

Gillard's grotesque people smuggler sledge <i>Binoy Kampmark</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>1</u></a>
Bringing poetry back to politics <i>Peter Kirkwood</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>3</u></a>
Sharing the journey with agnostics and Qantas <i>Andrew Hamilton</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>4</u></a>
Attack of the killer Jews <i>Tim Kroenert</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>6</u></a>
Wreckers at work in leaky Labor <i>John Warhurst</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>8</u></a>
Turbulence ahead <i>Fiona Katauskas</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>10</u></a>
Ghosts of children passed <i>Alison Sampson</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>11</u></a>
Liturgy translation prophecy <i>Marlene Marburg</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>13</u></a>
What matters in Qantas confrontation <i>Brian Lawrence</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>16</u></a>
Gillard's gambling problem <i>Michael Mullins</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>19</u></a>
Bringing civility back to the parliamentary cockfight <i>Tony Kevin</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>21</u></a>
Australian larrikinism is a royal myth <i>Ellena Savage</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>24</u></a>
Self-interest as a path to Aboriginal flourishing <i>Dan O'Donovan</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>26</u></a>
CHOGM and the Common Good <i>Jack de Groot</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>28</u></a>
Australia's child abuse parable <i>Tim Kroenert</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>30</u></a>
Putting the faith back into development <i>Duncan Maclaren</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>32</u></a>
Depression treatment beyond Jeff Kennett <i>Lyn Bender</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>35</u></a>
Love the monarch, spurn the monarchy <i>Moirra Rayner</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>37</u></a>
Roasts and race in segregated South Africa <i>Cecile Yazbek</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>39</u></a>
Farmed out <i>Helen Hagemann</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>41</u></a>
Closing the case of Bishop Bill Morris <i>Andrew Hamilton</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>45</u></a>
Even Gaddafi deserves compassion <i>Michael Mullins</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>48</u></a>
Reuniting church and state <i>Gary Bouma</i> . . . . .	<a href="#"><u>50</u></a>



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## Gillard's grotesque people smuggler sledge

### POLITICS

*Binoy Kampmark*

*'No law, made after a fact done, can make it a crime ... For before the law, there is no transgression of the law.'* — Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*

The grotesque nature of the bill that has been passed in Australia's Federal Parliament clarifying the terms of people smuggling reveals yet again how a governing body, without the restraint of a bill of rights, can run rough shod over fundamental rules of law.

Not even common law fetishists could deny that a retrospective law on criminal matters is an appalling thing at the best of times and should be stopped, if not rendered beyond the power of Parliament. A most blatant exercise of that power was made over the last two days.

It all centres on the case of 20-year-old Jeky Payara, an Indonesian man accused of people smuggling and defended by Saul Holt, a senior public defender for Victoria's Legal Aid.

Until the present bill's amendment to the Migration Act 1958, Australian migration law said it was illegal for someone to bring to Australia people who 'had no lawful right to come to the country'. The premise of the challenge made by Holt was that one cannot commit an illegal act when assisting individuals to fulfil their legal rights to seek asylum.

Suddenly, the problems of the Migration Act, already subjected to the closest scrutiny with the High Court decision in August on the Malaysia solution, have come back to haunt the Government.

The Gillard Government clearly wishes to see the Payara case collapse. To this end, it has drafted retrospective legislation punishing what was previously legal. This clearly violates a key precept of the common law, not to mention various human rights declarations that dot the international law landscape. This is commonly called the *ex post facto* rule or the rule against retroactivity.

The principle has a rich history, finding expression in the Latin expression *nullum crimen sine lege, nulla poena sine lege*, a principle formulated by Feuerbach and included in the 1871 German Penal Code and the Weimar Constitution.

The American Constitution openly prohibits *ex post facto* laws in Article 1, section 9(3), and article 15 of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights makes a similar proviso. Both include the qualification that trial and punishment of a person can still occur provided that the act or omission 'was criminal to the general principles of law recognised by civilised nations'.

History can point to a few key cases when such retroactive approaches were deemed legal,

sometimes because of the exceptional circumstances of the crimes, sometimes because a government had simply overreacted.

The Nuremberg Trials were an example of the former. The decision of the House of Lords in *Shaw v Director of Public Prosecutions* (1961) is an example of the latter; the House of Lords contrived to punish Shaw for the non-existent crime of conspiracy to corrupt public morals.

One might argue, as was done at Nuremberg, and subsequently in the Australian High Court case of *Polyukhovich v The Commonwealth* (1991), that the defendants would still have been punished under traditional war crimes accepted as such by the community of nations.

In a sense, the injunction against retroactivity may be a fiction. Judges abide by that happy fiction by claiming with pious conviction that they interpret rather than make laws. Unfortunately, a party who believed that what they did under old interpretations was correct, may well find that an offence or breach has, in fact, taken place. The law of precedent is not always a stable one.

The Government line has been that people smuggling constitutes a grave crime and deserves harsh punishment. Closer inspection of this betrays such a line as misguided.

The individuals who are being charged for people smuggling are often penniless teenagers who are themselves part of the process of funnelling people through various transit points in order to seek legitimate asylum. They are hardly, as Australia's foreign minister Kevin Rudd would have it, 'scum of the earth' engaged in the world's most evil trade'.

Whatever the case, this episode shows yet again how dangerous parliamentary absolutism can be. The same body has already made retrospective laws with regards to social-security prosecutions. Nothing is too serious. Instead of allowing a logical, carefully argued legal principle to be made, the Government has decided to pull the carpet from under the judiciary.

