in the afternoon light—

We took the name 'Liberal' because we were determined to be a progressive party, willing to make experiments, in no sense reactionary but believing in the individual, his rights, and his enterprise, and rejecting the Socialist panacea.

Today, the Liberal Party needs a forward agenda underpinned by a modern philosophy. The Liberal Party is currently under review. We have a review taking place into our policy platforms and we have reviews in different states and federally being undertaken into our constitutional arrangements. I mention this because it is worth noting that my comments today are not just my contribution to the discussion about politics in Australia; this is an issue that will come up for debate at the Liberal Party Federal Council later this year and how the party responds to it could well result in the election or not of a future Liberal government.

The Liberal Party must again be a force for change. It also needs to value-add to its membership, offering greater participation and greater incentive and opportunity to be involved. A larger, more engaged membership will lead to a greater, more diverse policy engine room and a more substantial troupe of spokespeople in the broader community. In my home state of South Australia in the 1950s there were around 50,000 members of the Liberal and Country League, the forerunner of the modern Liberal Party. Many of them were extremely active and engaged in the political process. Today, the membership is slightly over 5,000, a fraction of whom regularly attend branch meetings, participate in policy debate or assist at election times. This is certainly not unique to South Australia. Despite holding federal government for 11 years, Liberal Party membership declined around the country to unprecedented lows.

Even more of a concern is that a small and narrow membership also reduces the scope for members of parliament to be kept in touch with local community concerns by their local party membership. Low membership means the Liberal Party's policy base being more influenced by fewer people. I aspire to see the light of many voices illuminating the dark recesses of the caves of ignorance in politics. WorkChoices enabled our political enemies to make the case that we were out of touch. How much is this as a result of a dwindling, disengaged membership base? Political parties cannot function effectively without the involvement of active, engaged people. The Liberal Party needs to introduce innovative new ways to embrace our membership and the wider community and involve people in the democratic process more generally.

This year, I have argued that to re-engage and re-activate our membership base, all Liberal Party members should be given the opportunity to vote for the party leader. For many this seemed like a radical idea, but it is not too radical for the practice to be the case in the UK Conservative Party, the French Union for a Popular Movement—the UMP—the Canadian Conservative Party, or the Likud in Israel. The Republican Party and the Democratic Party in the US have raised grassroots participation to unprecedented heights.

I would envisage the Liberal Party adopting a similar model to our sister party in the UK. In essence, the Conservative Party in the UK allows the parliamentary party to choose the candidates who will be offered to the membership from among their number. The broader membership of the party then chooses between the two candidates who emerge from the parliamentary party ballot. Leadership ballots are held only when a spill of the leadership is initiated and carried by the parliamentary party or when the leader resigns or retires. Significantly, a person whose leadership is overturned in a spill cannot nominate as a candidate for leader in a subsequent ballot.

The experience of the Australian Democrats has soured such primary style elections for many in this country. I would argue that the Democrats imploded not because their system gave every member a vote for the party leadership but because their system gave their membership the power to remove the leader by a petition of 100 members. A party unable to reconcile the philosophies of its members and the personalities of its leaders, as was the case with the Australian Democrats, was always doomed to failure under such a system. Critically, in the UK Conservative Party model that I advocate, the membership itself cannot spill the party's leadership. That job is left to the parliamentary party whose regular accountability to their electorates should encourage the responsible use of such power.

Candidates for the leadership of the party would have to prove their mettle in the glare of national media and they would have to show their energy and capacity to handle a national campaign. The mere activity of running for party leader would ensure that the person elected would be engaged in a way neither main political party has demanded so far. Such campaigns could also give candidates a handy profile boost as well.

In fact, the international experience overwhelmingly supports this thesis. John Cary and John Polga-Hecimovich of Dartmouth College recently conducted a study into 900 candidates contesting 90 elections in Latin America, where an increasing number of political parties have started choosing their leaders through this sort of method. Their findings were that, where leaders were chosen by the various primary style methods, the recipients have bounces between three and six per cent when compared to leaders chosen by their peers alone. There has not been an Australian federal election result since 1975 that would not have been altered by a three to six per cent swing the other way.

Cary and Polga-Hecimovich attribute the success of primary systems to a range of factors. In part they say that voters like the transparency of these systems. Even those members of the public who would never formally wish to join a party or officially register their preference for that party can appreciate a party

where their neighbour or friend has had a hand in choosing the leader. For those members of the public who are not so politically squeamish but who just have not had any motivating influence previously that would make them join, reform to such a system would give the broad community a real incentive to join a political party for the first time. Our elections are increasingly disparaged as presidential. The vast majority of the electorate votes for their preferred party leader rather than their local representative—present company excepted, of course, except in the case of my state parliamentary colleague Grace Portolesi. Recognising this fact gives us an opportunity to engage them by letting them have a say in who leads the party.

Once people have actually gone to the trouble of joining a party, the benefits to the party are many. The new members increase their investment in the chosen candidate and they are more likely not only to vote for that candidate which they have had a hand in choosing but also to support that campaign with financial donations, personal labour and advocacy among their friends and communities. People often throw around the phrase 'grassroots activism'. If political parties aspire for this to mean anything or for their own brand of grassroots activism to achieve anything, then they need substantially more members than is currently the case.

The researchers also suggest that another reason primary elected candidates did better was that selections by a broader base of party members or party supporters are more likely to discover and support a gifted or charismatic politician who would also appeal to the public. When the decision is left to party insiders—MPs and factional leaders playing kingmakers in the back rooms of Parliament House or Sussex Street—they are likely to select candidates based on other factors that are less important to the public at large.

Let me cite three examples of leaders who have won their party's leadership through such systems despite being considered outsiders by those within their party's hierarchy: Junichiro Koizumi, David Cameron and Barack Obama, none of whom were supposed to stand a chance against Ryutaro Hashimoto, David Davis and Hillary Clinton respectively. First, Junichiro Koizumi. The system employed by the Liberal Democratic Party of Japan gives overwhelming power to the members in the House of Representatives. But at the same time it gives a say to each of the party's 2.4 million other members. In 2001, with the politically terminal Yoshiro Mori standing aside as Prime Minister, the 346 LDP law-makers had one vote in the contest and the party membership's ballots were boiled down to 141 votes, three for each of Japan's 47 prefectures. Traditionally, the ballots of the party membership were seen as unimportant. The faceless men of the LDP factions would choose their leader from among the leaders of the most powerful factions and their overwhelming numbers in the ballot would make the party members' votes worthless.

In 2001, former Prime Minister Ryutaro Hashimoto was the leader of the largest faction in the Diet and his success was presumed to be a *fait accompli*. Koizumi ran a very public campaign for the leadership, unlike any seen before in Japan. He gained the support of the nation's media and opinion makers. He was charismatic and presented an agenda for reform that remarkably made his party in power for all but a few of the previous 50 years look fresh.

In the first poll of prefectural party organisations, Koizumi won 87 to 11 per cent. The result was so overwhelming that the subsequent ballot of representatives, a majority of the Diet members, voted against the wishes of their factional seniors by 51 to 40 per cent and Koizumi won with almost two-thirds of the party behind him. Within three weeks he had gone from being an unlikely outsider to being Prime Minister of Japan. More importantly, he was an excellent Prime Minister, the second-longest serving Prime Minister in Japan's post-war history. He utterly revived the fortunes of the LDP, which were seriously ailing under Yoshiro Mori, the man he replaced.

Under Mori, who had single-digit approval ratings, the LDP was trailing miserably in the polls and looked like being smashed in the 2001 Upper House elections. Three months after Koizumi's election, he secured 78 of 121 seats in the Upper House elections in July. Koizumi later led his party to overwhelming victories before retiring on his terms and at a time of his choosing. He had a strong record of reform, including his courageous policy in 2005 of privatisation of the post office, a long-held taboo for the LDP's natural rural constituency. He would never have been Prime Minister without the opportunity to campaign for and gain the support of his entire party membership. His party and his country were the benefactors.

When Koizumi assumed the Prime Ministership of Japan in 2007, David Cameron had not yet even entered parliament, but he is now leader of the Conservative Party in the UK. For more than a decade the Conservatives were utterly dominated, driven from office and consigned to political oblivion by Tony Blair's Labour. Upon the resignation of Michael Howard, David Cameron stunned older and more fancied rivals Kenneth Clarke and David Davis, representatives of the party's traditional wet and dry factions, and pitched his message directly to the British public and Conservative members outside the inner circle. If Cameron's message of party modernisation and a pitch back to the philosophical centre, previously owned by his party but long abandoned, was challenging for that inner circle, it was a clarion call to the British public and the rank and file membership. Tiring of Labour, David Cameron's emergence as a potential leader was the first time since Thatcher that the general public had responded positively to the Conservative Party.

Although the first vote of MPs to determine which two candidates would be offered to the party membership for election had David Davis leading, Cameron won nearly 68 per cent of the vote and under him the Conservative Party first opened up opinion poll leads over Tony Blair and now Gordon Brown. In

the most recent by-election and local election campaigns, the successful Conservatives have been marked not only by overwhelming victories across the country but also by the revival of a reactivated and enthusiastic membership basis.

Twenty points ahead in the polls, the Conservative Party now looks set to win back the Treasury benches when an election is called. Cameron's election was the turning point not just for the fact that party members elected him despite the initial reluctance of his parliamentary colleagues but the very process of the campaign helped promote his bounce. Through his campaign for the leadership he was afforded the opportunity to build a public profile through an interested media that enabled him to present the Conservative Party in the best possible light to the previously disaffected middle ground.

If David Cameron's rise was swift, it was nothing compared to Barack Obama. The young and fresh Cameron was already memorising his lines for his party conference speech when Obama entered the United States Senate in 2005. But everyone in this room will be familiar with the way the United States primary system has given him the opportunity to appeal to the American people and become the Democratic nominee ahead of Hillary Clinton.

Clinton was the most unbackable favourite to seek nomination for a non-incumbent ticket that there has been since Ronald Reagan ran in 1980. She had the support of hundreds of super delegates—mostly senators and representatives—before the campaign even began. Yet she was defeated by a man who had been a senator for only three years and, what is more, he won with Democratic primary turnout reaching unprecedented numbers.

Time will tell whether Obama's polling holds up, whether he wins the election in November and, if he is successful, what sort of President he will make, but the key point is that in Clinton, the Democratic law-makers who were endorsing her overwhelmingly a year ago had chosen the candidate who was less successful—perhaps less capable—at reaching out to the great swathes of American people who turned out at the polling station for the first time.

These three leaders' examples remind us of a sentiment that John Howard often expressed: the Australian people usually get it right. Having been a member of parliament since 1993, I have shared my time between Adelaide and Canberra for 15 years. I spend countless days and evenings discussing issues of the day with my constituents and my local loyal party members. I spend all too many Tuesday mornings in Canberra discussing issues of the day with my fellow members of parliament. Let me conclude by making the observation that I have seen nothing in my 15 years in parliament to dissuade me from the notion that a party membership made up of the broadest possible range of the general public will be the best group of people to choose a leader for our party and a future Prime Minister. Thank you.

**Prof. COSTAR:** Thank you very much. We will take questions directly to Christopher. The whip reminds me: can we please restrict questions to one minute and answers to two minutes. We will take whatever questions we have for our last speaker and then we will have an open forum covering this session and the previous session.

**Mr McCULLOCH:** John McCulloch from the University of Queensland. Chris, you mentioned that Menzies founded the Liberal Party in Victoria in 1944 so you will be aware that he gave men and women equal representation on their state council, the committees and the preselection panels. In trying to get back to your grassroots, can we assume that this equity will spread Australia-wide so that we may see a greater percentage of Liberal Party women being preselected in safe seats around the country vis-a-vis Liberal Party men?

**Mr PYNE:** I think that is a great question. Can I tell you that with the South Australian system of preselection we use a plebiscite model, which means that every single party member gets a vote in preselections. That would, therefore, bring every single woman and every single man equally into the preselection system. I think that is a method to ensure that candidates who are chosen are more likely to be representative of the public rather than representative of party bosses, or whomever is making the decisions—whether they are on Greenhill Road, or Sussex Street, or St Georges Terrace.

I do not support the idea of quotas, which the Labor Party has introduced for women candidates, but I think that over time we would see, if we had more grassroots members involved in the party's processes, if we had a value for joining the party—basically, younger people these days have to have value for everything they do. There are so many different choices that they can make with their time and their money and their effort that they are not going to join something for which they get very little value. In the 1950s and 1960s perhaps people joined political parties because that is what happened in local communities or towns, but these days that does not happen. So we have to make our membership attractive to young people to bring in fresh people—new people, women, men, older people and younger people. That will flow through to the preselection system.

In South Australia we have some constitutional in-built requirements for women to be on state councils, as they do in Victoria. That is not the case in every state division. But, quite frankly, there are some people who are arguing that in our preselections for Lower House seats and our party leadership we should allow all the voters to have a go if they want to. Labor and Liberal voters should be able to vote in preselections for the Liberal Party like they do in some United States Senate races and congressional races and for the presidential candidates in some of those states. I do not support that, but some people argue that would break it up even further if it is all about grassroots participation.

**Ms PORTOLESI:** Christopher, good morning.

**Mr PYNE:** Hello Grace.

**Ms PORTOLESI:** My name is Grace Portolesi and I am the member for Hartley and a member of the South Australian parliament. Christopher, you referred to the UK and the US models to support your proposal. Have you factored in the impact of voluntary voting in their societies as opposed to the system of compulsory voting which we have here, which I am sure would be a factor in the general political engagement in the community?

**Mr PYNE:** It is not entirely relevant, Grace, but thank you for your question. Grace's seat is entirely within my seat and she is Labor and I am Liberal, but we do get along very well—although she tried to get rid of me last November and I do not know what will happen next time.

**Ms PORTOLESI:** Nearly succeeded

**Mr PYNE:** That was the one to win though, Grace.

In terms of your question, it is not really relevant in the UK model, for example, because only party members in the UK Conservative Party are allowed to vote. So whether they are voluntarily voting or compulsorily voting is not relevant. In Australia we have compulsory voting, which I support, and I do not see it being changed any time soon, so therefore it is not really relevant.

It is relevant in the United States, however, and the Democratic and Republican systems are different state by state. So in some they allow everybody to vote—whether you are a Republican, an Independent or a Democrat—as long as you are a registered voter. In some, they only allow the party members to vote from that political party. The voluntary voting aspect of it I think is interesting, because what they have done in America, especially in this race between Obama and Clinton versus McCain and the other Republicans, is energise the Democratic base. So because of the grassroots participation, they have energised the base of people who want to come out and vote. That will definitely flow through to the election at the end of the year, because I think 33 million people voted in the Democratic primaries and 23 million voted in the Republican primaries. So there are another 10 million Democrats who have been engaged in the political process. From a voluntary voting point of view, that will be very important in terms of getting out the vote, manning the polling booths, providing financial support et cetera. So it does have a real impact in the United States but would not so much here or in the UK.

**Mr HEWITT:** My name is Bill Hewitt. I have a 50-year association with the Liberal Party—parliamentary and organisational—and the sad news is that that is the end of the good news, because I disagree with your basic proposition. I am indebted to the young lady who draws attention to the fact that we have compulsory voting—one of only five countries in the world. I happen to think that we are right and the rest of the world is wrong. But on the assumption that you base your judgement on what is happening overseas, maybe we have to look critically at compulsory voting. I resist strongly your idea that the organisation should appoint the parliamentary leader. I remind you that on one occasion the Democrats were without a leader and they had to go to their organisation to determine who would be the leader. Sadly for them, parliament was sitting at the time and I think for about three weeks they were like headless chooks. I did not think that was good enough. I object on another basis. Supposing you have the leisure to appoint the leader and the respective persons go around and talk to organisational people. They can present one side of their persona—a calm, judgemental, lovely person and all of that—reflecting yourself, of course.

**Mr PYNE:** That is exactly right. Thank you, Bill.

**Mr HEWITT:** But it is only colleagues who have worked under the pressure of parliamentary process early in the morning—two o'clock when a hard decision has to be made—people who know how to make judgements under pressure, people who know how to relate to their colleagues. Those judgements can be made only by a group that is working with that person all the time, not the rank and file who are scattered all around the country. I think on one occasion the Democrats were given a leader they did not like and they did not want to work with that person. So with the greatest of respect, I think there are great flaws in your argument. If I am still active in the Liberal Party—and that for the moment is questionable—I would argue against your case.

**Mr PYNE:** Bill, firstly, Grace will be agreeing with you that she is a lovely young lady. Secondly, I do not think the compulsory voting and voluntary voting thing is relevant to this debate. It is a red herring and it does not make any difference, because we are talking about the party members of an organisation. Whether they vote compulsorily or voluntarily on election day really has no bearing on this.

The UK Conservative model addresses the three issues you have raised. Firstly, the UK Conservatives do not allow the party membership to spill the leadership. The Australian Democrats did. So it is completely different. So the organisation was wagging the parliamentary party. That is why it had three leaders in about 12 months. This model does not allow that to happen. Secondly, the current leader stays in place in the UK until the new leader is chosen. It took about four weeks to choose David Cameron and during that time Michael Howard remained as the interim leader. That would be the case in Australia. So whoever the leader was would remain leader for a month, in which time there would be tremendous publicity, which would be good for the party, good in the polls and give the new leader a bounce. Thirdly, the parliamentary party would choose the two candidates who were offered to the party membership. So your point about knowing the person, knowing that they could sustain the pressure of being in question time et cetera, is picked up by the UK Conservative model, because the parliamentary party chooses the



two candidates. So in the case of David Cameron, they chose David Davis and David Cameron. Their colleagues had obviously decided that both of them were capable of being leader and fulfilling the requirements. Then the party membership got to choose between those two. So you would not get a candidate who was not popular with a substantial number of the parliamentary party foisted on the parliamentary party from among their number, because it could only be one of those two people.