It is perhaps fitting to recall Article 28 of the failed Australian Bill of Rights Bill of 1985, which should be revisited: 'No person shall be convicted of any criminal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a criminal offence at the time when it occurred.'

## Bringing poetry back to politics

### VIDEO

*Peter Kirkwood*

A frequent criticism of our political leaders is that they don't provide a bigger narrative, a deeper story that might give some sense of meaning, inspiration and direction to the populace.

An example of this sort of critique came from Paul Keating last week when interviewed about his recently published book, *After Words*, by Paul Kelly in *The Australian*. 'The failure of the Rudd and Gillard administrations,' he said, 'is the lack of an over-arching story, the lack of a compelling story.'

According to *Eureka Street* poetry editor Philip Harvey, it is the work of poets to delve into this deeper territory, and poetry provides perhaps the best means to explore and express deeper questions.

Harvey spoke with Eureka Street TV as part of a special series of conversations to mark the 20th anniversary of the journal. As well as being interviewed, he also read some of the best poems that have appeared recently in *Eureka Street*.

The recording took place at the [Carmelite Library](#) in the Melbourne suburb of Middle Park, a special theological library dedicated to study and research in the areas of spirituality and mysticism, and its extensive collection is unique within Australia. Harvey is the librarian there.

With his palpable love of books, writing, spirituality and religion, Harvey is at home in this environment. These qualities were nurtured by his childhood growing up in an Anglican vicarage.

He was born in Bendigo in 1955, the son of an Anglican priest. His family later moved to Melbourne. Though he was raised in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, he has written that he has a 'broad ecumenical understanding and appreciation of Christianity that is very inclusive about what is valid and possible'.

He studied Pure English at the University of Melbourne under eminent poets Vincent Buckley, Chris Wallace-Crabbe and Peter Steele, gaining a BA with Honours. He went on to study librarianship with a graduate diploma from the State College of Victoria.

Most of his working life has been spent in libraries. For the last four years he has been President of the Australian and New Zealand Theological Library Association.

But poetry is his first love. Since his teens he has been an avid reader and writer of poetry, and his work has been [published](#) widely both in Australia and overseas.

## Sharing the journey with agnostics and Qantas

### APPLICATION

*Andrew Hamilton*

Pope Benedict recently gathered people of many religions and none at Assisi. The shape of the event and the Pope's thoughtful [speech](#) attracted much [comment](#) (also [here](#)). They also raise questions both for church and civil institutions.

Pope John Paul II held the first day of prayer for peace at Assisi in 1986. At it the delegates prayed together for peace, an initiative criticised by the then Cardinal Ratzinger. In convoking this year's meeting for peace, the Pope put his own stamp on it. The participants included some agnostics. There was a period set aside for delegates to reflect or pray in their rooms, but no shared prayer.

Pope Benedict gave the main address. In it he considered the causes of violence. In 1986, much violence was associated with the Cold War. Now it is often associated with religion.

After dealing with and deploring the appeal made to religion to justify violence, the Pope reflects on violence associated with the denial of God. He claims that the denial of God by Nazi or Communist states led also to the denial of humanity.

He then considers the violence that flows from the unbridled pursuit of wealth and power shown, for example, in the trading of drugs. He believes that this reflects a loss of humanity, which flows in turn from the loss of God.

When referring to the loss of God, the Pope distinguishes atheism from agnosticism. He believes that many agnostics search for truth and for peace, a pilgrimage which challenges both the dogmatism of atheism and the tendency of Christians to regard God as a possession. They call for a purification of Christianity. His invitation of agnostics to the Assisi meeting was intended to show that they and Christians are on a shared journey expressed in their commitment to peace and human dignity.

The Pope's speech explains the changes made to the Assisi meeting. It once gathered other religious leaders to pray together for peace. It now gathers both religious and non-religious people of good will to encourage them to work for peace. This goal may seem more modest and restricted, but working together to shape a better world builds deeper relationships and dismisses prejudices more effectively than does a focus on difference of beliefs.

This recasting of the day also enabled the Pope to handle creatively the tension between the understanding that the Catholic Church is the beneficiary of a unique gift from God and its mission to go out to the world outside itself.

He handles the tension by distinguishing between beliefs and people. Questions of faith



and of the definition of religion are left to a controlled conversation. But people of good will, religious and other, are to be embraced and cooperated with because they are fellow pilgrims.

This distinction between people and ideas, which underlies the attractive description of agnostics, tempers an intellectual style that often deals in large abstractions like atheism and secularism. They fail to do justice to the complexity of human reality.

But the tension remains. Even those who bear a unique gift for the journey must adapt their behaviour when they share a journey with others. They will share perplexities, get lost occasionally, need to listen to others' wisdom and explore freely the source of their resources, pray together in hard places, and make their own party fit for the journey. The gift that they bear will be for use on the journey, not simply to be kept safe.

Their fellow pilgrims will also expect them to show respect and justice in the relationships within their own group. That is a token of taking the shared journey seriously. For travellers the distinction between ideas and people is fluid.

Those implications of the shared journey have consequences for the life of the Church, as has already been made evident in the saga of Bishop Morris. But they also have consequences for thinking about mundane events.

The reputation of Qantas, for example, is built on the image of a company whose shareholders, management, smiling pilots and attendants and passengers are companions and active participants in ensuring safe travel and one another's welfare.

The recent actions of Qantas presents the more brutal image of a company in which the opinions of management, shareholders and board alone matter. Those who work for it are treated simply as costs. Those who travel with it are treated simply as revenue.

If it is to recover its lost reputation it will need to embody its professions of care in processes that see people as its gift and not as mere costs or revenue. Otherwise why would one want to share a journey with it?

## Attack of the killer Jews

### FILMS

*Tim Kroenert*

***Drive* (MA). Director: Nicolas Winding Refn. Starring: Ryan Gosling, Carey Mulligan, Albert Brooks, Ron Perlman, Bryan Cranston. 100 minutes**

Jerry: I wanted to talk to you about Dr Whatley. I have a suspicion that he's converted to Judaism just for the jokes.

Priest: And this offends you as a Jewish person?

Jerry: No, it offends me as a comedian.

So quips Jerry Seinfeld in one 1997 episode of his self-titled sitcom. Later, Jerry counters Whatley, a dentist, with a joke of his own: 'You know the difference between a dentist and a sadist? Newer magazines!' Jerry's jocular derision subsequently sees him labelled, farcically, as an 'anti-dentite'.

The episode represents one of the more obvious examples of *Seinfeld's* deflation of overly sensitive attitudes to cultural stereotypes, and of the comedian's healthy levity regarding his own cultural heritage (he and series co-creator Larry David were born to Jewish families in Brooklyn, New York).

It's an odd coincidence that Bryan Cranston, the actor who portrayed Whatley — the object of Jerry's satirical 'anti-dentitism' — more than a decade ago, is among the ensemble supporting cast of Swedish director Nicolas Winding Refn's Hollywood debut, *Drive* (now showing in Australian cinemas).

The film was, last month, the subject of a lawsuit from a Michigan woman who claimed she had been 'misled' by its promotional trailer. In alleged contrast to the trailer, '*Drive* bore very little similarity to a chase, or race action film', claimed Sarah Deming, in her suit against distributor FilmDistrict.

Her claim has been widely derided. One sardonic but salient assessment on blog site The Stir [notes](#) that not only does the trailer contain 'scenes that were not filmed inside a vehicle' but it also 'seems to indicate that there's a story ... that doesn't involve people endlessly racing cars'.

However, beyond Deming's dubious claim about the misleading nature of the trailer, she makes a far more serious accusation: that *Drive* directs 'extreme gratuitous defamatory dehumanising racism' and promotes 'criminal violence' against 'members of the Jewish faith'.



This claim bears a closer look.

First it needs to be said that *Drive*'s critical acclaim (Rotten Tomatoes score: 92 per cent) is not misplaced. This is an intense, meditative yet brutally violent film noir about a Hollywood stunt driver (Gosling) who moonlights as a criminal wheelman. It is a stylish, assured, character driven thriller.

We see the impossibly stoic Driver's soft side through his interactions with mechanic mentor Shannon (Cranston), and with attractive prison widow Irene (Mulligan) and her son. Later, we see the violent depths that churn beneath his stillness, when a job gone wrong sees Driver targeted by gangsters.

Nino (Perlman) and Bernie (Brooks) are indeed nasty pieces of work. They preside over criminal activities with arrogance and amorality, and substantiate sinister personas with easy violence. But it is the fact that they happen to be Jewish that raised the ire of Deming and her lawyer, Martin Leaf.

Responding to a post by film blogger Jonathan Poritsky, who [said he was](#) 'offended as a film lover, as an American and as a Jew' by the lawsuit and commended *Drive* for its portrayal of 'powerful' Jews, Leaf (who is also Jewish) decried the film's 'one-dimensional', 'senior citizen Jew stereotypes'.

This is tricky ethical territory. No one can take away Leaf's right to feel offended. But there's something to be said for Poritsky's counter-argument that far from being an anti-Semitic portrayal, the characters' Jewishness humanises what might otherwise be cardboard cutout villains.

'Their culture is what redeems them, what makes them worthy adversaries to Driver,' Poritsky notes. 'Why is Nino such a son-of-a-bitch? Because he's been trying to make it ahead in a world where he gets called "kike" and slapped around. That back story is what makes him relatable.'

There is an echo in this of remarks made by gay American filmmaker John Waters (who was in Australia last month performing his one man show ) regarding the seemingly overly-PC treatment of homosexuals in popular culture. Treating marginalised groups with a kind of blanket protectiveness, he suggests, robs those within the group of individuality, and reinforces their 'otherness'.

*Seinfeld*, like Jewish comedic forerunners including the work of Mel Brooks, demonstrated that in popular culture, it is possible for Jewishness to be a laughing matter. Perhaps the lesson from the *Drive* controversy is that in a post-politically correct world, it's okay for Jews to be bad guys, too.

## Wreckers at work in leaky Labor

### POLITICS

*John Warhurst*

Julia Gillard's cabinet has been leaking. Most recently, such leaks purported to reveal a split among ministers over asylum seeker policy, following the collapse of her Malaysian Solution. Such disagreements aside, leaks themselves are a sure sign of government instability.

Cabinet solidarity is one of the essential characteristics of the Westminster system of government. Furthermore its central feature is common to all expressions of collective leadership because it enshrines virtues like unity and teamwork.

Cabinet solidarity operates alongside associated concepts like cabinet secrecy, which protects official documents like papers and minutes from publication, and collective ministerial responsibility. These guiding rules make cabinet discussions sacrosanct, assisting the whole team to work together.

Solidarity and unity are understood by most groups, including trade unions, political parties and pressure groups, as necessary for success. Slogans like 'In unity is strength' and 'Solidarity forever' sum them up. That is why disunity and breaches of solidarity are taken seriously.