**Mr HUNTER:** Ian Hunter, South Australian parliament. Chris, I have a quick rhetorical point before my substantive question. You said early on in your presentation that the ALP successfully created the impression that John Howard had lost touch. Whilst I accept your positive endorsement of the ALP's campaigning abilities, perhaps the truth of the matter is simpler. Drawing on Dr Gow's presentation this morning, perhaps he had just lost touch. Let me get to my point. Looking at the US studies and the primaries, traditionally they show that people who vote in the primaries do not turn out to vote in the general elections to the same extent. Similarly, they do not join parties. So this does not really gel with your thesis, I think, that in fact by opening up this form of democracy—so called—you are going to revitalise the parties. The other aspect is, of course, that it is not just parties that have been losing membership over the years; it is every community organisation that we know of. It is the guides, the soccer teams, the Probus clubs—it is everything that is losing membership. People are not engaging. So I am not sure that this panacea that you mentioned is going to save parties; I think there is something deeper happening in the community than that.

**Mr PYNE:** Ian, I have read *Bowling Alone*, too, and I have no doubt that there are major problems in joining any community organisation, because people need to see value in their membership. It does not surprise me that members of parliament are against this idea. Of course, Ian is an Upper House member from South Australia, and the Labor Party as well. Where are all the Liberals today? They have all been defeated, I suppose. It does not surprise me that MPs are against this idea, because it is taking away their exclusive right. No-one ever likes to see an exclusive power removed from them and given to a much larger group of people. I must admit that this is a much more popular idea among my party members than it is among my colleagues, but that does not make it a bad idea. You can put up every argument against it. It is just one idea about trying to get grassroots participation back in politics to make our democracy healthier. But it does not surprise me that parliamentary parties and even former state Labor Party secretaries would prefer to keep the power in the hands of the parliamentary party. I would like to break it open and give it the people. That is my argument.

Can I say that your thesis is slightly wrong. In the Conservative Party, in the Likud, in the Canadian Conservative Party, in the French Conservative Party and in the LDP, this has led to a revival in party membership. There is every indicator—not just in the polls, not just in winning elections, but actually engaging and enthusing the party membership. Forget America; they have been doing it for 150 years. Therefore, we cannot really use them as a very good study. But in the UK, in France, even in Israel, in Canada and in Japan, moribund, broken parties—essentially in the case of Canada—that were on the way out managed to revitalise themselves by going over the heads of the parliamentary parties in many respects and to the people to re-engage and enthuse their party membership. It has worked. In fact, the Canadian Conservatives are in government and the Likud was even made to look fresh with Ariel Sharon as its leader.

**Prof. COSTAR:** This will be our last specific question to Chris, but remember we will have about 15 minutes of an open forum so people can ask questions of all of our presenters. We will have one last question to Chris.

**Mr MAXTONE-GRAHAM:** Just to satisfy our curiosity, looking from far away, we observed in the media that the Liberal Party had internal problems with leadership before the election. I think Costello was trying to take the leadership from John Howard. Just let me know: had the leadership changed, would it have made a difference in your fortunes?

**Mr PYNE:** It is not really a question on my speech, but I am happy to answer it because I never run from questions. There is no doubt that the Labor Party would never have been able to run a campaign solely built around new leadership if we had had new leadership as well. So I do think the result would have been different if we had managed to take away the Labor Party's ace that they played for about six months which was that if you changed the government you got new leadership. If we had had new leadership they would not have been able to run that campaign.

**Prof. COSTAR:** Until 12.30 pm we will have an open session covering the first panel and the second panel. I do not see David Gow about. As well as saying who you are, could you please direct your question to whichever speaker you wish. Just before we do that, Judy Maddigan MP and former Speaker of the Victorian parliament has drawn my attention to the fact that someone asked a question about the Victorian parliament's education program. She said she will very quickly tell us about it.

**Ms MADDIGAN:** Victoria has a youth parliament that is run by the YMCA. It celebrated 20 years last year. The students involved prepare bills and debate them in parliament. The bills that are passed are given to the government and then a minister responds at the next youth parliament on the things that they have recommended that have ended up in legislation. Some of it does come through. We have had an intern program going for at least 12 years which involves three universities—Victoria, Monash and Melbourne universities. Our education officer runs education days for teachers at all levels. In 2005 for our 150th we did our first video on how the parliament works. We have done another one since then. We are doing another one at the moment on how a law is made.

There are public tours five times a day when parliament is not sitting run by our attendants. They have a different focus. You can have a general tour or one on the history of the parliament or one on the architectural aspects of the parliamentary building. You can design them a bit to what you want. We have an open day each year. We get about 5,000 or 6,000 people coming through. We had an open garden day a couple of years back where we got about 4,000 people, which was about 3,000 more than the parliament expected so that gave everyone a bit of a surprise. That is going to be done again. The newest thing we have, which has been going for about three years, is we have trained our parliamentary attendants to run mock parliaments. When parliament is not sitting they go out to schools and run parliaments for schools. That is pretty much what we are doing at the moment.

**Prof. COSTAR:** Thank you very much, Judy.

**Mr CARTER:** I have a question for Andrew Hindmoor. I note that you have some traces of scepticism about the effectiveness of parliamentary committees. This is just a comment before my question. I have to say that I can see how that might be well founded, mainly because the executive looms to ensure that very often committees do not embark upon inquiries which have the potential to create embarrassment for the government. For instance, there was an attempt by my committee in the last parliament to have an inquiry into Job Network and another one to have an inquiry into CSIRO. Things have not changed with a change of government. But my question to you is: is this also the experience of the select committees in the House of Commons? Perhaps you could explain that.

**Dr HINDMOOR:** There is a contrast here. Essentially select committees are entirely free to choose their own topic areas. There is, however, a biting trade-off that they face. The temptation is to take on political and divisive issues which will raise their profile and in one sense give the committees more influence insofar as they then form a larger part of the political debate. Insofar as they do so and they are ambulance chasing after policies or headline chasing, the danger in those circumstances is that the bipartisanship, which is seen as a key source of influence in the UK system, fractures. So what happens is that, although select committees are nominally free to choose their own topic areas, discussions between the parties take place and they would seem to have more influence over government, not influence over the public, insofar as they choose more technical and apparently less overtly political issues. There is a trade-off there.

I think to an extent committees are left choosing the source of the people whom they want to influence. I think the same thing applies with the Senate committees. If the Senate committee structure is rethought post 2006, you need to recognise the trade-off that is there. You cannot have both bipartisanship and an immediate day-to-day political relevance in terms of the debates that are ongoing that divide people and that give parliament so much of its force.

**Prof. COSTAR:** We have time for one more question.

**Ms WALSH:** I have a question for Mr Pyne. Earlier this year the Liberal Party in Queensland had some difficulty in choosing a leader and over the course of a week it batted back and forth and it almost got resolved by picking a name out of a hat, quite literally. I do know enough about the internal workings of the party system to know how that went on and how that would have changed under your model. Would you like to comment on what happened there and how it could have been done differently?

**Mr PYNE:** Your understanding of the internal dynamics of the Queensland Liberal Party is probably as good as mine. It would have been done differently because the party membership would have done it themselves. I think there are 4,000 or 3,000 Queensland Liberal Party members.

The leader beforehand, Bruce Flegg, would have been overturned in a spill motion moved by the parliamentary party. Bruce would have stayed leader while the next three or four week process went on. The two candidates who emerged to replace him would then have been chosen by the parliamentary party because, remember, the vote was split four to four. That would have been easy because there would have been two candidates with four votes each. Then they would have been offered to the broader membership and the membership would have made a decision.

In that time those two candidates would have taken their campaign to the membership which would also be run through the *Courier-Mail* et cetera, so giving the Liberal Party a sense of being engaged and giving the membership value for their membership. That is how it would have been resolved. It probably would have been resolved much more definitively and because it was a definitive result would hopefully continue to last.

**Prof. COSTAR:** I invite you to thank all our presenters in this session. I thank you for your participation.

**Proceedings suspended from 12.28 pm to 1.35 pm**

**Dr COGHILL:** Welcome to the afternoon session. My name is Ken Coghill. I am a former member of the Victorian parliament and now an academic at Monash University. This afternoon, as you would know from the program, is 'Representation through the eyes of the Parliamentarian'. As you will see from the program, we have three very experienced and diverse parliamentarians listed on the program. We are just waiting for Tim Nicholls. Assuming that Tim comes, he will of course get to speak; if he does not, there will be more time for discussion.

Let me start by introducing Senator Barnaby Joyce. Senator Joyce was elected for the term commencing in 2005. He immediately showed himself to be a man of considerable integrity and courage, not in the sense of foolhardiness but in the sense of being very prepared to take on decisions which may not have been popular within his own party or popular to the government despite being a member of the coalition party. Since then, Barnaby has simply gone on to further enhance his reputation through the integrity with which he addresses issues and the thoroughness with which he addresses them. Could you please welcome Barnaby Joyce.

**Senator JOYCE:** Thank you very much for that kind introduction. I will not go around the room and start recognising everybody otherwise that will be my speech. I want to really draw on a sort of personal experience and try to lay that down as an example of some of the issues that I brought up in my abstract. No doubt you will have a wealth of personal experience here. Just in the first paragraph of my abstract, for those who have not got it, the issues of my discussion are the internal dynamic that has elected representatives dealing with the juxtaposition between representation and manipulation, necessity and honesty, and philosophy and pragmatism, which is part of the political process.

I will start by saying that politics is about power but the politics of power is not necessarily in this chamber or in the federal chamber. Power certainly exists and it is absolutely apparent in the affairs of the nation, but I think we sometimes delude ourselves that that power is manifest in the chamber when it is not necessarily. A lot of the times, the decisions that are made are made prior to it ever getting to the chamber. I will give you one classic example. Currently, we are talking about the environmental trading scheme. I have heard that we have just about come to a decision on the environmental trading scheme, which is fascinating because no-one has discussed it with me or any of my colleagues. So that is a classic example of how power can be manifest but it is not necessarily represented by those who are the elected representatives.

I do believe at times the parliament can be a cathartic exercise to beguile us into believing that we have full control of what is going on when really for all intents and purposes it is a preordained outcome. Power to an extent is completely evident in those who have the capacity to pressurise the effects of a parliament which has over time become more and more centralised. More and more decisions nowadays are conducted around a certain room, which is the room of the leader of the government and to a lesser extent senior ministers in the cabinet, and then it is a case of the parliamentarians being asked to fall into line. I do not believe that is a healthy thing.

I put my background notes on my web site so I will not bore you by reading verbatim from that, but I want to go to one issue which I will quickly pencil out. It is a quick graphic representation and is something I use to try to explain to people. Most people when they go to vote do not go with 101 aspirations or 10 aspirations; at best they may go with one, two or possibly four at the outset. If we determined that we had a graph of those four predominant aspirations of most voting people on two different axes, we should be able to find within that graph a point that reflects your desired policy position on those four aspirations in respect of the extent to which you want them. Then if we went around and graphed the position of all the people, all the voting public, on those aspirations and laid them out in the graph, there would be the capacity at the end to find a position on that graph which represented the mean position of the aspirations of the general public, and let us call that position X.

Then, when the election is on, when people are actually presenting their policies, there would be the policy positions of what the party is putting forward to you as to what it believes is a desired position, and we will call those positions P1 and P2—the desired positions that a party puts on to that graph as to where they would like you to be. At the end, we have the reality of what the actual position is in regard to policy outcome after the election, and I will call that PO.

I have always believed that the further that position P gets away from the point of position X, which is the mean outcome, the more undemocratic, the more unrepresentative is the political system. In any of these discussions, you have to look at how this position P—which is the position that the government of the day, Mr Rudd's government, or formerly Mr Howard's government has put forward—has managed to deviate so far from position X and how does it manage to survive? If you believe in democracy, you believe that position P should be as close to position X as possible.

What influences it to move away? I think the things that influence it to move away are determined by, in some instances, a consensus that no matter who is in power certain people have certain power in our political process. That could be big business, it could be big unions, it could be strong media interests—those who have a capacity to move the position, the outcome of what the people want, and have it as a greater disparity from where the mean average outcome is of the general ideas of the people.

Why is it that there is that capacity to do it? I think we are finding more and more in our political system now people who are not driven by a well of philosophy. We are getting more and more towards the generic politician who can be anything for any person, it just depends on how you feel about it for the day. In the political scope, there are certain people who I think do have strong beliefs. I believe that Bob Brown, as much as I disagree with him, is a person of strong beliefs. There is a belief structure there. He is certainly someone who believes in something. I believe that Tony Abbott is a person who believes in something; there is something there. I believe that Tom Uren obviously had a belief structure; there was something there. He had a formation in how he laid down his belief structure. I believe that Joh Bjelke-Petersen had one. People might have despised him but he certainly knew what he was on about.

When these people exist in the political form they exist there because there is a belief structure and they are not scared to stand behind it. I think one of the biggest problems we have in politics, though, is that as things become more generic we have the capacity to start electing people who reflect what is part of a centralist position. The fact that Australia has compulsory voting means that our voting system is really talking to the people in Australia who represent the 10 to 15 per cent in the middle who change their votes. Therefore, the political discussion is one of influencing a very small group of people in degrees. So it becomes a very banal, lukewarm, tepid political discussion. Some may say that is good. It is not confrontational; therefore, it is appropriate. But I think that, because that discussion is talking to that small 15 per cent, in that process we get a generic politician. We get a politician who can only live in that 15 per cent. Because it does not allow a true expression of deeper-held philosophies in what they are and in what they do, then for that reason we get a person who does not really express much at all.

You see the polls now about Mr Rudd and what ideas does he stand for. We have the same complaints about our own side, in the current nuances between Turnbull and Brendan Nelson. Because we in Australia rely on this 15 per cent in the middle to determine the outcome of the nation, we are excluding the true delivery of philosophies that are particular to the sides. For that reason the people in the middle can be anything. We have the capacity so that that person in the middle has the ability to be influenced.

Why this is dangerous is this: in the political process, especially in Canberra, there is a capacity for people to have a continuing influence regardless of who is in power—whether that is the Business Council of Australia, the union movement or whoever. They have the capacity to influence both sides. They have the capacity to use the mechanisms of power as they are in Australia to control a couple of people in some centralist positions in such a way as to determine an outcome. Australia does not really allow a vast divergence of views. That can keep some honesty in the political process by keeping an open debate.

In Australia one of our biggest problems is that the decisions are made before they even get to the chamber. It is great to have cameras here in the chamber—and I acknowledge the Speaker here today and the debate about cameras in the chamber—but the cameras in the chamber are totally useless because the decisions are made before they even get in here. If you really want to know how your politics in the nation works, then you should have cameras in the Prime Minister's office. You should have cameras in the joint party room. But do not have them in the chamber because it is a staged event. This is the sort of charade that is put up to you to placate your sense that your democracy is being well handled.

It is probably a bit embroidered but if we had a true reflection in this chamber of the views of the people within it, then it really would be entertaining because there would be a variety of views that are held. But we have developed a culture over time that says, 'No, you won't have an opinion. Your opinion will be the opinion of your party leader and that is it', because that is party discipline. There is a line where party discipline goes down to where it starts to become manipulation and corruption of the process; where a person is then excluded or the views of the wider dynamic of society are generally excluded.

I am just going to give a couple of examples now because you might think this bloke is prattling on. You might be thinking, 'Give me some examples about how this centralist power can become evident,' even in my nation's politics. I will give you three examples. I have already talked to some people at lunch about this. In explaining this, let us pretend that this is no longer a parliament but a hotel. It is a hotel and a beautiful establishment to which people come, but it makes its money from the cash flow that goes through here. If as an Australian you bought this for \$10 million to \$100 million and you sold it for \$400 million, then as an Australian citizen you are up for capital gains tax without a shadow of a doubt. However, we passed a law in the parliament a year or two years ago with bipartisan support—and I know, because it was one of the things I crossed the floor on. It was supported by the Labor Party, the Liberal Party and my National Party colleagues. The effect of the law was that, if you buy and sell this hotel and you are an Australian, you pay capital gains tax. But, if you buy and sell this hotel and you are a citizen of another nation, it is capital gains tax free. Now, I think that is wrong. The question I wanted answered was: how did it manage to get so far without anybody debating it? How did it manage to get through the process and not even strike a feature in the papers? How was it not brought to the attention of people saying 'I don't think this is right'?

The argument was put forward—so you know what people will say when you take this home tonight—that it brings us in line with other countries. I can assure you right now that I could set up a structure where no-one would ever pay tax. I have my colleagues here from New Zealand. They do not have capital gains tax in New Zealand. So I would set up a trust in New Zealand, buy and sell the assets in Australia and I would not be paying capital gains tax. It worked very well for people who were trying to sell media assets at the time. It worked extremely well for them because they are non-real property assets—predominantly choses in action. This, for you, should be an example of 'Don't get conceited and think that Australia is somehow a saintly body that does not have some big question marks on our own democratic process.' We do.

I will give you another example: the Oil Code. In 1980 it was deemed that oil companies should not be allowed to have too much of a grasp of the retailing of fuel. It was done to try to keep a spread in the marketplace and to keep some honesty so the Australian consumer would not be exploited. It is very topical today. The major oil companies were allowed to have only five per cent of retail sites. They came up with this idea that because Coles and Woolworths had come into the market by default—*ipso facto* Caltex and Shell—the Oil Code needed to be amended. I am all for that. We should have included Coles and Brisbane

Woolworths in the nominated companies in the Oil Code and precluded them to five per cent. However, they did not do that. What they did was say, 'We will go from five per cent to allowing them to have 100 per cent. We will repeal the whole code.' Once again, this went through with bipartisan support. Why? Why was there not a major discussion about that? Who were the lobbying forces behind that idea and what sort of power did they have in your parliament? These are the issues that should start ringing your own bells about your own democratic process.

The only way you will ever really be across it is to be vigilant. If you think your vigilance means that you read either the *Courier-Mail*, which, with all due respect, is owned by Mr Murdoch, and if you do not like that then you read the *Australian*, that is also owned by Mr Murdoch. So you want to read the *Quest* newspapers. Well, congratulations, that is also owned by Mr Murdoch. So you had better cast your net wider than that in how you are going to deal with these issues.

The latest one you will see coming up is something that will be fought for for a long period of time, and that is the Birdsville amendment to try to get greater protection for small business. I am watching the bread on the water and I think that will also be repealed, possibly with bipartisan support. That is just doing the beck and call of Coles and Woolworths. What I am doing is laying down some clear examples of how the democratic process is removed from the people and what you see in the chamber is not a true reflection of what a democratic process is, because it has been emasculated before it got here and the real power is not so much in this chamber but outside this chamber.

This happens because there is a sense of general apathy. I know everyone in this room here today says, 'Apathy is what happens outside here. Because we are all here today, we are a diligent people and we are not apathetic. We know our legal process and our political process back to front.' So I will give you all a little test. Think of any street here in Brisbane—give me a street in Brisbane—George Street. I do not know whether anyone lives on George Street, but we will try it. We will pretend it is George Street in Indooroopilly. In George Street in Indooroopilly in the state of Queensland, how many directly elected people would represent a person? Just take a punt. Give me one number. Who would you have voted for in your life at Indooroopilly? I do not expect you to get it right. Does anybody know? Fifty? I do not know about 50. I reckon there are 16. We are certainly going to have a local councillor, we are going to have a mayor, we are going to have a state member, we are going to have a federal member and we are going to have 12 senators. So that person in that street has 16 people who, whether he likes it or not, he was part of the process of electing.

I put it to anybody in this room to name the 16 for me now. If anybody can, I will give you a case of beer as you walk out the door. For the rest, that is the sense of the apathy that you have in the political process. That is your political process and we are the people who believe that we are at the forefront of it. What can we do to try to break down that apathy, because that is really what I think? We have not had the Jefferson-Hamilton debate. We have not had King John and the Magna Carta. So we have had a very limited political experience and we have had a pretty safe political experience.

So what can we do without having a civil war or anything to try to invigorate that political process? I think a large group of that 16 we just mentioned there are the 12 senators. There should be a change in the dynamics of how our federal senators work, and I will close on this. Why can we not have senators, instead of sitting in parties, actually sit in state groups federally? Why can we not have senators—because when you sit beside someone you are less likely to be derogatory—sit in seniority? Why can we not at this point in time have an investigation into what exactly is our process and how we can be more tenacious, more open and more vigilant in our democratic process? I will close on that.

**Prof. COSTAR:** Thank you, Barnaby. Thanks for sticking to the time, too. Our next speaker is Tim Barnett. Tim is a member of the New Zealand Labour Party, representing Christchurch Central, and he is the Senior Government Whip in New Zealand. Please welcome Tim.

*Mr Barnett gave a traditional Maori acknowledgement.*

**Mr BARNETT:** I recognise the traditional owners of this land, the members of parliament who are here and also those who work with members of parliament and who study us as academics and write about us as journalists. As I was listening to Barnaby—I guess as all of us were doing—I heard a sound outside. I was thinking, as we all were, 'I wonder what that is all about? Is that a demonstration on parliament or something else?' There was a sound going on there. I thought that maybe I could summarise what I was going to talk about as being the wall between parliament and the outside world. That really is a wall that on this side we, as members of parliament in the chamber, control. I am very much talking from the point of view of a parliamentarian about these issues. We have heard advice and ideas from journalists and we have heard ideas from people working in parliament about how to improve the engagement. So I am really talking directly as a politician.

As probably the most overused statement in Maori—'He tangata, he tangata, he tangata'—says, it is all about people, about people, about people. The themes of this conference tie together very nicely for me about participation, representation and engagement. I end up really suggesting one action in each of those areas for politicians to take on. But also in New Zealand there has been a pretty hot debate—which both our Speaker Margaret Wilson and Charles Chauvel know an awful lot more about than I do—about electoral funding. I know that is a live debate in a lot of the Australian states. Part of our solution around electoral funding was to agree with the Green Party to the establishment of an ongoing citizens jury or debate on electoral funding arrangements—to try one of these experiments going outside parliament and

trying to get the public involved. That was something that I was reflecting on recently and which our ASPG chapter had a discussion on, which is also relevant to this issue. As an elected member of parliament representing an inner-city seat for the last 12 years, I am departing from parliament at our election in about four months. So it is a good time to reflect on things.

So what my paper really says in summary is that parliamentarians themselves have responsibilities in this area. I started off by asking two questions. One is: has the parliamentary project really exhausted its potential and, if so, should we be focusing on establishing external democratic bodies? We heard in the first two presentations today the concept of a natural life cycle for a government—something which as a member of a third-term government I reject absolutely. Is there also a natural life cycle for the kind of parliaments which we all sit in or work in in Australia and New Zealand? Is there a point where the pressures, the cynicism, becomes so great that we need to think of more radical things to do and more radical changes?

Clearly, there is a level of disengagement. I was interested to hear the statistics from Colin earlier where he suggested that there was not a lot of evidence in New Zealand of great disengagement with the system. I think there are some different factors there. Without wanting to blow our political trumpet, for the last nine years we have had governments that come in with manifestos and have delivered on those manifestos. So people cannot deny that they got, in a sense, what they voted for. But also, key decisions such as not to go into the Iraq war were popular ones. I guess that has meant that the people have stayed engaged with the system. But also reflecting on Barnaby's comments just now, we have a different voting system where a lot of the voices that are excluded, I suspect, in a lot of the voting systems in the Australian states and the federal parliament are in our parliament both in terms of gender and sexuality and politics. I know Charles will be talking about that later on. So maybe that is one way in which we have had a greater sense of engagement.

To quote Parvin and McHugh from back in 2005, the issue is maybe not at its core about apathy but rather there is some kind of link between citizens and the state which has become broken. That is something that we need to work on. There is something not working as well as it could do in terms of those wider relationships. There are good reasons for that break having happened, including the fact that over time public expectations fuelled by marketing devices, fuelled by impatience, fuelled by a great sense of mortality and so forth get ever greater and unrealistic. For example, we have a great debate in New Zealand about crime. We already have a distinctly more punitive criminal justice system than Australia's. The cries that are being pushed in the media are all to make sentences much tougher. I suggest that is an example of an unrealistic public expectation. Our society is getting more racially diverse and diverse in other ways. Our media, certainly in our experience, is more sensationalist. I think there is a weak citizenship perception of their ability as individuals or as parts of groups to really effect change. Also there is a lack of issues to make people feel angry enough to engage with the system.

The solution that we agreed to with the Greens in New Zealand was around a sort of citizens' assembly. Others talk about strengthening the referendum process or other forms of direct democracy. When there were debates such as the difficult debates that Colin referred to in New Zealand around prostitution law reform and civil union, there were certainly calls for referenda because those issues were too difficult for the politicians to decide. That tension will always be there.

In order to actually address the issue at its core, we have to go beyond what seem to me to be somewhat superficial solutions, and I think they are superficial because there are fundamental challenges in those sorts of approaches. They assume that the wider public has got the skills which I cannot pretend we necessarily come into parliaments with but they are skills we develop, including an ability to work an abnormal number of hours and an ability to churn through endless papers. The kind of privileges that we have as parliamentarians gives us a level of skill that I suspect the average member of the public does not have. We have the information, the resources, the motivation to get involved in some of these issues and the time to do it. Even if a wider democratic experiment of some kind produces a solution, how does that then relate to the parliament which is already sitting there? Therefore, questions such as how you choose who goes on to an assembly, how people are educated before a referendum et cetera, seem to me fundamental and there is no easy way of getting around them.

I think there is another way to do it and that is about looking at the break in what I call the chain of command between the citizenry and parliamentarians, and seeing how that could change. That is about trying to improve the way in which we engage and also trying to improve the knowledge about how to engage with our institutions. We have heard from others today about different ways that can be achieved. In a sense Christopher's proposal about membership ballots for leaders of political parties within the political party spectrum is one example of how to increase engagement.

I have focused on three things that relate a bit back to my background. One is about how members of parliament work. We have two kinds of members of parliament in New Zealand: electorate members of parliament work to represent a geographic area and list MPs who are elected through a party nomination system. Sometimes they end up working in a geographic area, sometimes they work on issues and sometimes it is a bit of both. I am talking here particularly about electorate MPs because they are engaging with a particular defined population. It seems to me that the whole world of social networking is about the internet. In the 12 years I have been in parliament there has been an absolute change from the major contact being by telephone and letter to being by email. That has been a very great shift. Email contact opens up all sorts of opportunities and threats in terms of politicians.

The size and diversity of electorates will obviously affect the degree to which one can engage with the citizens we represent. In our MMP system, in most geographic areas we have a choice of representation so that people can choose not to go to Tim Barnett, that well-known Leftie, but instead they can choose to go to a Conservative MP or a New Zealand First MP, who both have offices just a kilometre or two from mine. We have that ability in the electorate to get contestable debate and politicians can choose to use it to engage with voters in new ways, to consult on issues, to communicate back and so forth. It seems to me that the most under-studied area of what we do as politicians is how we actually do our jobs. Barnaby was really saying that you end up being in the 15 per cent in the two-party system because you are trying to please everyone in that political centre. I think our system does offer new opportunities to operate differently. It seems to me that while there is a lot to learn from how MPs operate locally, there are very few templates. Therefore, an awful lot more could be done to encourage MPs to work in new and different ways.

The second point is about empowerment to lobby. This is really about the member of parliament, including the young guy pictured in the middle there if your eyesight is particularly good, building bridges between outside lobby groups and the parliamentary process. One quick example: this is a picture of me a couple of years ago with Kidney Health New Zealand trying to encourage them to give out drink bottles and a bit of an information pack to MPs. That was the beginning of a process whereby this year they had a one-week awareness raising in parliament. We all did a urine test—which can be quite messy if you do it yourself, I can promise you—and a blood pressure test, and then we did briefings in our local areas. We also went, certainly in my case, to see someone who was training to go on dialysis. In a week we actually got a whole lot of information about the issue. My role as an MP was basically to advise them—not as a paid person but as a volunteer and friend—about how they could get their message across to politicians.

I am not sure anyone else but a politician or somebody who knows that world well could actually build that bridge. It is the role of politicians to encourage some of those voices like those we were hearing outside, so that their voice is heard in the system. That is a dysfunction, the degree to which those groups think parliament is not worth coming to because we will not listen and they do not know how to engage, and there are ways we as politicians can influence that.

The third and last idea is around select committees. Charles is an experienced select committee chair who has just gone through our emissions trading select committee, so he has many tales to tell about that. Our select committees, for a number of reasons, are probably right up there among the best, partly because we have permanent standing committees and just about all our legislation goes to committees. The great majority of people and groups who want to give an oral submission to a committee are allowed to do that. Committees do regularly change legislation. They are seen as a major point of interaction. I think our previous speaker described them as the upper house that we do not have. They really are the place where the debate carries on, having gone initially through a first reading in the House. We can look at more time in those committees, we can look at better resources for the committee, wider consultation and so forth. But our mixed member voting system means that committees do not have an automatic government majority, so there is a sense in which the debates are being carried out within that system.

Just before I summarise those messages, I also want to recognise that we have people here from Niue and Bougainville, PNG. I know that in all those cultures decision making is very different. In fact, Uncle Joe spoke at the opening today about people meeting at the flour mill on the hill. That is often the way in which Indigenous cultures would have their meetings and make decisions. This is the form of decision making we have chosen. It is a largely European form, but that does not mean to say it cannot be moulded over time using some of these methods and others in order to widen and change the nature of debate.

In summary, the three key messages are: first, changing the role and style of the elected representative, which is about representation, one of the conference themes; second, encouraging a wider range of voices to communicate messages to parliament in ways that we can understand—that is about engagement; third, a further transformation of select committees. I hear in a lot of the Australian states they have some way to go to encourage participation by the wider public and by NGOs in our political decision-making system. Thank you.

**Dr COGHILL:** Thank you for that, Tim. Our third speaker has arrived. I welcome Tim Nicholls, who is a member of the Queensland Legislative Assembly, deputy leader of the Liberal Party, shadow minister for transport and traffic management, shadow minister for trade, and shadow minister for employment and industrial relations, but able to give us some time today. Please welcome Tim Nicholls.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thank you very much, Ken, for the introduction. Those portfolios are by necessity, not desire, I should say. If we could spread them around a little bit more, we would be happy to. I know that there are a few people here who understand what I am saying. It is a pleasure to be here. I am filling in for Lawrence Springborg, the leader of the Queensland opposition. He was originally slated to be here today, but due to his election to that position he is actually opening another conference today. I extend his apologies. I hope you find that his substitute is at least able to give you some entertainment and information over the next little while.

My topic today is community engagement and community representation in a pressure cooker. Those of you who have been watching non-Labor state politics in Queensland for the last 72 hours would not deny that at the moment I am particularly well qualified to give you some indication of what is going on.

For anyone interested, I can solemnly advise you that in the time honoured tradition discussions are continuing. We are all hopeful of reaching a satisfactory resolution and common sense will hopefully prevail.

There you have it, the standard triple barrel political response which we all know really means we do not know what is going on, we hope like hell we get it right and if we do not it is someone else's responsibility. This, to a large extent, accords with Winston Churchill's description of the most important qualities of a politician. That great parliamentarian said, 'The ability to foretell what will happen next week, next month and next year and to explain afterwards why it didn't.' That is part of what I am going to raise with you today.

It is my view and the line of discussion that I will take today that for too long elected representatives have sought to placate noisy interest groups, noisy representatives and other serious groups of influence and have not engaged with their community, and in pressure cooker situations have been too willing to take the line of least resistance. To properly represent a community includes the obligation to engage that community in a robust debate and to engage that community in an education and to fight for what you believe to be in the best interests of your entire electorate.

I am a great believer in the parliamentary system. I listened with interest to what Tim said about some of the concerns about engagement. I do not believe necessarily, Tim, with all due respect, that that is true. I think we as parliamentarians have perhaps failed to make our system as workable for the electorate as it can be. We have retreated a little bit behind populism and behind the current issue of the day that grabs the media attention rather than engage in our responsibilities to educate our electorate about what we can do for them and what the parliament can do for them when we bring an issue here.

For a long time Queensland, and particularly the south-east corner, was regarded as a holiday destination—a good place for a holiday, a nice place to visit but not a home for business. This has been changing for 20 years. For two decades the rate of interstate migration to Queensland has been the prime driving force behind our economy. It has driven growth in housing, the retail sector, small business and across-the-board. Its influence is apparent even in tourism. Queensland is driven in large part by tourism and the ongoing dynamic of tourism is driven by migration to this state.

So we know that strong growth in population is part of the character of the south-east corner. Growth creates many positives but it also presents us with many challenges. In June this year the *Business Review Weekly* carried an article about the opportunities and challenges particularly facing south-east Queensland. It estimated that the population of the south-east of the state will increase by 10½ per cent between now and 2011. The level of growth will present substantial challenges to the state's planning system and its ability to keep housing affordable. The level of growth equates to just over 55,000 new residents each year or demand for about 5,000 new dwellings every month of those five years. That is the current state of growth in south-east Queensland—the current pressure we are facing. This has been happening for 20 years. For at least those 20 years these challenges have framed the bulk of the responsibilities that we as politicians face in south-east Queensland. It was not unknown that this was occurring. This has been happening for 20 years.

Some 12 years ago a report by our department of local government and planning indicated this growth. The Gold Coast will record the highest growth rate of any local government area, increasing by about 190,000 people to reach just over half a million people in the next three or four years. The south-east region—the region where we currently are—from the Gold Coast to Noosa and west to Gatton will double to reach just under four million people by 2031. In Brisbane, where we are gathered today, the population is expected to reach more than 2½ million by 2031, a 65 per cent increase over where it was 10 years ago.

So we are receiving a flow of up to 1,500 people a week and we have been receiving that flow for many years now. Because of these forces Queensland, like other growth areas, is a pressure cooker of political imperatives. Over 20 years this strong current has had an impact on every part of politics in Queensland and at every level of government. Things such as availability and affordability of housing, the provision of roads and public transport, the capacity of our hospitals to meet the increasing demands placed upon them, our schools meeting their increasing obligation and the burden on families of rates and taxes are all issues that we are struggling to manage in the pressure cooker of growth in south-east Queensland. The consequences of mismanagement are severe not only for politicians and their immediate electoral prospects but also for the people we represent.

This is the pressure cooker. I would like to zoom in on my local area. The area I represent is the area of Clayfield. I have been the state MP for that area for nearly two years now and I was the local councillor under the Brisbane City Council boundaries for the same area for six years before that. Clayfield is situated to the north of Brisbane. If you flew into Brisbane you landed in my electorate. If you drove along Kingsford Smith Drive you drove through my electorate. Hopefully you did not do it at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon or at about 7 am because you would have seen the congestion that we are suffering.

The electorate is in the front line of pressure on infrastructure with the massive growth of the Brisbane airport, which is now privatised. It is served by really only two roads. It has three major roads going through it that service the rest of north Brisbane and up to the Sunshine Coast area and the growth area of Caboolture. Only this week we had the operators of the airport calling on families and friends of travellers to say their goodbyes at home in order to reduce the numbers of people trekking to and from the Brisbane



airport on the overloaded road network. So instead of the traditional goodbye at the airport or at the seaport it is now goodbye at the front door of home and put people on the train to avoid the congestion that we are seeing on our roads.

To address this congestion in my part of the world the construction of a new tunnel was proposed. I was part of the Brisbane City Council plan to address traffic congestion. I was part of the council team advocating that this plan be put forward, fully aware of the consequences that it would have as 4½ kilometres runs through the middle of my electorate. I strongly supported the plan then and do now knowing full well those impacts.

After three years of work, discussion and community engagement the contract was finally let two months ago. To give you some idea of the scope of the project—called Airport Link—I will give you a brief summary. It is the biggest transport project in Australia. It goes underground to fast-track traffic to the Brisbane airport to avoid congestion in the city's northern suburbs. Two new underground busway stations will be built. The \$3.4 billion Airport Link road carrying a toll when it opens in 2012 will cut travel time to the airport to just six minutes from the city. It is being built under a public-private partnership, led by Macquarie Infrastructure but known as BrisConnect. It is the largest road and tunnel project in Australia. It includes a 6½ kilometre tunnel running 50 metres underground from Bowen Hills to the airport. It avoids 16 sets of traffic lights and is part of a combined project that will cost just under \$5 billion by the time it is completed. It also links in with some other works being done at the airport.