Importantly the concept does not mean cabinets should not have private disagreements about policy before, during and even after decisions are made. Unity does not mean uniformity. That would be both unrealistic and unhealthy. But disagreements should not be public.

In berating her ministerial colleagues the Prime Minister has rightly pointed out that if the system is working properly there should be frank and fearless discussions within cabinet. What we know of past cabinets suggests discussion is often fierce and passionate.

But solidarity means that eventually the team must come first. If a team member has such strong feelings about an issue that they cannot accept the discipline that comes with cabinet solidarity, then they should resign their position. If they stay on and then break cabinet solidarity by speaking out against a cabinet decision then they can and should be sacked.

A cabinet decision, such as the Gillard Government decision to process asylum seekers onshore rather than explore the Nauru option, binds all cabinet members. There is one practical reason for this. Ministers have to defend the government's position in Parliament and in the community even if they disagree with the majority view.

That can be extremely uncomfortable. But cabinet solidarity means ministers can retain their dignity even if they are 'rolled' in cabinet, as they often will be if it is not to be just a

rubber stamp. Secrecy and solidarity mean ministers are saved from some of the ignominy that comes with being unable to win the argument.

Cabinet leaks are extremely damaging. This was evidenced by the Labor leaks, attributed to Kevin Rudd or one of his supporters or staff, during the last federal election campaign. These leaks purported to reveal who said what in the Rudd cabinet. Gillard, the new PM, was severely damaged by these leaks, which allegedly revealed her position on several cabinet decisions, including paid maternity leave. The kerfuffle derailed the Government's election campaign for at least a week.

Managing breaches of solidarity is difficult. Refusing to comment on the grounds of 'what happens in cabinet stays in cabinet' can seem defensive and unconvincing even though it may be the best strategy. The alternative, commenting, is itself another breach and gives further publicity to the leak.

The impact invariably benefits opponents of the government. It gives the impression of division and disunity, even though it would be remarkable if on such a controversial issue as the handling of asylum seekers the decision was unanimous. The recent leak makes Bowen's job more difficult as they reveal that he was in the minority.

Finally, the existence of leaks shows that there is a wrecker in the cabinet; or at least someone who is irresponsible enough to think the ends justify the means. Someone in the minority thinks they know best. They may do, but that is not how cabinet works.

The worst aspect of the cabinet leaks is the likelihood that they are the product not just of understandable policy differences, but of leadership destabilisation. If Gillard is the target then this is a particularly unethical way of undermining her authority.

## Turbulence ahead

CARTOON

*Fiona Katauskas*



## Ghosts of children passed

NON-FICTION

*Alison Sampson*



Small ghosts trail behind so many families, invisible to the naked eye.

Rena bustles around her son's birthday party, passing food and welcoming guests. During a lull, we chat. 'Did you ever think of having a second child?' I ask. 'Oh, we did,' she says, 'but he died. He was eight weeks old. He got an infection, it entered his heart, and he died.'

I place my hand on her shoulder. There are no words.

So often, life is extinguished too soon: 12 weeks after conception; during an impossible birth; after a few short weeks of life. A two-year-old drowns. A three-year-old falls ill. So many families carry these little ones around. There are no words.

These are the invisible children. They hover around their parents at the kinder gates. They are the fleeting shadow in their siblings' eyes.

'Did I have a brother once?' asks a little boy, looking at my youngest and no longer sure. As his mother's eyes fill with tears, I master the lump in my own throat: 'Yes, darling, yes you did. A long time ago, you had a baby brother of your own.' He shouts triumphantly, 'I did have a brother!' and runs off. We mothers glance at each other, then look away. There are no words.

As each year rolls around, there are new things to grieve. It is the first day of school, and there is a small ghost at the end of a line where a living girl ought to be. It is Christmas, and a quiet space sits at the end of the table. It is a birthday, and a father avoids eyes in the lunchroom. The child is gone; no one here knows; he doesn't want to chat. There are no words.

And yet remembering is so important for understanding and healing. A grief unspoken turns inwards and suffocates. It isolates people, deadens them.

So how should we remember these children? Do we mark their birthdays or the day that they died? Do we talk about them in conversation, or sit with friends in silent solidarity, letting them know only that we, too, share in their loss?

Do we name them during All Saints services, and provide the chance to talk about them afterwards? How do we celebrate them?

One family I know has a meal each year on the birthday of their son. Last year he would have turned 21. Around the table they tell old stories, dusted off for the event; they dig out faded photographs.

Another has a quiet corner with a chair, some photographs, a kinder painting, a favourite teddy. When memories bubble up, they go there and sit.

Fifteen years later, a friend sews gifts for her daughters; neither saw the light of day, but the grief is still there, raw and painful and finally coming out. Each stitch is a step in the paradoxical journey of remembering and letting go. Each stitch is a move towards healing.

As friends our role is ambiguous. With families we know well, it is more straightforward: we listen, we reminisce, we might help mark a particular occasion. We send a card or flowers on what should be a first day of school. We send a hamper to a couple whose baby dies soon after birth.

But for newer friends, met after their loss? The biggest gift we can give is to slow down enough to notice the small ghosts, and to ask who they might be. Notice the gaps in a family. Notice the glistening eyes on the first day of school in the mother who has no one starting that year. Notice the reluctance of some parents to hold a baby, or chat with a two-year-old.