There we have it: an essential project in an area badly affected by the consequences of traffic congestion and our rapid growth but also in an area that is traditionally regarded as one of Brisbane's premier residential suburbs. The housing style is predominantly timber and tin. There is not a great deal of insulation from noise or the elements. It is part of what we call the Brisbane character. The average price of houses in that part of the world is just over a million dollars.

On the merits you would hope that the project would enjoy strong community support. You would hope that in the interests of addressing the massive burden on our roads and easing traffic congestion it would have broad bipartisan support. But then if you hope that, you have not been in politics long enough, because that was not the outcome. I wanted to relay to you my experiences in participating in getting that project through. It was all about community engagement, consultation and leadership in an environment where the political pressures had been building for decades. It was about building a consensus among local groups and in the wider community to satisfy and balance local needs against the wider community imperative.

We need and we needed then the Airport Link to go ahead. But in building it we needed to satisfy the community through which it passed that their interests were going to be served by it and that their concerns were not going to be bypassed or ignored. It is located near a large and very well regarded local high school and a smaller but nonetheless vitally important local primary school. It passes through nearly 100 acres of local green space, park and playground, 4½ kilometres from the GPO, that is highly valued by its local community. It abuts a brook and it goes through the previously mentioned Clayfield residential area. It has three exhaust stacks, all of which are going to be located in close proximity to the residential area and the schools, rising 25 metres into the air. This is for a road that is going to be carrying in the region of between 60,000 and 100,000 vehicles a day.

So there are a number of issues that people in those local areas are genuinely and reasonably concerned about. As the candidate for election in the seat of Clayfield in September 2006, the announcement of the planned tunnel route, the location of the ventilation stacks and the impact on the local community could not have come at a worse time. It immediately sparked protest groups, community meetings, widespread angst, newspaper reports, TV reports, hysteria about the loss of value in housing and concerns about children's safety—are we going to be breathing in fumes, what is going to happen to us? As the most visible proponent of it, I was on the receiving end of most of that concern in the lead-up to a hotly contested election campaign for a marginal seat.

As the election loomed closer, the pressure naturally intensified and this became even more so when a local community advocate put his hand up to be a candidate for the seat and stand as an anti tunnel advocate. Initially, it was suggested to me that I sort of accede to the supposed community's demands, that I accommodate the anti tunnel movement—which was also broadly an anti development movement—and so change my position to reflect what I was told the community were telling me: that they did not want this tunnel.

My reaction to that was that it was simply untenable. Having been an advocate for it for 2½ or three years, having stood up with an election platform and said, 'This is something we need to build,' and having engaged my community on that basis, if I had changed my position on the eve of an election it would have rendered me in my view unelectable and unreliable. Instead, I chose to engage the community and not run away and to participate in the vigorous community debate. It was pretty unpleasant. I attended the anti tunnel protest rallies and, as people who have attended public rallies and been on the receiving end of it know, it is a terribly unpleasant task. Most people avoid it if at all possible. Things were thrown at me, spat at me—the whole range of public emotions in local parks and at local meetings.

I attended community groups and meetings of action groups of people in their own homes. I convened meetings between those people who were concerned and the project proponents, the experts who were there to put their side of the story. That was how I dealt with the local area in that sort of pressure

cooker situation, but on the broader scale it was also necessary to engage the broader community. It affected perhaps a thousand people in their homes in the local area, but the electorate contains 30,000 voters and perhaps 50,000 people so it became necessary to broaden the debate out and engage the whole community across the electorate. I did this through a number of typical means, and it was nothing new and there was nothing particularly different about them: newsletters, community meetings, information stalls and regular community engagement through the local schools, local community groups and local churches.

So through a process of calm debate—on my part anyway—through not dodging the issue and by making myself available as and when required, I was able to encourage large-scale electorate-wide support for the proposal. In the affected residential areas, many residents who were initially concerned were satisfied and, far from becoming a focal point of those opposed to the proposal, in fact became advocates for the proposal. Some even thought about buying further properties in the area as they saw the advantages of the tunnel and saw that it would improve the local amenity once it was built.

The local schools and their quite vocal groups were able to be satisfied by strong advocacy on their part, which sought not to oppose the project but to deliver advantages and benefits they would not otherwise have got if we had not had this tunnel project in the first place—things like air conditioning of the local schools and local improvements to the building fabrics of the schools. Issues of importance to the local people were able to be worked into the project to give them a better outcome than would otherwise have been delivered if they had just rejected the project.

The end result was that the local opponent only garnered about 150 votes in that area where he was supposedly representing the broader interests of the community out of over 1,200 that were cast at the local booth. I won that booth and went on to win the seat. As I said, both schools received far better outcomes than they would otherwise have done if they had opposed the proposals. Major changes were agreed to the road network. The project was improved. A new network of underground roads and bridges, including up to 3½ kilometres of new cycleways, was included. We got refurbishment of old and disused parkland that had been a home for old shopping centre trolleys. So by going through that process of engagement with our community, by keeping that pressure on, by engaging and not running away, and by not bowing to the populous politics of the time, we were able to get a far better result.

I am a firm believer that when we get those types of projects which do cause angst in communities in terms of what their outcome will be, it is the obligation of parliamentarians, elected representatives, not only to listen to that feedback and to come into a place like this and report it but also to go out and engage the community and put the other side of the story, to educate, to promote and to deliver a rational reason as to why these sorts of things ought to occur.

My appeal to my colleagues today comes on behalf of all residents of south-east Queensland and it is to all elected representatives, irrespective of the party they belong to. The need for infrastructure in our region, in south-east Queensland, is chronic. A tendency for our political processes to lag too far behind the needs of our growing population only means that when the political will is finally found the cost is far greater. In this regard, I would naturally point to the determination of my friend Campbell Newman, the Mayor of Brisbane, who has been an advocate for infrastructure over populism for many years now. In fact, he commenced at a time when 'infrastructure' was a dirty word in south-east Queensland. He was criticised roundly as a result of going down that path, and questions were asked about whether he would ever be able to deliver on his projects. But he engaged the community in the debate, and three out of four of these massive projects are now underway and the other is seriously under consideration.

The fact is we will need to do more work, not less work, on infrastructure—I am not just talking about hard infrastructure; I am talking about social infrastructure as well—and our responsibility as community representatives will be to continue to engage our communities on the hard road that is necessary to be followed if we are going to get the results that our community as a whole is going to need. I firmly believe it is part of our obligation not to slavishly follow the gut instinct of the mob. Our parliamentary system of government allows us, as elected representatives, the opportunity to engage and educate our constituents. It is our role to do that in an informed and rational way. To do anything less, even in a pressure cooker situation, is in my view an abrogation of our responsibility and the great history of parliaments and parliamentarians.

**Dr COGHILL:** We now have about 35 minutes but Barnaby has to leave in a few minutes so if someone has a question they would like to direct to Barnaby first I will take that question.

**Mr LARIS:** My question goes to either the Hon. Tim Barnett or Senator Barnaby if possible. In my country voting is not compulsory, whereas in Australia it is compulsory. What is your view regarding voting not being compulsory? It is a simple question but I will try to take note of what you say.

**Senator JOYCE:** In our nation, and I will be corrected by Professor Reynolds here, we did not have compulsory voting until about 1927; is that correct? It was 1924, and I think at that point in time about 57 per cent of people in our nation voted and that was on the back of between wars, dealing with depressions, a range of things. Australia's problem is that, by nature, we fit voting in between the cricket and the groceries and that is about where people put it. It is generally an inconvenience.

Compulsory voting means that the dynamics change. Forty per cent are always going to vote one way, 40 per cent are always going to vote the other way, and what happens is that the people in the middle become a very powerful group. The idea of voting in Australia is not to scare people, so you go to the ballot

box trying to make sure you do not scare them out of their wits, otherwise they will vote against you rather than for you. In the United States of course, like your country of Bougainville, the idea is to get them out of bed to vote, and to get them out of bed to vote you have to scare them to death. So that is why they have a far more emphatic type of approach to it.

I was lucky enough to work in the United States for the mid-term congressional elections in 2002. Obviously their message is far more powerful. With a powerful message, however—as you acknowledge—comes the ability to incite problems, because you are talking specifically to one group to the detriment of another group and that can cause all sorts of problems. I think you should look at what your risks are. I believe in Australia our problem now is that we have become so apathetic that no-one really cares. It is Tweedledum and Tweedledee and they really do not make much of a difference.

**Dr COGHILL:** Barnaby has to leave now, so could you please show your appreciation. Any further questions?

**Ms STONE:** Kate Stone, New Zealand House of Representatives. My question is for Tim Barnett. I refer to some comments that Colin James made earlier about generational change and issues. I wonder if it is also generational change in the way that people are approaching these new issues. You talked about educating your constituency on how to engage politicians. I wonder if the problem is also that parliamentarians need to educate themselves on how the people are engaging and engage the people in those fora rather than trying to bring the people into these walls?

**Mr BARNETT:** Thank you for the question. I think you are quite right. A lot of the work I have done around engagement has not involved getting people any nearer to parliament. It has often been about how to express their ideas better so that they can go to MPs from my party and others to try to explain their ideas. So often it is about communication and marketing. It may well be the solution to their problem is not a parliamentary solution; it is a solution about working with an official. It may be a solution about local government, or whatever. So it is really trying to remould the job of the member of parliament as being wider representation and bridge building around problem solving. But it may not be that every problem has to be solved within the parliamentary environment.

While I am here, I have half a minute just to answer Hilary's question on compulsory voting. My view would be different. I actively would not support compulsory voting, because I think there has to be a right not to engage. That is what you get when you do not have to vote. You can decide not to vote. Firstly, that gives very clear messages about the integrity of the political system. If there are large parts of the population, like African Americans in the United States, not voting, that is a pretty powerful message about the health of democracy, or the sickness of democracy. Secondly, I think it then offers an invitation to political parties, knowing who is not voting, to gear their messages to those people. So it actually puts pressure on us as politicians to find ways of explaining to young people, maybe, why our political party is relevant to them. So I think better politics comes out of a non-compulsory system.

**Mr LARIS:** Perhaps we should say you do not actually have to vote; you just have to get your name ticked off the voters' register.

**Mr BARNETT:** That is right.

**Prof. HERR:** Richard Herr, recently retired from the University of Tasmania. I have a question for Tim with regard to his paper—

**Dr COGHILL:** Sorry, which Tim?

**Prof. HERR:** Sorry, Tim Barnett, New Zealand. You talked about citizens groups to some extent circumventing the parliament. I wondered to what extent you saw these as things generated, as we have seen in America, by the executive branch basically to get around the popular mechanism of parliament—or Congress there—in a way which is actually undermining public support for the parliament. We have talked a lot about the executive, the presidentialisation of politics and so forth and the focus on executive leadership.

**Mr BARNETT:** Thank you for that. It is hard to answer in two minutes. I am not sure it is about circumventing; it is about individuals or groups in wider society who know change needs to happen to make their situation better and who often have no idea what change is needed. So I think often—certainly in our system—a politician is someone to whom they go to say, 'I've got this problem and I think we need a new law,' which often is not what they need, or, 'I think we need a different government,' which may not be what they need. I think it is often seeing the politician as a problem solver.

One thing I have advocated in my electorate, which has never happened, is the idea of a democracy centre, which I have floated in my paper. It is an independently funded place to which groups can go if they want to speak to the system—to local government, central government and politicians—to train in how to write submissions, develop strategies and engage with democracy. There is nowhere you can go to at the moment to do that. In the United States, I think it is the League of Women Voters who give out a list after the election of who their representatives are in an area. So who in Australia gives out the list of your 16 representatives? It is no-one's job to do that. I think we need an agency in our communities to do that. That is where those groups should probably go to initially to say, 'Here's our problem. Can you advise us on what kind of solution we want? Put us in touch with others and help us to understand how to form a group.' That to me is the bit that is missing in our system. It can be done by parliamentary educators thinking of educating not just in the building but out at community level away from the building, but I think there is a missing link in our democracy that is becoming more evident as time goes on.

**Ms BEATTIE:** Liz Beattie. I am a member of the Victorian parliament and my electorate also takes in Melbourne airport. My question is to Tim Nicholls. You talked about that massive infrastructure project. Your party is in opposition. How hard was it within the internal workings of your party to convince the party that that was the right project and not just to take the opposition line?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thanks, Liz. It actually was not too hard. We had put forward the proposal for that massive project as part of a series of proposals in the lead-up to an election campaign. So we were looking to differentiate ourselves from the current government. By way of doing that we put together a policy platform that involved what we call the TransApex project, which is a brand name for putting ring-roads around Brisbane.

So we actually sat down and said, 'How do we differentiate ourselves?' We sat in our party room—and I do not want to give too much away—and we worked through it all. We worked through all the issues that were likely to be of concern and what our arguments were to counter those issues. But to a large extent we also responded to what we were hearing as we were going around. In the south-east in Brisbane the primary issue was traffic congestion and public transport. So we had a fairly good sense that it would get broad support. But like any of these projects, at the broad scale everyone says, 'Yes, that's a great idea,' but when you come to put it 20 metres under their house, their perspective suddenly narrows a whole lot more. So we had some ways of dealing with that as well and that was taken on board. In fact, it was taken on board so that the project, although originally proposed as a council project, was actually taken over by the state and is now being funded by the state. It managed to garner a degree of bipartisan support in its latter stages. So it was not too difficult to get that through the party room. I do not know about now.

**Ms WILSON:** My question is to Tim Nicholls, and I thank him for a very realistic presentation of what often happens on the ground when you have difficult issues. My question is: what role did the media play in this? Was it, as is often the perception, that it fed into the conflict but not the substantive argument, or were they supportive of the larger issues that were happening?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** The media played an important role. The media love conflict. A public meeting with angry residents versus the candidates, the members of parliament and the councillors, was always going to be on the agenda. So I took the early option of getting into the office of the editor of the local newspaper and running him through the whole plan, taking him through it all. I guess to some extent I pointed out the areas that were likely to be of concern, but more importantly pointed out the benefits that were going to be of concern. In that area we were able to do that. The media played a role. They played a role as much in getting my message out, if you like, about the benefits of the proposal as they did in highlighting the stories of those who were going to be badly affected by it or thought they were going to be badly affected by it on the way through. I think the media also probably tended to drive some aspects of the project design as well, so what we started off with was modified as a result of what the media reported in terms of the final project that was approved. There was some role in that as well.

I have to say I had a bigger and worse response when they tried to put a methadone clinic next to a brothel in my electorate than I did when I worried about a \$4 billion tunnel. I think the old adage that drugs and sex sell more papers than infrastructure holds true, certainly in the—

**Ms WILSON:** Perhaps you could have put the methadone clinic on the tunnel.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Don't think we did not suggest it. We have not given up on that one, either.

**Ms THORNTON:** Julia Thornton, RMIT University. My question is addressed to Tim Barnett. You began your talk by suggesting effectively that people were more indifferent to parliaments or that the power was contracting. In your list of suggestions for that contraction of power, I notice that you did not include globalisation. I am just wondering, in fact, what your response would be to a suggestion that perhaps the power of parliamentary decisions to influence daily lives, both in terms of greater impact from global issues and from contraction of the public sphere, overall has contracted?

**Mr BARNETT:** I did mention that I thought citizens had a very weak perception of their ability to create change and I guess that is because often they perceive that the decision making is moving further away from them. Sometimes in talks I have spoken about the old system being a bit like a pyramid or a hierarchy with government on the top and the wisdom flowing down, and that the new systems feels more like a crossroads for a state government. Maybe New Zealand with a population about the size of Queensland has the same issues. We are at a crossroads where we have local government wanting more powers and an increasing amount of decision making being made internationally, and we are really there to try to graduate those debates to allocate resources out but have less ability to really affect results.

I think we are seeing that in some of the climate change debate at the moment where there is a personal responsibility to sort out our own trash in a way that makes sense and is responsible, so we can do something personally. At a national level often we are struggling to come up with the right solutions because we are all waiting to see what other countries are going to do. Internationally there are agreements, but they are all pretty vague. I think we are struggling to work out where the right level of decision making is. I am not sure the structures with the authority are always where the decisions need to be made.

**Mr LANGBROEK:** John-Paul Langbroek, Queensland parliament. My question is to the member for Clayfield. Tim, I am interested in whether your opponent who was the sitting member was also opposed to this infrastructure and whether that became a central tenet of your campaign? I do not remember hearing a lot about that.

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Isn't it always the case that family gets you hardest when they ask a question? Thanks. John-Paul is my colleague, he is a member of my party and he is the member for Surfers Paradise, which is one of those tourist areas I talked about. We were able to jam my political opponent into a position where she was forced to appear to give support to it but in a political sense was perhaps working against the proposal as I put it forward at the time. It was a bit of finessing in the political games. It was not outright opposition, but it was certainly, 'I can do a better job of managing your concerns' and a little bit of underground work, if I can put it that way, to undermine the position that I was putting forward. It was not outright rallying around the flag as a political opponent; that certainly was not the case. It was a question of degrees, I suppose, of opposition. Thank you for that question.

I focused quite heavily on the local issues as I dealt with them, but from a more global perspective I was listening to what Tim said about engagement. I have been to the States and seen citizen-initiated referendums. I have seen a recall election when Gray Davis, the Governor of California, made way for Schwarzenegger. If anything strikes fear into a politician's heart it is the idea of recall two years into a term.

In terms of my involvement with that particular project at a local level, there was no fear of the community wanting to engage the political process. They were well educated and they were prepared to engage, but predominantly the engagement was outside of the parliament. It was within the local media, it was within the local community, it was via local letterbox drops, they set up an internet web site and those sorts of things. The parliament, I think, was probably less relevant to them as an institution here than it was otherwise.

**Mr McCULLOCH:** John McCulloch from the University of Queensland, for Tim Nicholls. I agree with what you said about infrastructure. What worries me, and what you did not say of course, is that a lot of the traffic congestion was caused by that monster called the Brisbane airport, which is in your electorate, building a hypermarket and so forth, which certainly increased it. Now I believe there is a plan to build a second runway and they have been protesting about the proposed developments, which I think are in your electorate, at north Hamilton and so on. Finally, what I want to ask you is this: this is going to cost the Brisbane City Council a lot of money, besides the state government. Has the fact that Campbell Newman just put up the rates by several hundred per cent on some of the so-called million dollar units got anything to do with that?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Now that is a good question! There are a couple of things that I have to deal with there. You talk about the hypermarket at the airport. That is the Direct Factory Outlet. The Direct Factory Outlet contributes to traffic but does not necessarily contribute to traffic congestion. The reason is that it does not open until 10 o'clock in the morning. Ninety-three per cent of the traffic that we experience on the Gateway and on the airport motorway is going to the airport. It is going to drop people off and pick them up. The DFO specifically does not open until 10 o'clock to avoid the two streams of traffic coming on. To drive out there at 11 o'clock is not to experience the other traffic congestion. I think we need to put that into perspective. That was a deliberate planning decision agreed on with the airport and one of the things that we were going to deal with.

The airport's objection to Northshore Hamilton I think is the airport protecting its own little patch. It is substantially concerned about residential complaints about 24-hour access to the airport. My parents live next door to Northshore Hamilton. They are also going to be paying 100 per cent more in rates. I am copping it from every direction. I think that is where the airport is coming from. They are trying to avoid future problems of noise complaints.

I turn to the cost of the projects. The Airport Link project is a public-private partnership. It will be funded predominantly by the consortium putting the money in and trying to recoup it through tolls. So will people pay for it? Yes, they will; they will pay for it when they use it. In terms of the net cost to the Brisbane City Council, it is something less than \$70 million. In a budget of over \$2.3 billion that is acceptable. There are other things that are not being paid for as a tollway which are going to need to be built. These include roads and busways which will be publicly funded.

**Dr COGHILL:** You described a very involving process and a process of active engagement during your campaign before you were actually a member of parliament. How easy or difficult has it been to follow similar processes with new issues which have arisen since your election?

**Mr NICHOLLS:** Thanks, Ken. I have had a couple of issues since then that have been difficult. Predominantly I see my role as one of being out there looking for issues. So I am out there looking for people. I want people to engage with me. We run listening posts on Saturday mornings and things like that to try to get information.

I find it not too difficult to do. I enjoy it. I think it is a great challenge. It is part of being a problem solver. I was a lawyer before I was in politics and I was an eldest child before I was a lawyer and I am not sure whether you inherently get some degree of problem solving capacity in you. That is certainly how I see it. I prefer people to come to me with those problems and work through them.

The answer is not necessarily a new law and the answer is not necessarily what we see here. The answer is perhaps guiding people as to where they can best get the solution to their issue. I enjoy the process. I am pretty pleased to say that most of it is now well managed and people understand what the big projects are and what is going on.

I am always hungry for new issues and new means of attack. If you are talking about what is happening at the moment then that is something, to an extent, beyond our individual capacity to control. If a merger of political parties goes ahead we will see what happens. In about an hour's time it gets very interesting, that is for sure.

**Dr COGHILL:** On behalf of us all, Tim and Tim, thank you very much for responding to the questions.

**Proceedings suspended from 2.58 pm to 3.31 pm**

**Mr LINGARD:** Ladies and gentlemen, our nominated chairman, Anastacia Palaszczuk, is not available so I will be your chairman for this particular period. My name is Kev Lingard and I am the father of the Queensland parliament. I have been the Speaker for at least two terms and I have never had to throw anyone out of the House yet. I think Joh Bjelke-Petersen thought I was a bit soft, but I would love to have a go at Paul Reynolds or one of the other authors who are around the place if they want to be thrown out of the Queensland parliament. It is my pleasure to chair this particular section, which is 'How Representative is the Parliament'. Our first speaker is a lady who has had nearly as long in the parliament as I have had. Lynn has had 22 years in the New South Wales parliament. Lynn Lovelock is the Clerk of the Parliament in New South Wales. Would you welcome Lynn.

**Ms LOVELOCK:** Thank you very much, Mr Chairman. The paper that I am delivering today has been distributed so you should have a copy of that. I do not intend to read it but just speak to it and I have only a couple of slides to show that will help to illustrate it.

By way of background, the New South Wales Legislative Council was reconstituted in 1978. At the 1978 reconstitution, we became popularly elected for the first time and we were the last House, I believe, in this country to become popularly elected even though we are the oldest House in the country. It was the first time that the House had become a full-time House where the members were seen as full-time members. They reduced the membership from, I think, around 60 to 40 members at that time and their terms were for three terms of the Legislative Assembly. Prior to that, they had had terms of 12 years and there had been times where they had been appointed originally for life. So the House from 1978 has become a very different creature. In 1991 it was further reduced from the 45 to its current 42 members. Also in 1991 we adopted fixed-term parliaments in New South Wales. At that time we also adopted a reduction in terms for members of the Upper House from three terms of the Lower House to two terms. So now most members of our House get eight years when they are elected.

Proportional representation was the method of voting that was adopted for the New South Wales Legislative Council. It is similar to what was used for the Senate and it was quite a bone of contention. It was one of the reasons we were deadlocked for some time in 1978 in trying to get the House reconstituted. The method of election apportions representatives of the parties in numbers which are commensurate with the proportion of the overall vote they receive. We use a system of quotas, that is, to be elected a candidate needs a predetermined quota from the ballot. That quota is determined by dividing the number of votes—that is formal votes—by the number of members to be elected and then adding one. So from 1978 until 1991, that meant taking the number of votes and dividing them by 15 and then adding one to that. The quota was approximately 6.25 per cent of the primary vote.

In 1991, when we reduced the membership from 45 down to 42, that quota went from 6.25 down to 4.55, which is about where it is now. It varies according to the number of votes, obviously, and the number of constituents. So we do not know exactly what the quota will be in the lead-up to an election, but certainly we have an idea that it is around somewhere between 4.2 and 4.6 per cent. Under the proportional representation system, surplus votes then are distributed according to preferences. What that means is that once you have your quota, the additional votes that you might get over and above the 4.55 per cent are then distributed to other people within your party or according to a pre-allocated preference.

In 1987 we introduced an above-the-line option for voting which, as you can see on the slide above, means that you can either vote above the line by putting a '1' into one of the boxes and preferences then will be allocated by the parties or you can vote for a minimum of 15 candidates below the line and preferences would then be allocated according to your personal preference. So you could vote for more than 15, but if you were voting below the line you had to vote for a minimum of 15 or your vote was not formal. If you voted for more than one above the line, then you got into some difficulties with different ballot boxes, depending on who was going to rule what as formal. I know when I was working on booths when we were counting them afterwards there was often quite a lot of discussion about whether there was a clear intention of what people wanted and whether it should be allowed or not allowed.

So that was the system that we introduced in 1987 and it was a system that stayed in place until 1999. It had some impact upon the outcomes of the elections. In the 1995 election, under the system of above and below the line voting where parties distributed their preferences, we had an unusual outcome in that one member was elected to the House who, in all fairness, had not intended to be elected. The member was Alan Corbett. He created his own party called A Better Future for Our Children and it was really a protest party that he put together by getting 200 friends in the Blue Mountains outside Sydney to register with his party. He then registered to be on the ballot paper. His whole campaign cost less than \$500. He was basically elected on 1.28 per cent of first preference votes. As I said, as a protest party, he really did not expect to be elected. I do not think I would be telling tales out of school to say that when I

phoned him to give him the good news that he had been elected he had to ask me where Parliament House was—he had never been there—and he did not own a suit so he said he would have to go out and get one before he came in to our training session on the following Monday.

It was an unusual outcome because, as he said to me, he had really done this only because he felt that members of parliament had not been paying enough attention to children. That is why he had put this party together with some friends and basically put it up on the paper so that he could make a point that we ought to be looking to the future for our children. It would appear that a lot of the parties decided, without knowing really what his political background was—and it was quite left of Centre—a lot of people gave their preferences to him, because how could you not vote for a better future for our children?

So that happened in 1995 and it had a singular effect on the next election. People saw that you were able to get elected to parliament without trying because you had a really good party name and people were prepared to vote for you, and we ended up with what has become known as the tablecloth ballot paper in 1999. For that particular election for the Upper House in New South Wales—where we now vote for 22 members because we do half at each election now for the eight-year terms—for those 22 seats we had 264 candidates, we had 80 parties or groups registered and the ballot paper itself was one metre by 70 centimetres. It also caused the Electoral Commission a few headaches. They had to increase the width of the voting booths, they had to get larger ballot boxes and they had to hire larger forklifts, trucks and planes to carry the ballot papers.

I can tell you that it actually had a very negative impact on the electorate because people thought it was a joke and it looked like a joke. For those of you from New South Wales who had to vote in it, it was really difficult to get in with your ballot paper that was one metre long and try to fill it out. I was also a little horrified after I filled out every one of those squares—as I do for the Upper House—to discover that not all of those are counted. They do a sampling of those ballots, so I hope they counted mine because it took a very long time to fill that out. It also caused huge queues with people who did try to fill out below the line.

Obviously, that sort of outcome did come up with some really interesting results. Three candidates were elected with less than one per cent of first preference votes, and one of those votes was as low as 0.2 per cent of primary votes, which is 0.04 of a quota. So of course that led to claims that people were not actually being democratically elected because they were not getting the required 4.55 per cent of the quota of primary votes.

The outcome of the election was determined by a complicated series of preference deals between some of the minor parties who swapped their preferences despite having absolutely no commonality of support base. So that in itself I think led to questions about the validity of an election where people were voting for parties thinking they were voting for one particular issue and then because the preferences were so complicated they had no idea really who their vote was going to end up going to. It also was an election where the One Nation party received 1½ quotas but they ended up with only one member because they got absolutely no preferences from anybody else. So their half of a quota got distributed to other people in a system which I am not going to try to explain to you—where it is not one vote for one, but each time they are distributed they are worth a little less and a little less and a little less until they are exhausted.

There was a prevalence of sham parties where the names of parties had little or no relation to the political intent of the party. It was argued by some people that it was an attempt to split votes, to get votes from some people. For example, there were a number of parties which claimed to be environmental protection parties who might want to actually open up the national parks to logging or to four-wheel drives. There were parties that were claiming to be supporting women in the electorate that actually believed that meant that women should not be in the workforce. So there were all sorts of claims about the kinds of parties. People argued that some of the parties were simply political fronts put up by the major parties to try to get the disaffected vote and that, because they had seen the result in 1995, there was an attempt to manipulate or emulate that result to get extra seats in parliament.

The House composition from that election ended up being 16 ALP, 13 Liberal-Nationals—they got 27.37 per cent of the vote which was actually down from their principal vote—and 13 minor or micro party members in the House. We had Greens, Democrats, the Christian Democratic Party, the Outdoor Recreation Party, One Nation, Reform the Legal System, and Unity. It was a very challenging House both for the government and the staff. It was also a very exciting House: you never knew what was going to happen from one day to the next. We would have meetings in the morning and, as a Clerk, I would sit and talk to the staff about what was going to happen and then we would talk about the 15 different varieties of what could happen.

But because of the outcome from that election and because it did lead to a very difficult situation for the government to try to muster a majority, the 1999 Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Amendment Bill was introduced into the House to try to take away what were seen as some of the worst features of that particular election. The proposals were: we should abolish this group ticket voting system; there should be no pre-lodged party preference lists; above-the-line voting should be limited to that party; and preferences would only be available when indicated by the voter themselves, and that preference could be either above or below the line.

Party registration rules were also changed. The original proposal was to have a minimum of 1,000 members to register a party, whereas previously it had been 200. A party needed to pay \$3,500 for registration whereas previously it had been nil. There was a \$5,000 fee to contest the election, although

this would be refunded if somebody from that group got elected or if you got at least four per cent of first preference votes. You also needed to be registered for 12 months prior to an election, so you could not get a new party springing up two or three months out from an election.

The reaction in the Council was interesting. When this bill came before the House, both of the major parties supported it. The government argued it was more democratic. As the Leader of the House said at the time, it was wrong for 60,000 people voting for one candidate to ultimately end up electing another candidate, which is what was happening. He argued it was more transparent and that it would restore faith in the electoral system. The opposition claimed it would remove the ability to manipulate the preference system and people would know where their votes were going.

Interestingly, the Greens supported it. Perhaps they could see the potential benefits as one of the larger minority parties. They also argued it was more democratic and transparent. I guess you could argue in some ways they were the most damaged party from the 1999 election—as I said, due to the number of parties that were arguing they were actually green-based parties, their vote was being split. It was opposed by most of the minor parties and the micro parties. It was suggested that this was an introduction of first-past-the-post voting by stealth. They also argued it would reduce variety and representation in the House, and it would favour the major parties.

One of the things that needs to be remembered is that, if you cannot put in a pre-preference distribution, you need to get around the state to be able to tell people how they should distribute their preferences to vote for you. Of course this will favour larger parties and even larger minor parties, but if you have a very small party base and you do not have a lot of people who belong to your party, you are not going to be able to get around the state to actually get how-to-vote cards out at an election. So they argued it would be less democratic. They also argued it would be less democratic because votes would be exhausted, so if your candidate is not elected the votes go to somebody else. Here, if your candidate is not elected, your vote does not count, it just disappears.

In the long run, the bill was passed. There were a couple of changes. That \$3,500 registration fee went down to \$2,000, and membership now only requires 750 members, not 1,000. Otherwise, the reforms were accepted without change, including the abolition of this group ticket voting. The impact of that was that the vote of smaller, similar-minded parties was split—as I said, how-to-vote cards favour the major parties who can have somebody at every polling booth to hand out how-to-vote cards—and more votes have been exhausted when there were no preferences indicated by voters. These reforms were passed after the 1999 election.

If we look at what happened in the two elections that we have had since then, in 2003 only 15 groups registered, down from 80 in the 1999 election. Only four seats were won by minor parties, which is down from seven at the previous election. We got two Greens, one Christian Democrat and one Shooters Party. The Council then had 11 crossbench members, which is two down from the 13; 18 ALP, which is two up from 16; and the Liberals and Nationals stayed the same at 13. They found that preferences played virtually no part in the final outcome of the election.

These days preferences do not appear to be actually impacting. Eighty to 90 per cent of votes above the line were exhausted between the groups. The primary vote determined the members elected. Parties with divided core support were disadvantaged. For example, the Shooters Party, One Nation, Fishing Party, Horse Riders Party, the four-wheel drive ticket and Australians Against Further Immigration got a combined primary vote of 1.63 quotas, with only one member elected with less than half a quota in the long run. However, the lowest vote for a crossbench member was 2.05 per cent, whereas at the previous election it had been 0.2 per cent. In 2007 we got only four minor party members elected and the lowest vote there was 2.79 per cent or 0.62 per cent of a quota. The Council now has eight crossbench members; 19 ALP members, which is one up; and 15 Liberals and Nationals, which is two up. So there are only eight crossbench members.

This slide shows you the different parties that were returned at each of the elections. At the moment we have a House that has a reduced activism in intervention. Between 1999 and 2006, 40 per cent of amendments were agreed to. Since 2007, only 11 per cent of amendments have been agreed to. The interesting thing to note is that 242 amendments, which is more than two-thirds of all amendments, have been moved by the Greens—who now have four members in the House, which is their greatest number of members in our House—but only eight of them have been agreed to. So there is a huge change in that. I think the Greens thought that because they have more members they were going to have more of a say in what happened. But the reality has been that, as the crossbench has diminished, it is much easier for the government to get the numbers it needs.

In conclusion, I think the electoral changes have impacted significantly on the crossbenches. It has been argued that certain parties have been favoured, particularly the major parties. Criticisms of the reforms were that they effectively removed preferential voting, that they have limited minority interest representation and it is less democratic because many votes are exhausted, whereas those who support it argue that it has removed manipulation of the electoral system. Members are now elected according to the level of their primary vote, or their primary base. It is more transparent because you know whom you are voting for. Therefore, it is more democratic. I find it interesting that both sides are claiming that it would be more democratic or less democratic. They are completely at odds.



There are observable differences which I have seen in the House as a Clerk. Fewer amendments are being moved. Fewer crossbench amendments are being agreed to. The government can get the numbers more easily, and there has been less successful activism in the suspension of standing orders, in disallowance of regulations and in non-government amendments getting through the House.

**Mr LINGARD:** Are there any immediate questions for Lynn before we start the next speaker? We will leave those questions until afterwards. I now introduce Jenni Newton-Farrelly, from the South Australian Parliament Research Library. Jenni's topic is 'Gerry built to purpose built: creating fair and equal electoral districts in South Australia'.

**Ms NEWTON-FARRELLY:** My paper is about a unique constitutional requirement of the Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission in South Australia. Elsewhere in Australia and until 1991 in South Australia the presumption has been that a redistribution of electoral districts would only be politically fair if the redistribution authority is blind to the political consequences of the boundaries that it draws. The fairness clause reverses that presumption and requires the commission to take political values into account in much the same way as the parties, the commentators and political scientists have always done. The paper covers the process that the commission has worked on to put the fairness clause into effect. The paper is way too detailed and too long to read to you, so I will summarise it and I will also look at why the fairness clause was introduced. I hope that by the end of this presentation you will be as interested in this whole area as I am.

First, I should tell you about the fairness clause itself. Like every other jurisdiction around Australia, South Australia requires its boundaries commissioners to draw electoral boundaries in such a way that each seat will have roughly the same number of electors at the subsequent election. So we are not talking about at the time of the redistribution. In addition, the commissioners must try to make sure that at the election the party which wins the majority of the votes will win a majority of the seats and will therefore be in a position to form a government. Specifically, section 83(1) of the South Australian Constitution Act 1934 requires—and this is longwinded but I will read it—

In making an electoral redistribution the Commission must ensure, as far as practicable, that the electoral redistribution is fair to prospective candidates and groups of candidates so that, if candidates of a particular group attract more than 50 per cent of the popular vote (determined by aggregating votes cast throughout the State and allocating preferences to the necessary extent), they will be elected in sufficient numbers to enable a government to be formed.