Allow acquaintances to avoid us as our children move into a particular age loaded with comparisons, and welcome them back when they are ready. Let them tell stories if they offer them, and accept them as sacred gifts of trust. Remember the dates. Birth, death, first day of school: these are the days when, year after year, a gentle smile or small remembrance might be welcome.

And reflect on the ghosts. Some are sleeping peacefully; others crawl; still others run after their fathers hooting with silent laughter. They are always there, a great cloud tumbling around every school and kinder gate, playing touch-last with the wind. It is up to us to observe them. It is up to us to celebrate their time on earth. It is up to us to help their families mourn.



## **Liturgy translation prophecy**

POETRY

*Marlene Marburg*

### **Discernment and wobbly knees**

There are liminal spaces  
cramped and soggy  
like old tomato sandwiches  
you wouldn't give to next door's dog.  
There are spaces where I crouch  
and have to keep my head down.  
And spaces  
where God can dance,  
weak at the knees with love.

### **Indigenous**

Dull winter blew open my soul.  
I heard the eucalypt speak in native tongue  
and felt her unconscious persuasion.  
I saw her arms raised in joyful surrender  
without need for instruction on how to grow tall,  
how to flower or consummate love.  
I observed she gathered her own, roots entwined,  
each tree bent and whispering to the cluster,  
welcoming the newcomer — a conifer,  
rigid and trimmed, lonely as a city.  
I saw the eucalypt commune with her desert-heart,  
and plead for space as an unruly convict or  
a desperate refugee; loud and green,

sure as the wind to speak from the grave.

**Christ on the margins**

He upturns the table

They upturn the soapbox

He reads the raw underside

They read the soapie side

He speaks of love and vulnerability

They speak of law and certainty

He is crucified

They are crassified.

**Prophecy**

*Dominus vobiscum*

The Lord be with you

*Et cum spiritu tuo*

And with your spirit

Two blessings

one resurrected

one still in the tomb

We are not pre-Vatican

We think whole

body and soul

in whom God dwells

We anoint you saying

And also with you

We are not parrots in a pew trembling

And with your spirit

unless we mean

that the body is dead  
in the body of Christ

## What matters in Qantas confrontation

### POLITICS

*Brian Lawrence*

The Qantas industrial dispute has generated enormous controversy and is likely to make a major contribution to the history of Australian industrial relations.

As in many other industrial disputes, all sides will claim some kind of victory. The broader implications for Australian industrial relations and the future of national regulation are already being debated.

We have a politically-charged debate in which some who usually oppose the use of an industrial umpire have criticised the Commonwealth Government for being too slow to send the dispute to the industrial umpire, Fair Work Australia (FWA). If we are to cut through the spin and politics, we need to understand the operation of the current system of industrial regulation.

When the Howard Government introduced its Work Choices legislation in 2005 it did away with a century of national industrial regulation, based on the conciliation and arbitration power in the Australian Constitution.

Work Choices abolished the *general* ability to have an industrial dispute conciliated and, if needed, arbitrated. This was replaced by a more robust system of collective bargaining, sometimes called an industrial 'law of the jungle', where appropriately notified industrial action was 'protected' and where safety valve arbitration was only available in carefully defined exceptional cases.

This part of Work Choices was continued under the Fair Work Act, introduced by Labor in 2009. Under the current provisions, protected industrial action can be suspended or terminated where there is a threat to life, personal safety, health or welfare, or where it would 'cause significant damage to a significant part of the Australian economy or a small part of it'.

So the Qantas dispute is not really about the respective merits of the current and previous legislation, but about the way in which our collective bargaining system has operated under both sides of politics. The dispute, more than any other under the new regime, demonstrates what we lost when the conciliation and arbitration system was all but abolished in 2005.

The essential facts of the Qantas dispute are reasonably straightforward. For some months during 2011 various unions with Qantas membership had taken protected industrial action in support of negotiations for new enterprise agreements. These legal actions had put substantial pressure on Qantas, consistent with the operation of a robust system of collective bargaining.

While there was economic pressure on Qantas itself, it was far from clear that it was

sufficient to justify the suspension or termination of the protected action.

Qantas argued publicly that the uncertainty in its operations (the threat of future stoppages) was impacting on tourism, but the fact that it did not call for the end of protected industrial action and the use of conciliation and arbitration recognised the stringency of the statutory provisions.

Furthermore, the unions were showing that they would continue to apply pressure without providing the grounds to suspend or terminate their protected actions. Qantas appears to have taken the view that it could probably get better industrial outcomes by arbitration than through the wringer of industrial bargaining.

Qantas was between a rock and a hard place. But such a position is perfectly acceptable under this new system of industrial relations.

Qantas cut the Gordian Knot by taking an action which, if followed through, would lead to significant damage to the Australian economy. On Saturday it gave notice that it would lock out a major part of its workforce from 8pm on Monday. The lockout would shut down its entire operations. It was legally entitled to take this protected industrial action.

The Qantas lockout opened the door to the cessation of industrial action and arbitration. This is the critical passage in the FWA decision given in the early hours of 31 October 2011:

It is unlikely that the protected industrial action taken by the three unions, even taken together, is threatening to cause significant damage to the tourism and air transport industries. The response industrial action of which Qantas has given notice, if taken, threatens to cause significant damage to the tourism and air transport industries and indirectly to industry generally because of the effect on consumers of air passenger and cargo services.

However, it was Qantas' decision to shut down the entire airline from 5pm on Saturday until the start of the lockout period that has generated most public debate. It was not protected industrial action and many believe it to be unjustified.