As in every other jurisdiction, there are other criteria which the commissioners may take into account—geography, community of interest and ease of communication with the member—but the equity and the fairness criteria are so demanding that in practice they override these other criteria. In particular, a requirement that existing boundaries be taken into account has been removed altogether.

To put this into context, I need to summarise the electoral system in South Australia. It is bicameral. The Legislative Council is elected using PR over a statewide electorate, and so the boundaries commission has no reference at all in relation to that House. The House of Assembly has 47 members elected to represent single-member seats. It is these electorates that the boundaries commission is responsible for.

Boundaries are examined and can be redrawn after every election. Elections are held on a fixed date every four years. In Assembly elections there is a full preferential ballot. In the final result in a seat if the contest involves a candidate other than the ALP or the Liberal candidate, if it is an ALP or Nat result, for example, the ballot papers are thrown to find a theoretical ALP-Liberal two-party preferred result. This means that there is an official count of the two-party preferred vote for the state as a whole for each seat and indeed for each booth.

The Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission is an ongoing entity of three members: the most senior judge of the Supreme Court, the state Electoral Commissioner and the Surveyor-General. The redistribution process is essentially a legal one. I will give you a quick overview of boundaries. Many of you will immediately think of Playford and malapportionment. What Playford did in 1936 was to entrench existing malapportionment as a formal zonal system which kept the LCL in power for the next 30 years even at elections where two-party preferred estimates showed that the majority of voters across the state would have preferred a Labor government.

In 1965 the ALP won government despite the enormous disadvantage that it faced at the polls, but electoral reform was blocked by the Legislative Council. Electoral reform was gradually achieved by the ALP under Dunstan and also by Steele Hall's small 'l' Liberal government, and in 1976 an independent Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission was constituted and drew South Australia's first-ever set of equitable boundaries. The commission's order came into effect without parliamentary involvement and it seemed to everyone that, just like the franchise, boundaries would no longer be an issue. Someone did suggest that political values might be taken into account but the commission refused the idea point-blank.

In recent history the political contest in South Australia has not been dominated by either the Labor Party or the Liberal Party. No government has had the numbers in the Upper House—not since the introduction of proportional representation in 1973. In the Lower House since the Dunstan decade, both ALP and Liberal governments have often needed to rely upon the support of Independents or members representing minor parties. For example, for the 16 years from 1989 until the most recent election in 2006, ALP and Liberal governments relied on the support of minor party members of parliament and Independents for almost 10 of those 16 years.

South Australia's political geography is relatively rigid compared to other states because the degree of regionalisation is quite low. There is no large mining workforce that votes ALP like Western Australia has and the steel industry based in Whyalla has lost most of its workforce since the 1970s. Aquaculture, fishing, forestry and agriculture are not big employers. As a result, there is a fairly limited ALP vote in the country, to the extent that the ALP regularly wins just one of the seats outside Adelaide. By contrast, in the city it is fairly easy to categorise individual suburbs as either Labor or Liberal. The result is that country voters support the Liberal Party at a much higher rate than city voters support the ALP.

The concentration of Liberal-supporting country seats was a problem for the Liberal Party in the 1980s because the Liberal Party could not convert its vote into seats as efficiently as the ALP could. This was not a matter of a single-member electoral system amplifying the vote of the winning party. With a similar share of the vote across the state, the ALP consistently won more seats than the Liberal Party did. It was not just a matter of the ALP running a series of effective campaigns in marginal seats. The political effect of geographically concentrated party support is a phenomenon that had been identified in Britain 100 years before and in 1958 Soper and Rydon had identified that in federal elections in Australia the ALP was disadvantaged by the concentration of its support in cities. Soper and Rydon developed measures for the two drivers of under-representation: unequal electorate sizes and what they called the differential concentration of majorities. If we use their measures we can see that in South Australia, before the introduction of equal-sized electorates, these two factors were working in opposite directions.

In 1975 the fact that some electorates contained many more electors than others reduced the ALP's effective two-party preferred vote by three percentage points and the differential concentration of party support reduced the effectiveness of the Liberal two-party preferred vote by 2.3 percentage points. Therefore, when equal-sized electorates were introduced in 1976, the ALP disadvantage was removed but the differential concentration of majorities remained to disadvantage the Liberal Party. The problem came to the fore at the state election of 1989 when the Liberal Party won 52 per cent of the two-party preferred vote across the state but did not win enough seats to form a government.

Meanwhile there was strong population growth in outer suburban seats which threw several electorates well out of quota but no redistribution was likely for several years. The ALP government began the process to change the frequency of redistributions. But in the select committee, one of the Independent members whose support made it possible for the ALP to govern supported the Liberal proposal for a fairness clause. For a win on more frequent redistributions, the ALP accepted the fairness clause.

So what does having a fairness clause involve? Implementing the fairness requirement seemed difficult at first because the methodology was not obvious. The commission and the parties do now seem to be agreed on the following points. Political support will be represented by the two-party preferred vote at the most recent election. Political support in a given geographic area will be calculated at the census collectors district level and it will be the weighted average of the two-party preferred results at booths used by the residents of that CCD. The two-party preferred vote will be used rather than the two-group vote or a government/non-government construct.

The pendulum will be used and uniform swings will be assumed to operate but it will not be assumed that individual seats will each swing to the same degree. Country seats will be assumed to swing less than the average on the basis of which the commission will not make the median seat a country seat. The commission will not take incumbent seats into account. The commission will not make large numbers of marginal seats just in order to overinsure the need to guarantee the winning party a majority of the seats. The date at which the new electorates will need to have equal numbers of electors will be the next election date.

Finally, the commission will test its boundaries at two points in time. Firstly, at the time of the redistribution the commission will need to be satisfied that if the opposition wins a swing big enough to give it 50 per cent plus one of the two-party preferred vote, it will win a majority of seats and be able to form government. Secondly, at the time of the subsequent election, the redistribution will be judged on the basis of whether the party or group that wins the majority of the two-party preferred vote across the state actually does win a majority of the seats.

The fairness clause is not a proportionality requirement. The commission does not attempt to fix seats around the pendulum in such a way that a party which wins 55 per cent of the vote would necessarily win 55 per cent of the seats. But it does explicitly set seats around the pendulum in such a way that if either the ALP or the Liberal Party wins just over 50 per cent of the vote it will win the median seat and it will be able to form government.

The fairness requirement is not a requirement that the electoral system be fair to all parties, nor that it be fair to individual members of the parliament. Minor parties have submitted that the new system entrenches the importance of the two major parties. Individual members have submitted that the combination of frequent distributions and the commission's lack of concern for existing community of interest makes representing communities more difficult. Perhaps more importantly, members have argued that it seems unfair to have a marginal seat made even more marginal simply because the commission needs to have seats set at particular points around the pendulum. Naturally enough, no-one has complained when their slender margin has been increased for the same reason.

Has the introduction of the fairness clause been worthwhile? Of the four state elections since the introduction of the fairness clause, three have returned results which were clearly fair. The party which won a majority of the two-PP vote across the state has also won a majority of the seats. The result in 2002 is

not as clear. The Liberal Party won a majority of the two-party preferred vote across the state but it did not convince the various Independent members to support it to form government. You might recall that an Independent—Peter Lewis—gave his support to the ALP to form government even though his was clearly a Liberal-oriented electorate. I agree with the commission's conclusion that this was not a problem with the redistribution but rather with the Liberal Party's ability to translate its support into government.

In general, the parties and the individual members accept the new system. I had actual written support for it, but speaking to some of the members I have to change that. They do accept the system and there has been no attempt to change or to nullify the fairness provisions. It has taken some time for members of both parties to recognise that community of interest is no longer a reason for deviation from the quota. But the commission has been resolute. The paper notes the outcry in 1991 when the commission attached Kangaroo Island to the Eyre Peninsula electorate rather than to the Fleurieu Peninsula electorate and the commission's fairly blunt response.

My understanding is that commissioners also support the use of the fairness clause. When the first draft of the redistribution was finalised in 1991 the commissioners were surprised to find that without any intention to advantage one party or the other they had drawn boundaries which would not have given a fair result when judged by the previous election's results. I think that was a salutary lesson.

Has the fairness clause put an end to the disadvantage caused by differential concentrations of support? Support is still concentrated and sometimes it seems to have made a difference but it is not always the Liberal Party that has been disadvantaged so it is hard to see it as a systemic bias. Applying Soper and Rydon's measures to the four state elections since the introduction of the fairness clause, there was a small disadvantage to the Liberal Party in 1993, a disadvantage to the ALP in 1997 and again in 2002 and finally in 2006 there was a disadvantage again to the Liberals. These are quite variable results and at levels that are relatively low. But it is unsettling to see even this. What I am doing now is working on the measures to understand what is happening.

What would the parliament or commission do if the next election produces a result which is clearly unfair? My guess is that one wrong election outcome would be accepted but two would be a problem. The centrality of the fairness could now affect how the South Australian electoral system will be able to change in the future. I think that the two-party preferred count is so important that we could not go to an optional preferential ballot even if other states and the federal parliament do.

I do not think that we could use what Western Australia and Queensland use, which is a large electorate, even though we have two electorates that would qualify under those state systems. Members of a couple of Australian parliaments have suggested that a fairness clause be introduced in their jurisdictions. I think it would be very difficult to introduce in a jurisdiction which had optional preferential voting. I am not sure that it would work terribly well in a jurisdiction where you had three parties or more. Ours with two parties works reasonably well with a pendulum. But a three-party pendulum ain't going to work.

In summary, the fairness clause is something which many observers thought would be either dangerous or impractical. The paper shows that the commission has found ways to make it work. It is accepted by the parties. My guess is that even if it fails in the future, the parliament will look for a replacement mechanism that will guarantee both equity and fairness.

**Mr LINGARD:** Thank you, Jenni. I am sure there will be some questions about the fairness clause at the end of the session. I now introduce Charles Chauvel from New Zealand. He is an MP in the New Zealand House of Representatives.

*Mr Chauvel gave a traditional Maori acknowledgement.*

**Mr CHAUVEL:** Like my colleague, Tim Barnett, I have just presented respectful greetings to you all in the Indigenous language of New Zealand. Thank you, Kevin, for the introduction. Just a couple of preliminary comments: the paper did not reproduce terribly well in your booklet, so I have put my email address up there in case anybody is enraptured enough to want the full version with footnotes and tables but I have also had the tables passed around. Basically, in the presentation I want to try to cover the background to New Zealand's move to this new electoral system and then really concentrate on the differences that it has made for representation in our single chamber of parliament. If there is time, I will go on to talk about some of the broader implications for public policy that the changes have entailed.

As you probably know, and I will perhaps speed through this part of the paper, until 1993 we had a pretty much vanilla English style, first-past-the-post system to elect our single-chamber legislature. In 1993 there was a referendum to change that system and move to a mixed-member proportional system, and the first MMP election was held in 1996. In terms of the detail of MMP, it is a form of PR where about half the members of the chamber are elected from single-member constituencies by the straight-out plurality method and the remaining members are taken from party lists so that the overall composition of the legislature exactly reflects the election night tally in terms of overall national party vote distribution. Clearly, that system is designed to—and does—result ordinarily in coalition governments.

You get two votes on the day—your party vote and your constituency vote. Your party has to either get five per cent of all the party votes or win a constituency vote to qualify for representation in the parliament. Generally speaking, there is a default size of the House of 120, but since 2005 we have had 121 members because of a phenomenon called overhang. It is a little bit complicated but it means that, if a

party fails to qualify for the same percentage of vote that it wins in constituency seats, it nonetheless gets to keep the constituency seats. Our Maori Party won four seats last time. They did not quite get the percentage of votes that would have justified the proportional share in the House, but nonetheless they kept their four seats and the House was increased to 121 members, with a bit of a squeeze at the back of the chamber as a result. That is the way the system works in those cases.

So why the move? As I said, New Zealand used to be a pretty perfect example of the old Westminster model, a very centralised system. We have had a unicameral parliament since 1951. I think uniquely across Australasia, our upper chamber was abolished by a Conservative suicide squad, rather than a Labor appointed one. We have no formal written Constitution and voluntary voting, as you heard. There was really a concentration of power in the old large parties which was not wisely used. In the 1980s Labor gained election and then implemented quite a radical economic reform agenda, which none of the voters really knew was coming, and then in the nineties the conservative National Party essentially promised to do better and not implement this agenda further and then took it much further than Labor ever had. So there was a lot of disillusion amongst voters with whether or not the politicians of the two big parties could be trusted to keep their promises.

There was also a tendency to produce results that were disproportionate to the system—a little bit like the South Australian experience we just heard about. In 1978, for example, and in 1981, Labor won more votes across the country than National but failed to govern because National won more seats as a result of the distortions produced by the system. There was a minor third party called Social Credit, believe it or not, which in 1978 won 16 per cent of the votes and in 1981 won 21 per cent of the votes but only managed on each occasion to get one and two seats in the House respectively. So it was seen as unfair.

Labor came in in 1984 and introduced a series of constitutional reforms, including a Bill of Rights Act and also a Royal Commission on the Electoral System. The commission recommended a two-stage process—one, a referendum on whether to change the system, and then if that referendum produced a favourable result, a further referendum to indicate on a binding basis what the alternative should be. There was a vote in favour of change and then a further binding vote in favour of the MMP system with an STV system coming second. I think I have covered the first point in this overhead.

The second point is probably a quite interesting lead-in to the major point of this paper. MMP really has increased the diversity of our parliament and it has done it in two ways: firstly, by creating the political circumstances where it is a useful and profitable thing politically to found a new party because the two major parties do not have a stranglehold on representation anymore; and, secondly, at least some parties deliberately use their party list compensatory top-up, if you like, as a mechanism to get more women and other groups that have been hitherto under-represented into the parliament. Figure 1 in the tables is actually quite a good graphic representation of how ethnic and gender representation in the parliament has improved over the period in question.

I will look at groups that have benefited from the system: first, women. You can see that between 1990 and 2005 there has been a huge jump, from 17 per cent in 1990 to 32 per cent of the legislature at the last election in 2005. There was a bit of a dip in the 2002 election, but the trend line is very clear. Although it is difficult to crystal ball gaze, it is hard to see that trend reversing at least as far as the candidate selections for the next election, which has to be held no later than 15 November, are concerned.

In terms of international comparisons, New Zealand is currently ranked 14th out of 188 for female representation. If you look at figure 2 in the tables that have been distributed, you will see in quite a lot of detail how New Zealand ranks compared to the Nordic countries, Australia, the United States and Canada. It is pretty obvious that those systems that use mixed-member proportional type voting systems end up with a better record as far as empowering groups who were previously under-represented.

So why is it that under MMP women have managed to get into parliament in greater numbers? As I said, MMP creates the facility, with the party list mechanism, to do something that is a lot easier than you can do with straight-out constituency seats. You can actually have a policy whereby you say, 'We will use the list to try and overcome historical equity objections.' Labour, my party, for example, has a constitution that requires the committee that puts the list together to pause at every fifth place and look back at how representative the list has been so far, in terms of making it look like it is trying to put a decent representative sample of people into parliament.

Also, it has tended to favour parties that have deliberately adopted not quota systems but systems that have been designed to remedy historical under-representation. The Green Party, for example, has been represented in the House since the advent of MMP—in fact since before—and that is a party that also has sought to deal pretty emphatically with the issue of women's representation. It has a co-leadership and one of the co-leaders is required to be a woman, and I think its caucus is pretty much fifty-fifty. Obviously, in New Zealand we have the experience of having a number of women in high office, including having had two female prime ministers over the last 12 years. That is no accident either.

Turning to Indigenous representation, really there is quite an interesting story here: seven per cent of MPs identifying as Maori in 1993; after the 2005 election, 17 per cent. So you now have roughly the sort of representation of Indigenous people in the parliament as you do in the general population. Why? There are a couple of reasons—or perhaps a couple of reasons directly attributable to MMP and a couple that are attributable to trends that were existing already. First, the number of reserved electorates for Maori has increased from four to seven. A decision was made by the fourth Labour government to unfreeze the

number of reserved seats from four to allow it to increase with the size of the population of those people identifying as Maori who wanted to be on the Maori roll. So the scope for increased seats, obviously, was opened up. As a result, more Maori enrolled to vote on that roll but also the population of Maori is increasing at a greater rate than other New Zealanders. So more Maori in absolute terms and relative terms are enrolling. Obviously, we have the phenomenon of a number of Maori as list MPs from the major parties and we have the formation of one and arguably two parties dominated by Maori interests.

In turning to other ethnic groups, the story is a little bit more mixed, as Colin James indicated earlier. About seven per cent of our population is descended from Pacific Islander people. We have about three per cent of the parliament represented by Pacific Islander MPs. Asian New Zealanders are only two per cent as against nine per cent of the population. So there is a way to go there before the House of Representatives lives up to its name.

As far as sexual minorities are concerned, as far as account can be made, about five per cent of the New Zealand House members identify as non-heterosexual. Having had a look at a very sort of rough and ready media scan of Australia, Canada and the UK, that compares to about three per cent in Australia and Canada if you count all the legislatures. If you just count the federal legislature, I think the number goes down. In the UK, the proportion is 1.4 per cent if you lump in the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Scottish Assembly. If you just take the House of Commons, it is smaller.

In terms of ideological mix, there has been a broadening of interest. I think the comment was made earlier that the system that previously operated tended to favour the Centre and if you expressed a centrist perspective it was easier to get elected out of a district or constituency. That problem does not exist as far as party lists are concerned. So you have seen a sort of radical economic Right Wing rationalist party spring up, which has two members, and you have seen the Greens with six members. Probably those two spectrums would not be represented in that way had we retained the FPP system.

As Colin James said, there is also a lot less dissatisfaction with the system. I have reproduced some survey results in the paper that show that confidence in the political process in New Zealand—the feeling of people having a stake and an ability to have their say—has increased in statistically significant terms since the system was introduced. The paper speculates as to why this might be and also adds to some further evidence on this decrease in voter dissatisfaction, which does seem to be a relatively consistent trend across Australasian democracies.

In the time that remains, I would like to touch on some of the consequences for public policy that we have seen under MMP. Probably the most significant one is that it slows down the legislative process. There are more MPs involved. There is no absolute majority in the House for one party anymore, so you have to negotiate to get legislation through. Tim mentioned the emissions trading legislation, which I reported back from my committee a couple of weeks ago to parliament. That committee has 13 members on it and a government-appointed chair, but no government majority. That explains the just under 1,000 amendments to that legislation that came out of the committee. But that is life under an MMP system. You cannot simply issue fiats as the governing party; you have to negotiate to get what you want through.

I think probably that is enough on slowing the legislative process. I have said there is increased ambiguity under the system. I think probably what best sums this up is the way in which the parties campaign. Rather than making specific campaign pledges—although there are still a number of those—it is very much more a situation of the voters getting a feel for the vibe of what the parties are about. I think Colin James's observation this morning about the intuitive intelligence of the voter as far as the perceptions of what at least the two major parties were likely to do in power is probably quite on the mark. Parliamentary committees are more influential. I have given the example of the emissions trading legislation. We have a number of committees that are chaired by opposition MPs and only one committee, as far as I can recall, that has a government majority. So again, you have to negotiate to get your desired outcome from that process.

I think probably it is fair to say that we had a shaky start to the system. It came in under a National government—Prime Minister Bolger and then Prime Minister Shipley had to manage the process initially. There was a sort of wag-the-dog quality to the system at that point. Under the Clark leadership it has been made clear that the governing party expects to be able to implement the broad thrust of its program. It is equally clear that minor parties will have the opportunity to implement parts of their program by negotiation, but the dog wags its tail now as opposed to the inverse proposition and I think voters have responded well to that. There has certainly been much defter management under the Clark leadership—and do not just take my word for it; the commentators seem to agree.

There is also evidence of increased voter sophistication. There is vote splitting where, given that you have two votes, you can use one vote to elect a local member who you might think is quite good but who might come from a party other than the party that you want to cast your party vote for. Increasingly, this happens. There are a number of seats in parliament now that are held by members who do not come from one of the major parties and whose parties would not in the ordinary course of events get over the five per cent threshold allowing them to carry further representatives into parliament. So while on the one hand they might look like little cults of personality, on the other hand they indicate that voters are thinking quite carefully about how to use their votes.

There is a decrease in vote wastage, and this is all summarised on figure 4 that you have. The threshold for getting into parliament, as I said, is five per cent. In the first couple of MMP elections, there were a lot of minor parties contesting the ballot and those that did not get over the five per cent threshold or win a seat accounted for about 17 per cent of the vote. There is nothing like that sort of wastage in the vote now. Although we have a voluntary voting system, our turnout is consistently between about 80 and 90 per cent. I think that indicates that there is a degree of health to the system as far as stimulating voter interest is concerned.

To conclude, MMP has resulted in the increased representation of different groups and interests and in the diversity of representation, including ideological representation, in the House. It has led to an increase in public trust and confidence in the New Zealand political system. It has resulted in a greater need for consultation by slowing the law-making process down, even though unfortunately we seem to be meeting in parliament a lot more than we used to under the FPP days. Some of the minor parties seem to equate more sitting days with more hard work. I am not quite sure about that correlation myself. It has evolved significantly since its implementation into a system where, at least as far as the parliamentary leadership of the governing party at the moment and the voters are concerned, there is a lot of evidence that the system is being deployed in a sophisticated manner.

**Mr LINGARD:** There you had three very different and three very challenging papers. I am sure there are questions. We probably have 25 minutes. Paul?

**Dr REYNOLDS:** This question could go to any of the speakers, but particularly perhaps to Jenni. Under the redistribution situation in Queensland there is a redistribution after three successive elections or 20 per cent of the seats are out of quota. What the Electoral Commission cannot do is to increase the size of the House. That means with the population growth that we have had, which we were told about in an earlier paper, the quota has gone up consistently since 1992 when the Electoral Act was passed so that the quota is now over 30,000 voters, where the last redistribution was 20,000. My question is: do you favour giving your independent Electoral Commission or commissioners the power to increase the size of the House, as they are prevented from doing in Queensland by act of parliament?

**Ms NEWTON-FARRELLY:** Actually, that is not something I have thought about at all, so I am not sure that I can reply—but Charles has a good reply.

**Mr CHAUVEL:** I do not know about a good reply but, as I said, under the New Zealand system there is a formula which is simply applied by the Electoral Commission in the event that that overhang phenomenon arises in an election without any political interference whatsoever. If the proportionality of the House would be disturbed by an election result, then automatically the size would increase over and above the 120 standard members. It seems to work so far.

**Mr PYKE:** John Pyke from QUT, Brisbane. I am also the Vice-President of the Proportional Representation Society of Australia, so I have a question for Charles in particular. The PR Society is very dogmatically in favour of STV systems with multiple-member electorates and we regard MMP as the bastard offspring of first-past-the-post and STV. Despite our dogmatism, I can see some advantages in MMP. It certainly produces a much stronger proportionality and you automatically get fairness in outcome. But the problem I still have with it is that you have some members who represent a distinct bloc of the population and then you have the other half of the members who either represent four million New Zealanders and a very general smidgen or represent their party head offices. I wonder if this produces its own form of democratic deficit.

**Mr CHAUVEL:** I said that we had two referenda: one on whether to change and secondly on what to change to. I voted yes to change and then voted for STV in the binding referendum on what system we ought to have. So I sympathise with what you say to an extent. I think, though, that the problem with STV is that it is complicated. We legislated to allow our elected health boards to operate STV elections and I think also regional government and local government, if they wanted to—if they conducted a poll in their local region. Some of them did. First, there was the phenomenon of the tablecloth ballot paper. Second, people found it a complicated system to understand as far as the legitimising of the results went.

So I suppose what I would say is that MMP has a patent fairness about it and that the House of Representatives on election night looks exactly like the proportion of votes cast. As to whether or not you have a two-class system of representation, as the system has evolved the most effective of the list MPs are those who have carved out natural constituencies for themselves. The parties would then not put them in high places on the list at their peril. So I am not sure that it is a question of turning people into party hacks. In a sense you can get a party hack from anywhere, but you cannot always get outstanding people who will carve a niche for themselves and who might not have come through the constituency election process. As I say, those have been the stand-out successes under MMP.

**Dr COGHILL:** My question is to Lynn, but it really follows figure 5 in Charles's paper in which he refers to the wasted vote. I have not looked at the New South Wales—or, for that matter, other Australian—figures recently, but I find the New Zealand figure for the list, or the party vote, of 1.3 or something extraordinarily low. I am just wondering if you have a figure for New South Wales under the current system for the Legislative Council?

**Ms LOVELOCK:** Yes. If you have a look at the latest results that we have—they are available on the Electoral Commission web site—that shows what people got in the 2007 election. If this answers your question, the Labor Party had a swing of minus 4.4 but it got 8.61 quotas and elected nine members, which was one up. It got 39.14 per cent of the overall vote, whereas the Liberal-Nationals got 34.22 per cent, Brisbane

which was an increase of only 0.92 per cent, and they got eight members from 7.53. The interesting thing there was that 0.53 was what ended up being rounded up to get the member in and it was very close. The member who got elected was a National and pushed out our last Democrat. So we lost that seat there.

But when you look at all the different quotas, they have been split—I am probably wandering a bit from your question—and because the preferences are not flowing, it seems to me that there are a lot of votes now that are not actually being counted. So you got people who had significant quotas that just did not pass on to anyone else. You had 40 per cent of a quota translating into nothing; it did not flow to anyone. So that is quite a lot of people. For the Democrats, that was just under 68,000 votes. They do not have a representative now in the House for those 68,000 votes.

I have the lists here, which I can show you, of the overall. The quota was 173,239 votes that you needed to get a quota, but in the long run, as you know, people get elected without a full quota because you have to get your 21 members each time. It is really quite funny to see how the splitting of the votes now means that, as I said in my paper, you can get close to a quota of votes among a number of parties but because the preferences do not flow, there is nobody represented in the House for all of those votes, whereas in the major parties they are more likely to pick that up and get elected because it is flowing down the number of people on their ticket.

It may change. I think one of the concerns I have is that I do not think the electorate is all that savvy about what is going on. I do not think they realise. If you had a look at that overhead I showed you of above the line voting, it is really small print there about you can vote for one or you may, if you want, vote for more people along the top there. So I think the electorate needs to be educated that they can actually give their preferences according to how they feel. I do not think many people recognise that. I do not think I answered your question.

**Mr BARNETT:** I have a question for Jenni. One of the most fascinating political maps I have ever seen was of what was called Londonderry in Northern Ireland where with a population of 70 per cent Catholic and 30 per cent Protestant they managed to have a Protestant council through a long period. I think that is where the term 'gerrymander' came from. They had a whole lot of seats which had a tiny Protestant majority and a whole lot with a massive Catholic majority and people seemed to vote according to their religious beliefs. How would the South Australian approach stop such a situation arising? They operated within a reasonable diversity of population but they were using other factors to create an extreme situation.

**Ms NEWTON-FARRELLY:** The term 'gerrymander' is actually even older than that. It comes from America in 1812 apparently. I am not sure how the Londonderry situation works out, but the South Australian system just looks at the political values. It is not interested in making adjustments for religious background or anything else. If the religious background and the party allegiances were pretty much aligned then I cannot see why the South Australian process could not be applied there in the same way. Were you asking how it would apply?

**Mr BARNETT:** If that could happen and it was not a factor which was affecting voting rather than just ideology—if it were a factor of race or religion—could that then create a situation where the approach you have could actually sustain an unfair situation?

**Ms NEWTON-FARRELLY:** I am sure it could still be unfair. I do not think that South Australia's new process is actually the be-all and end-all. I do not think it is perfect, but it is better than what we had. It is probably better than what some of the other states are still running with. It may be that there are other things that prevent other states from taking on a process like South Australia has introduced.

Jim McGinty from Western Australia in 1995 suggested a fairness clause. Barry O'Farrell in New South Wales suggested a fairness clause, I think, in 1995. I thought that people should know what they would be in for if they actually took it on. It has not been simple. It has required a lot of not necessarily negotiation between the parties and the commission but a lot of agreement between the parties and commission. How are we going to do this? That is actually what the paper is about.

I am sorry that I did not have the time today to actually talk about that process of agreement. It has actually been very much a process solved over four or five redistribution cycles. I do not see why it should not work elsewhere.

**Mr PHILLIPS:** Just by way of observation before I ask Jenni a question. In Western Australia, which actually has the longest running preference voting with compulsory preferences in Australia, there has only been one election—that being in 1989—in which the two-party preferred vote has not favoured the government. That has even been with heavy vote weighting until recently.

The commission on government in Western Australia did actually consider that and rejected the notion of a fairness clause. I am very interested in your late claim that Jim McGinty was interested in it. He is the present Attorney-General and electoral affairs minister. He did commit himself in 1995 to adopting the recommendations of the commission on government. That was actually before he saw the commission's recommendations.

Who were the formulators of this fairness clause in literature? You are talking about Jim McGinty and others considering it. It was adopted in South Australia. Before we had proportional representation there was a multiplicity of leading authors. Even on preference voting or the alternative vote there were booklets and advocates and models. What I have never been able to find is any literature on the fairness clause, which is very interesting.

**Ms NEWTON-FARRELLY:** There are two questions there. I will deal with the Jim McGinty one first. There is a *Hansard* reference in 1995 to him actually suggesting a fairness clause. I sent an email to him and Barry O'Farrell before this paper because I wanted to know whether either of those people still thought that it was possible in their states that it might come up again. I did not have a reply from Barry O'Farrell but Jim McGinty sent me a very nice letter saying, 'Our system seems to have caused us a bit of pain recently.' Basically what he was saying is that it is fairly well settled now that the malapportionment has been stripped out of the system. Perhaps pause for breath for a little while and then have a look at the system again and then other things might be considered. He did not actually say, 'I personally favour this.' I did not get a reply from New South Wales. I am assuming that it is just not on the cards.

In terms of the literature, I have been told that Gough Whitlam mentioned it. But the earliest reference that I can find is in South Australian *Hansard* before the 1988 election. It was suggested by Trevor Griffin who was then the shadow Attorney-General. He was basically saying, 'Look, the Liberals are going to need 52.1 per cent of the vote just to win the median seats at the next election.' He said, 'I don't think that is fair.' He spoke of a fairness clause pretty much in terms of word for word what we ended up with. After that election when the Liberals won 52 per cent of the vote and still did not win the 24th seat out of 47 we did have a situation where people were discussing the clause and they used that wording. So the earliest that I can find reference to it is the South Australian reference.

**Prof. COSTAR:** Just a couple of quick comments. On the gerrymandering question, I think the issue there is as long as you keep legislators' hands off the redistribution process that stops gerrymandering, which is why of course the Americans have got it. They are probably worse over time than Northern Ireland was.

Paul's point about growth in population size of divisions is an interesting one. It is not only a problem for Queensland; it is becoming a serious problem for the Commonwealth. It is not uncommon now to have House of Representative divisions approaching 100,000. In fact, there are some that have 100,000 voters in them. Where do you draw the line and say, 'Can you represent this size?'

The other problem though that we are seeing in the federal area is that the strict High Court interpretation in McKinlay's case in 1975 is now meaning that there are redistributions happening quite regularly. So New South Wales might have thought it had had its pain by losing Gwydir last year but, sorry, it is losing another one. The problem with that of course is not that the population of New South Wales is declining; it is just that the population of Queensland, as we heard this morning, is rocketing. So they lose another seat in New South Wales and up goes the average size of divisions. Is anyone game enough to have a crack at the nexus again?

**Mr BARNETT:** There is one other element of our system which does something to address that. We are all very concerned about the South Island and North Island division of our seats, so our electoral legislation says that there will be 16 general electorates in the South Island. After the census the first stage is to divide the population in the South Island by 16. So we are guaranteed that level of representation in parliament. Then the second stage is to divide that figure of 50,000 or 60,000 into the population of the North Island. So over time we are slowly gaining one more seat in the North Island. But at the same time you are guaranteed a minimum 16 MPs from the South Island. It is a fairly elegant way of ensuring that a place that may feel under-represented at least has some guarantee of representation. In our case, the number of elected MPs is increasing and the number of list MPs is decreasing. So there is no review process within whole sides of parliament but we have the ability to change that balance.

**Mr LAWSON:** I will make a couple of points in relation to the South Australian system. The guarantee that there will be no gerrymander of the Londonderry type in the South Australian system is really the independence of the commission itself and the fact that the commission's recommendations require no political ratification. The chair of the commission is a sitting judge. All parties as well as the community have an opportunity to present submissions to the commission in public and the commission is required to produce a draft result before a final order. I think that process does mean that it is an open and accountable one and opportunities for gerrymander do not exist.

As to the original author of the South Australian system, there was a select committee appointed to examine the situation and it published a report. I think it is fair to say that it is a uniquely South Australian solution to a particular South Australian problem. The select committee report placed no reliance upon philosophical argument or political science. It simply devised a formula which, as Jenni mentioned, had been articulated prior to the election.

**Mr LINGARD:** On behalf of all of you, can I thank Lynn, Jenni and Charles for their very different but very challenging papers.

**Conference adjourned at 4.57 pm**



## AFTER-DINNER SPEECHES

**Ms MALONE:** It is my very great pleasure once again to welcome you all to the 2008 Australasian Study of Parliament Group conference. I would like to express an especially warm welcome to our New Zealand cousins, who always join us for this occasion and who, indeed, hosted a very fine conference in 2006. I also welcome the partners who have joined us just for the dinner and who have not been at the proceedings today.

For those of you who have not been associated with the Australasian Study of Parliament Group and were not here this morning, I will repeat a little about the purpose of the organisation. The Australasian Study of Parliament Group has a charter to bring together parliamentarians, parliamentary staff, academics and senior members of the media to foster research and debate about our parliamentary systems. In Australasia we do this via a system of chapters of the Australasian Study of Parliament Group. So each geographical area rather than jurisdiction has its own chapter.

The chapters operate reasonably autonomously and there is quite a bit of variance in how we go about our activities across Australia and New Zealand. The federated body, though, has two major activities. One of these is the annual conference. The other is the production of an academic journal, the *Australasian Parliamentary Review*. The conference really is the highlight of our year. As I said before, it is a very great pleasure for us in Queensland to be hosting this and to see you all here this evening.

The whole evening is supposed to be pleasurable, but what I hope will be for everybody the highlight of the evening is Richard Fidler and Jack aka Peter Hoysted, who will give us a brief, or not-so-brief, presentation this evening.

I would like to introduce Richard to you. Richard Fidler is the host of the ABC's 'The Conversation Hour'. It is broadcast on radio in Brisbane and in Sydney. Richard was formerly a member of the Doug Anthony Allstars, which sadly did not cross the Tasman. So your first taste of what that has spawned I suppose will come tonight. It is now my pleasure to welcome Richard.

**Mr FIDLER:** Thank you very much, Nonie, and thank you all for inviting me to become part of this spectacular and incredibly prestigious event, ladies and gentlemen and distinguished guests. It is an honour for you to invite both Jack the Insider and me to address you. I know you are all here to celebrate, as we do, the gleaming perfection of Australia's machinery of government, and Jack and I can only say 'Hear, hear'. These things can always be a little awkward to begin with because you are probably sitting with people you really do not know all that well. As a way to get started, often I find it helpful if we acknowledge and honour the person who is with you at the moment—that stranger. We can do that in all sorts of ways. You can turn to the person next to you, look them in the eye, maybe stroke them gently on the cheek with your fingers, and say, 'I don't know you but already I'm strangely attracted to you.' Can we try that now on the count of three? One, two, three—I don't know you but already I'm strangely attracted to you.' Already I can see how that has improved the parliamentary studyship to enormous degrees.