This is where Qantas' reputation is most at risk. No doubt, more than a few lawyers are contemplating a class action on behalf of those affected throughout the world. In due course a court, here or overseas, may tell us whether the shutdown was justified.

The important issue here is whether Qantas should have been required to threaten substantial damage to itself, and enormous collateral damage to the national economy, before it could gain access to arbitration.

The transition to the new industrial relations system deprived Australia of a system of industrial regulation that served the country well for a century. The dispute will generate debate about whether we should return to this earlier system which, by the way, delivered great national productivity improvements from the late 1980s until the early years of this

century.

A more limited question is whether the provisions for conciliation and arbitration should be relaxed.

The Catholic Church has been an advocate for the conciliation and arbitration system. For example, in his address to the Transfield workers in 1986 Pope John Paul II said:

Australia has a long and proud history of settling industrial disputes and promoting cooperation by its almost unique system of arbitration and conciliation. Over the years this system has helped to defend the rights of workers and promote their wellbeing, while at the same time taking into account the needs and the future of the whole community.

In its submissions to the Senate inquiry into the then Fair Work Bill, the Australian Catholic Council for Employment Relations argued that the proposed 'safety valve' provisions were too limited:

The provision depends on disruption, not merit. There will be no prospect of arbitration for those workers, and employers, who cannot sustain the harm that the proposal requires ... This is particularly disadvantageous to low paid and vulnerable workers.

The Qantas dispute demonstrates that the Commonwealth's forthcoming review of the Fair Work Act 2009 should include a review of the extent of the conciliation and arbitration power available to FWA. As John Paul II noted, that system was based on cooperation, not confrontation. We must look to a system in which a party to an industrial dispute does not need to generate the level of disruption seen in the Qantas dispute before the industrial umpire can help resolve the dispute. This is the real message of the dispute.



## Gillard's gambling problem

EDITORIAL

*Michael Mullins*

Tara Moriarty, secretary of the NSW branch of the Liquor and Hospitality Union, has made perhaps the most useful contribution to the current debate on poker machine reform.

She [distanced](#) her union from clubs industry claims, insisting the union was 'certainly not buying into' the 'probably over-stated' [campaign](#). But she stressed that 'it doesn't mean that the workers shouldn't have a seat at the table during this process to make sure that their jobs are protected'.

Her comments reflect an appreciation that care for problem gamblers needs to be balanced against care for workers whose jobs are threatened.

The Federal Government, on the other hand, is open to the accusation that it regards the jobs as expendable because its survival depends upon the successful passage through parliament of the mandatory pre-commitment legislation. Moreover the Prime Minister's ostensibly empathetic [assertion](#) that 'too many people would know a family torn apart by problem gambling' could be disingenuous.

Many people also know families torn apart by unemployment, and there is an onus on Julia Gillard to demonstrate that she is primarily motivated by an ethic of care for the wellbeing of her citizens, and not her own political survival. If this is the case, it follows that she will look after workers affected by the pre-commitment technology.

Assistance provided for workers to make the transition to alternative employment is not the same as the compensation packages that will be sought by the clubs industry and affected gambling entrepreneurs such as James Packer, whose business models rely on profiting from the misery of problem gamblers and their families. 40 per cent of the clubs' profits come from people addicted to poker machines. These profits should be regarded as ill-gotten, and therefore not deserving compensation.

That figure is [quoted](#) by Rev. Tim Costello, who chairs the Australian Churches Gambling Taskforce. He suggests that clubs dependent upon problem gambling revenue are 'operating [on] an unsustainable business model and should seek advice from Western Australia, where there are no poker machines outside the casino, yet communities and clubs thrive'.

There will be ambit claims for compensation if the ethic of care is obscured by the greed of the clubs and gambling entrepreneurs.

There are arguments that pre-commitment technology is a sign of the 'nanny state' at work and therefore a threat to civil liberties. Nanny state rhetoric is a ruse that gives licence to those

who are greedy, or psychologically robust, to prey on the weak and vulnerable.

The so-called nanny state is actually a euphemism for a state that cares for its citizens. Certain powerful interests perceive that as a threat.

## Bringing civility back to the parliamentary cockfight

### POLITICS

Tony Kevin



Last week, chatting with the Queen at Government House, Tony Abbott commented that in Australia, we play our politics tough.

Certainly, Abbott seems to: he remarked, testing the boundaries of how to converse with royals, that the Queen had outlasted many Australian prime ministers and might get to outlast a few more yet. The Queen replied diplomatically that minority government must present special problems.

Australian politics these days is brutal, but was it always so?

I have adult memories of Australian parliamentary politics back to Menzies. I worked as a public servant under the McMahon, Gorton, Whitlam, Fraser, Hawke, Keating and Howard governments.

For all the political passions of the day, the Whitlam and Fraser years were civil compared with now. Under Hawke and Keating, things went downhill: we regularly saw the ruthless baiting and derision by a triumphalist government of a hapless, divided opposition. Today, the boot is on the other foot.

There is a deeper issue here than ups and downs of parliamentary style and culture. Parliament is a team sport, and you barrack for your team. But what we see now raises some basic questions about civility and demagoguery in Australian politics.

'Civil' is a rich word. *Civil affairs* relate to government; *civil liberties* to the people. To be *civil* is to be polite or courteous. When social philosophers use the term *civil society*, the adjective conveys all three meanings: a civil society enjoys a government which respects the civil liberties of the people, and which functions in a polite and courteous way.