Jack the Insider is here. He will be speaking shortly. He is a man who appears on my radio program on a regular basis. We wrote a book together. We will talk a bit about that later on. We share your deep admiration for our constitution, the Australian Constitution. It is recognised all over the world as a work of genius created by the finest minds of the 19th century. It is a perfectly brilliant document in every way and it never, ever goes wrong.

Jack will have something to say in just a moment, but first by way of introduction I thought I would introduce you to our way of thinking about our Constitution in a speech I call 'Our Constitution: papering over the cracks in Australian democracy'. When our Founding Fathers assembled our Constitution with bits of Meccano and Airfix glue, this is what they had in mind—how power is supposed to work in Australia. It is kind of like the anatomy of the human body. You can see at the top the Crown, the shiny brain clamp of our heritage. Under that there is the Governor-General, the open, gaping mouth of protection. You have the House, the bowel system; the Senate, the urinary tract; the PM and the outer cabinet, the less said about the better, I suppose; and the High Court is kind of like the spine. That is how the Founding Fathers intended our system to work.

It did not quite turn out that way. This is how power actually does work in Australia. It took Jack and I a long time to put that document together after a lot of careful study. To figure out how this happened, I think we need to go back and look at the birth of the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia. When you think of the Constitution, think about it as being a bit like your dear old great grandma—a kind of relic from the horse and buggy era that is deeply uncomfortable with change and deeply uncomfortable around people of colour.

The Founding Fathers agonised over whether to have a Westminster system like in the UK or a US style system. So we decided to take the best of both worlds. We took the Westminster system for the sturdy central framework of the Constitution and then we tacked on a bit of Washington on the side like an outdoor dunny. That is why to this day experts insist it is not so much a Westminster system as a 'washminster' system. And it is gags like that which can get a conference like this chuckling for hours!

Ladies and gentlemen, while our House of Representatives is based on the British House of Commons, our Upper House is similar to the United States Senate. This was deemed necessary for three different reasons. Australia could not have a House of Lords because we have no aristocracy, although the

Downer family gave it a red-hot go for a while. Also, just like the United States, some kind of states' house was needed as a check against an overly powerful federal government. Also, we wanted a Senate because the Founding Fathers thought that a Senate would be a really cool, sexy, all-night toga party.

The Senate: every Prime Minister in the autumn of his career will at some point look out into a dark Canberra night and wail, 'Oh, God, why do we need a Senate? I hate them so much. I hate them, I hate them, I hate them.' And it is a good question, Prime Minister. The Senate was conceived as a states' house—a safeguard to stop the bigger states riding roughshod over the smaller ones. Senators would rise above narrow sectional interests and represent instead the faction or union that preselected them!

The other parliamentary chamber is a different beast in Australia. It is called the House of Representatives. The House of Representatives proudly calls itself the people's House as a reminder of its strong democratic values, although it is worth remembering that North Korea calls itself the People's Democratic Republic of North Korea for exactly the same reason. The House of Representatives is all about local representation. That means you get to elect your local member who will then reluctantly agree to commute to your crappy electorate from Mossman or Kew.

The Founding Fathers envisaged that the House of Representatives would proudly reflect the great diversity of the Australian people. It would be like a mirror of Australia. So it has proved to be, establishing once and for all that 48 per cent of all Australians are lawyers, 56 per cent of all Australians are former political staffers, 23 per cent of all Australians have a dad who once served in parliament and, most interestingly and intriguingly, 78 per cent of all Australians are men. Delegates, one of Australia's most endearing quirks is that every single one of our Prime Ministers has been a middle aged or elderly white male. What are the odds on that? It is freakie. It is like rolling a six 40 times in a row.

Then there is the role of the Prime Minister himself. Perhaps the weirdest thing about the Prime Minister—aside from the fact that he can work without sleeping for seven weeks in a row and do a Sudoku puzzle while being interviewed by Kerry O'Brien—is that his job is mentioned nowhere in the Australian Constitution—nowhere. It is not mentioned at all. He is recognised only under the broader grouping of ministers of the Crown. So his status as the head of government is actually legally, I think, very, very shaky.

That brings me to my next point. We have had plenty of big and ugly tough Treasurers in the past—ambitious guys. I cannot for the life of me understand why that Treasurer just does not walk into the cabinet meeting, shove the PM out of way, sit down in the chair and say he will be chairing the meeting from now on. It makes a lot of sense. The Treasurer should just announce that he is the head of government from now on and the Prime Minister is now the minister in charge of prime numbers, or something—I do not know; it does not matter. Come on, Treasurers, show a bit of mongrel out there. If Andrew Fraser is listening, good on you, have a go—have a red-hot go, Andrew!

Then there is the judicial arm of government embodied in its highest form by the High Court of Australia. One thing that is important to know about the origin of the High Court is that it was established by the Constitution of Australia. The Constitution was written by this man, Sir Samuel Griffith. No prizes for guessing who got to be the first Chief Justice of Australia. He was probably wearing the wig when he wrote that relevant part of the Constitution. Samuel Griffith set the bar on constitutional change very, very high. Section 128 of our Constitution famously stipulates that the Constitution can be amended if and only if there is (a) a national vote that must be approved by the majority of votes in a majority of states; (b) the vote is held at 3 am on a wet Sunday morning in Greenland; and (c) we have to be at war with imperial Japan at the time.

The whole point of our Constitution, you would think, is to stick the square peg of the Westminster system into a federal system. We have a federal system and the beauty of that in Australia is that the states are free to go their own way. They are free to experiment—do what they like. This has so often been the case with this state—the state I live in, the proud state of Queensland—the state that inflicted another crippling blow in last week's Origin series. I just thought I would point that out again. It hurt, didn't it?

Through a quirk of history, Queensland has no Upper House. It used to have one but no longer. That is because back in 1921 'Red' Ted Theodore, the former Premier, decided it was kind of boring having a Legislative Council. So the Council obligingly agreed to abolish itself in a fit of loyal fervour to 'Red' Ted. It is that kind of innovation here in Queensland that has allowed so many Premiers in this state a free hand to govern as they see fit unburdened by the dead hand of judicial oversight. Queenslanders are proud of their highly streamlined legislative process and even today members of the Lower House here in Queensland are ready to abolish themselves the moment Anna Bligh gives the nod.

Because the states are so different, ladies and gentlemen, there are different roles for the executive. South Australia, for instance, will have a minister for water. New South Wales will have a minister for ringing up Alan Jones and asking him what he wants this time. Whereas Queensland—right here—we just did away with all of that nonsense and simply appointed a minister for everything, 'Big' Russ Hinze.

It is now my great pleasure to introduce to you a man I know only as Jack the Insider. Jack operates at the very summit of public life in Australia—a man with good mates at the highest levels of government, business and sport in this country. On 11 November 1975, it was Jack who handed Gough Whitlam the loud hailer. When Malcolm Fraser lost his strides in Memphis, Jack lent him a spare pair. The Fine Cotton ring-in, well, Jack was there too. Every night Jack serves the nation proudly by putting up the numbers on Brisbane

the board in the national tally room in Canberra. Last year, Jack and I wrote a book called the *The Insider's Guide to Power in Australia*. It has already sold well over 190 million copies worldwide. Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me great pleasure to welcome to the stage Jack the Insider.

**JACK THE INSIDER:** Many thanks, Richard. My friends, I am pleased to be here with you in these august halls this evening, here with this fine group of legislators and administrators charged with the rough and thankless task of public service. There are some folk here tonight who have travelled from the political powerhouses of New Zealand and also from Papua New Guinea, Bougainville and Niue and I know that they will be quick to learn all that Australia has to offer. I salute you all.

Prior to attending, I took the time to examine the Order of Precedence—a somewhat arcane and archaic device wherein lies the hierarchy of importance within the state of Australia. No. 1 is the Queen, of course, followed by her representative, the GG, and then follows governors from various states, then the PM at No. 8 and so on it goes. My friends, it will trouble you all to learn that many of you here today do not appear on it and seem to have less influence in the general scheme of things than the Prime Minister's cat. The illustrious elected officials here tonight—MHRs, MLCs, MLAs, senators and so on—will be astonished and no doubt hurt and possibly ashamed to learn that they exist on this hierarchical structure way down the bottom in the high 300s, some 250 spots behind the administrator of Norfolk Island. For those diligent, hardworking folk who provide the management and administrative skills that make Australia's parliament the finest in the world, they do not feature at all.

My friends, this cannot stand. That is why I have taken it upon myself tonight to give you the tools to move you along from the insidious drudgery of your day-to-day working lives so that you may clamber up the ladder of the Australian Order of Precedence into a life where you do not have to do as much work as you do now and you can put your feet up on a chaise lounge and have a nice time of it.

My friends, I am experienced in the workings of the pointy end of government and I am here to tell you that the higher you are up the ladder, the less is expected of you and the more you can skive about on that most hapless of individuals, the Australian taxpayer. You need not be troubled by this shameless exploitation and outrageous waste of public funds, because (a) everyone does it and (b) everyone else does it. So think of this as some spirited career advice—the kind you will not find in the 'wanted' ads.

So my friends, let us begin our journey aboard the Australian government gravy train. The train is leaving the station and with me you are sitting up the front. But do not be a mug, do not rush in and just take any old appointment. It is time to unfold the map of the world and go for the gig with the best drinks trolley.

My friends, let's begin at the top, at the absolute cream of the crop of Australian political appointments—the High Commissioner in London. You will note, firstly, that there is a schooner rating and that I have given this five schooners, which is the best you can get. I would give it more if I could, but five is the limit and five it shall be. It is the sweetest nut, my friends. Like all the very best jobs going around, should you be lucky enough to become High Commissioner in London, no-one will know what you are there for or what you are supposed to be doing, so you can help yourself to everything. If you are ever offered this job even as a joke, snap it up at once.

There is nothing really wrong with this gig. It is the best going around. But, if I was to point to one particular shortcoming, I would mention that Elizabeth Windsor is a bit of a drinker. Let's face it, her husband is a nightmare. Actually, her husband has been apportioned much of the blame for the Windsor family shortcomings, but I think that is unfair. Any proper understanding of the Duke of Edinburgh's ancestry will tell you that the man is as rational as could be expected under the circumstances.

My friends, Phil's mum, Princess Alice of Battenberg, was what the aristocrats liked to call an eccentric but the rest of us refer to as a raving loon. Princess Alice wore a nun's habit for the last 30 years of her life although she was not actually a nun. She regularly hosted dinner parties where Jesus was the guest of honour. Phil's dad, Prince Andrew of Greece, caught one look at his son and never set eyes on him again. Phil's uncle, King Alexander of Greece, died when he was bitten by a poisoned monkey. It is a true story.

With this kind of madness hard-wired into his DNA, it is little wonder that the Duke of Edinburgh is not seen on Hampstead Heath baying at the moon. But he isn't, at least as far as we know, and all things considered Phil is as sane as anyone trapped in the House of Windsor could possibly be. So, my friends, let us move on to our next plum job, the Ambassador to Ireland and the Holy See. I have given this four schooners. It is tremendous fun and there is plenty of hijinks to be had. The pros are that you can sign a few documents in the morning and then get as drunk as an Irishman all day long. Sadly, there are some cons, like the long, boring masses. Be advised that you cannot smoke in front of the Pope. Just remember that if you are a smoker. You might be able to get away with it if you are carrying an incense burner, but the general rule is no cigarettes, cigars or pipes when you have an audience with the Pope.

If you are a smoker and not an avowed monarchist, the next job to angle for is the Ambassador to the United States. That is a three-schooner rating—not quite as good, but still a damn fine job where little is expected of you, so you will rarely disappoint. The pros are big breakfasts, long lunches and you are on the turps by noon every day. You may pack on the pounds, but in America no-one will notice or, if they do, they will only remark on your comely figure. Not that it matters much, but there is one shortcoming: American government officials will presume you are from Austria and speak loudly to you, if they ever speak to you at all.

My friends, if travel is not for you and you prefer a more sedentary life in Australia, there are some excellent career opportunities at the external polyps of Australia's governmental tentacles. At the top of that pile is the Chief Justice of the High Court. Don't sell yourself short, people: you are a chance every time. I have given it a rating of just three schooners, you will note. There is a certain amount of dignity and austerity in the position. The horsehair wig and the fake bookcase are your constant companions, so long lunches are out. Still, when it comes to the Order of Precedence in Australia you are near enough to the top of the heap and your business card will look fabulous. The best thing about being Chief Justice of the High Court, as my little mate 'Muz' Gleeson will tell you, is that you can make whatever laws you want and throw out any you don't like. Say goodbye to those speeding fines forever, and you can park your car wherever you want. No-one can tell you what to do or, if they do, with a little judicial tinkering you can have them arrested and charged with the disappearance of the Beaumont children. There is only one shortcoming that I can think of. There is a lot of sitting down. If you are an active sort of person, a get up and go type who likes to run about and have a kick of the footy, being Chief Justice of the High Court is really not the job for you.

If you have a ton of energy and you are a bit of a party animal, then there is a terrific career waiting for you as the Consul-General in Los Angeles. I have given it just 2½ schooners. You might be wondering why, but I will explain that in a moment. The very best thing about being the Consul-General in Los Angeles is that you are constantly seen in the company of Hollywood celebrities. But there is one pitfall, and that is that you are constantly in the company of Hollywood celebrities. Don't expect too much by way of intellectual discourse in this gig. The best you can hope for is a quick chat about the latest development in pilates or a superficial analysis of kabbalah or scientology or whatever crank religion de jure is in vogue with the Hollywood crowd at the time.

My friends, we are starting to get into the chaff now. The best jobs may have been taken, but that is no reason to give up. There is still a certain pride in holding public office in Australia, no matter how lowly the position. Thus you may have to aim a little lower and consider becoming Governor-General. This has a rating of just 1½ schooners. Being Australia's Head of State is not as good as it sounds. While our Constitution confers a huge amount of power on this character, in reality he or she has to do as they are told. The successful applicant will have great hair and an ability to appear fascinated while stumbling through a decoupage exhibition in rural Queensland, which is not as easy as it seems. The good news is that you get a nice house, plenty of servants, all the kangaroos you can eat, and everyone from the Prime Minister down has to call you 'Your Excellency'. The bad news is you have to wear a hat. That is the rule for this job. You will be spending a lot of time at the milliner's. Of course, you have the constitutional authority to sack a government and install one you feel more comfortable with, but that has been proven to be a very poor career move, and the next thing you know you will end up at the Melbourne Cup in your hat, as full as a Catholic school and becoming the laughing stock of the nation.

Here is a job that offers some very fine contacts in the field of international trade—Director of the Australian Wheat Board. It has a rating of just one schooner. It is a terrific gig with lots of perks, a huge expense account, guns and ammo. But, my friends, there is a downside, sadly: that is, our overcrowded prison systems across the nation are not the place from which to launch your next career move. On the other hand, it does not seem to have done all that much harm to Alan Bond.

For those who want a slightly less risky job there is always the media. So why not Chairman of the ABC? It has a rating of just one schooner. The pros are that you get to watch a lot of tele, but unfortunately most of it is awful. My friends, those of you who have a bit of go about you may want to have a crack at a comfortable berth in the Queensland Public Service. So why not start at the top, as Secretary to the Cabinet, Queensland? Sadly, there is not a lot of fun to be had here—just the one schooner's worth, in fact. Still, if you slash and burn remorselessly at the Public Service, you could become Prime Minister one day. The downside is that you will never be more than a one-termer. Who wrote that!

My friends, if you like to put on the white lab coat and you prefer the anonymity and the thanklessness of scientific knowledge, you could do worse than becoming the Commonwealth Chief Scientist. It's only got a half-schooner rating, of course—it's a science geek job—but there is some good news here. You can write your own prescriptions—very handy—and if all goes well your face could end up on an Australian \$500 note one day. The bad news is that you have to be good at maths. If you think trigonometry is a Czechoslovakian tractor, this job is not for you.

We are getting to the bottom end, my friends. At the bottom end of the diplomatic jobs on offer—and if you hang around DFAT long enough this job will be offered to you—trade commissioner to Chechnya. There is no schooner rating here I am afraid, as alcohol has been banned in Chechnya and if you get caught with a schooner you are going to have a swift encounter with the pointy end of the Chechnyan justice system. The good news is that petrol is cheap and as the only trade that Chechnyans engage in is the export of Islamic extremism, you won't have to do too much. On the downside, the Australian High Commission in Grozny is looted every Wednesday at 3 o'clock sharp, so best make yourself scarce around that time.

My friends, there is one more job that you may aspire to, but for all its apparent prestige I would caution you against it: the Secretary to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. It will, I assure you, be utterly joyless in every respect and without a positive note that I can think of. There is only one downside here—actually, there are plenty of downsides, including massive job uncertainty and the fact that you work for a man completely devoted to the destruction of family life, starting with yours. You will encounter the worst working conditions in the world aside from an Adelaide tourist commissioner.

So there you have it, my friends. That is the drinks trolley; the answer to all your career inquiries. The gravy train is leaving the station and it is important that you get on board. But if you miss out, you needn't worry: unlike the public transport systems in this country, there is always another train coming around again soon. I thank you and wish you well in climbing the ladder to loftier heights. Now get back to work, the lot of youse.

**Ms MALONE:** Wasn't that terrific? Thank you very much Richard and thank you very much Jack for wonderful entertainment and insights for all of us. Perhaps we can all take those jobs on rotation over the next five years.

Earlier I gave a welcome to some people. I would like to add to that welcome now the guests that we have from the Papua New Guinea Parliament, the Bougainville Parliament and the Parliament of Niue. It is a very important part of the Australasian Study of Parliament Group program to share the activities that we have on an annual basis and to try to foster some collegiality and a genuine sharing of learning with our friends in the Pacific Island parliaments. We are indeed very, very pleased to have you with us. To everybody else, I would not like to hold you up much further so, please, enjoy your meals and enjoy the conference tomorrow.