By this definition, Australia has a way to go to being a full civil society towards Aboriginal people. We took a turn for the worse in the 1990s when governments began treating asylum-seekers in cruel discriminatory ways. After 9/11, the civil liberties of all Australians came under attack from a fearful and angry government. These days, a fragile balance has returned in these areas.

According to the *Macquarie Dictionary*, a demagogue is 'a leader who uses the passions or prejudices of the populace to further his or her own interests'. Demagoguery pretty much describes the style of Opposition politics these days.

We see tactics designed to bypass Parliament, to exploit and mobilise the passions and prejudices of the people, to make parliamentary law-making seem transitory and irrelevant.

Parliament, especially Question Time, has become a theatre for verbal violence, aimed at influencing public perceptions through dramatic media coverage of personalised confrontations.

We see persistent efforts to cement in the public mind a perception of the present government and leader as hopeless, 'dysfunctional' and 'toxic'.

Such tactics, sadly, work. There is a remarkable disconnect between public judgements as to the policy achievements of the present government, and as to the quality of its leadership.

Two recent Essential Polls found that [large majorities](#) of voters — between 51 and 89 per cent — are satisfied by current government policies on a range of important matters that affect our daily lives, such as health funding, pension increases, managing the economy to keep interest rates and unemployment down, GFC stimulus spending, and abolishing Work Choices.

Only on asylum seekers and carbon pricing — the issues where parliamentary demagoguery is most sustained — is Labor losing the policy argument. Yet on two-party preferred, Abbott leads Gillard 58 per cent to 42 per cent (or more) on polls taken around the same time.

This is worrying evidence of the success of a demagogic style of politics. That said, polling experts note that such large contradictions usually lessen come election time, when voters make more serious choices between parties and leaders. For Julia Gillard's sake, I hope so.

Much has been written this past year on what ails our politics and political coverage. Who is to blame for declining parliamentary standards — politicians, the media or the people? I suggest we all are.

The media encourage head-bashing politics, because civil politics is boring. The people have become less forgiving and more openly emotion-driven, and maybe expect politicians in their own image; dignity, compassion and restraint are out of favour. Many politicians, though they know better, are giving the people and the media what they want: rancorous confrontations and barbed insults.

Most of the people in our Parliament are well-educated in manners. When they choose to set manners aside, it is deliberately calculated. Part of being 'a good parliamentary performer' is the ability to put the other side off their stroke, make them miss the ball.

The 'tough' way in which Australian politics is now played corrodes civility and potentially erodes our democracy. It reduces public respect for Parliament and makes people feel that Parliament is failing. It could tempt people to more extreme street politics. All these things have happened before in Europe in the 1930s. Verbal violence desensitised people, and real violence followed.

Some of the rhetoric in the recent carbon tax debates, in Question Time, in censure motions,

and outside in the public galleries and streets, was pretty frightening.

Civility in politics might be a bit boring, but a lot of Australians would dearly wish to see its return.

There are still many role models of a civil style in politics. Tony Windsor, Bob Brown, Christine Milne, Malcolm Turnbull, Simon Crean, Stephen Smith and Greg Combet spring to mind. They make their points quietly and in balanced ways.

Parliament needs to rediscover its classic role as a venue for civil conversation among intelligent people of differing views, united in a search for public-interest solutions to national problems.

## Australian larrikinism is a royal myth

POLITICS

*Ellena Savage*



Queen Elizabeth's first visit to Australia in 1954 as a pretty young woman was, by all accounts, an occasion most auspicious. Of the Australian population, then around 7 million, an estimated 70 per cent made the time and distance to partake in festivities.

In 1954, 'White Australia' policies were functionally intact, women parliamentarians were incredibly few, Aboriginals did not enjoy any legal equality, and homosexual expression was illegal. Non-ballerina women, if rumour is to be believed, curtsied. The migrants who constitute and parented a large portion of the population — myself included — had not yet arrived in Australia.

It was the year Menzies borrowed the words of Thomas Ford to describe his monarch-worship, 'I did but see her passing by, and I will love her 'til I die.'

From all I can deduce, 1954 in Australia was a provincial and suffocating place bent on sports, Mother England, and marginalising, well, pretty much everyone. Yet Australia today, as the Queen herself noted upon her arrival last week, is a vastly improved place, economically as well as culturally.

She rightly attributes the international flourishing of Australian arts to a thriving and open democracy.

This democratic ideal is threatened by flaccid cultural attitudes.

I was present at Occupy Melbourne while it was embanked at City Square in Melbourne. I spent time speaking with articulate, positive, welcoming folks working towards small-scale, community-based changes. Some were angry, others excited to be a part of something bigger than themselves. All had individual grievances, but were committed to positive change and political engagement.

The violation of their dignity and rights that saw police brutally remove them from public space was supported by a public agenda of dullness, epitomised by the parochial leadership of the City of Melbourne Lord Mayor Robert Doyle.

Dullness sounds innocuous, but from it blossoms contempt for imagination. Public opinion that is not measured by reason or compassion can be tyranny; its affects were registered here as state brutality.

My mother has the 1954 royal tour book at home, which she says is worth keeping. And it is



worth keeping — as a relic of our history. She remembers a royal visit in 1963, when she was a small child, and the royal carriage rode down her street.

These memories are expressly emotional. Similarly, I will remember being one of about 30 spectators at the Greco-Roman wrestling at the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. Fond memories do nothing to legitimise the structural obscurity and obsolescence of the monarchy in Australia, any more than they do that of Greco-Roman wrestling.

The political structure in Australia might appear natural to us inside the context of our history, or at least to those Australians who share that particular history. But if we could extract ourselves from this context and look at Australia now, we would register incongruity in the figure of our Queen.

There is a myth we repeat to ourselves, that Australia is a larrikin nation. The only evidence of larrikinism I can see on a daily basis is a love of swearing (I am on board) and a certain predisposition towards pub brawling (I must reserve myself here).

We are not a nation of provocateurs, but one of conformists.

India is a republic in the Commonwealth. Gay marriage is legal in South Africa and Mexico City. We enjoy great liberties, but our 'larrikin streak' seems reserved for ridiculing and silencing the progressive politics that bring about such freedoms.

Occupy Melbourne activists might come close to the real, anti-establishment larrikin, though I doubt many participants care for indulging a national mythology.

Is it that we are too lazy, or just too dull to imagine a collective future that is different to our present? I hope it is the former, but the latter is evidenced by our selection of political representatives and by our ambivalence towards participatory politics.

The fact of Queen Elizabeth being a very nice lady doesn't negate her inherited privilege, her arbitrary powers, and the fact that her reign isolates many Australians, including those more recently arrived and, most significantly, the first nations.

As Paul Keating argued through the '90s, an Australian republic is not a radical concept. Representative politics is not radical.

Committed republicans get a bad wrap — granted, some of the republican conversation is dominated by blokey and aggressive voices, leaving critics to suggest there are more pressing political concerns. But what, in a democracy, could be more pressing than a representative leadership structure?

## Self-interest as a path to Aboriginal flourishing

### INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

*Dan O'Donovan*

Noel Pearson's book, *Up From the Mission: Selected Writings* is more than worth a read. It is a shaker. In the Kimberley, we are feeling its impact on the ground.

It has been well reviewed. This present piece concerns the following words of John Hirst in *Australia Literary Review (Weekend Australian)*, of 3 June 2009:

Nor does (Pearson) explore whether Aborigines will want to be enthusiastic participants in the wider economy and society. Their communal and anti-materialist attachments might still be a bar, apart from everything else.

Again, Pearson is confident about incentives and if those fail he will 'crank up the engine of self-interest among the underprivileged'. 'To put it crassly,' he says, 'poor people need to become at least as greedy as those who are not poor.' Yes, this is crass.

So, for his Cape York constituency, Pearson sees self-interest (as he explained in a speech to the Centre for Independent Studies in July 2010) as 'the engine of development'. Not only is it 'relevant to any serious intention to close the gap on disadvantage, it is absolutely central'.

In this, he is urging his own people to a big mutation indeed.

In the traditional pre-'scientific' religious intuition referred to as the kinship system, everything in the wide universe was seen as having a place, a 'skin', in the totality. Everything was inter-related and inter-dependent. Self-interest as a mode of human being and living did not occur to the Aboriginal mentality. Nor could it, in the circumstances. In this, I believe, it was graced.

Here in the Dampier Peninsula, north of Broome and Roebuck Bay in Western Australia, good things have been happening, along the lines Pearson is proposing. The Howard family's Midlagoon is a popular tourist resort. The Sibosado family venture in Lombadina is again a seasonal attraction. The Cox family bakery in Beagle Bay is, similarly, a heartening success story, and exemplary.

Billard, close to Beagle Bay, is a Victor family project, backed by the government. It is feeling its way, with suicide-prevention its focus.

Each of these is getting out of what Pearson calls 'passive welfare' and into employment and self- (or family-) aggrandisement.

The question is: are the ancient kinship vision/experience and Pearson's self-interest reconcilable, or inevitably opposed?

Though he grew up in Hope Vale Lutheran mission, and still regards Hope Vale as his dearly-loved home, Pearson avoids the subject of religion. There is one short paragraph in one of the essays contained in *Up From the Mission*:

The decline of religion and the influence of the churches in the communities are also part of this story ... I served on the Hope Vale Aboriginal Community Council when the last vestiges of the Lutheran Church's administrative involvement in the affairs of our people were removed in the late 1980s. We cut these last ties with a relishing sense of historic reckoning.

The awful truth is that we threw the baby out with the bathwater ... Both the church and our people should have found a way to move beyond the paternalism of the past without destroying the moral and cultural order that had been such a strong quality of our community ... We now repent social and moral wreckage.

The next paragraph (and the remainder of the book) opens: 'But these are details ...'

So, to our question: are the kinship system, (hardly recoverable now in all its former practices), and Pearson's self-interest, reconcilable or mutually opposed? I think they are reconcilable.

The spiritual vision/experience the kinship system offered is unquestionably a lasting wonder our world sorely needs to have set before its eyes.

Perhaps Australia's Indigenous wise may come to re-energise that old holistic understanding, its embers lying within their deeper selves, waiting; may allow it to assert itself, from among them, in possibly new ways, and for use. For their part, let the climbers climb.

## **CHOGM and the Common Good**

### POLITICS

*Jack De Groot*

‘Where human lives are concerned, time is always short: yet the world has witnessed the vast resources that governments can draw upon to rescue financial institutions deemed ‘too big to fail’. Surely the integral human development of the world’s peoples is no less important: here is an enterprise, worthy of the world’s attention that is truly ‘too big to fail.’

This message from Pope Benedict XVI last year in London bears reflection today, as Commonwealth leaders prepare for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Perth.

Every two years they meet to discuss global and Commonwealth issues, and to agree on collective policies and initiatives. Following this meeting Julia Gillard and five other Commonwealth heads of state will travel to France for the G20 leader’s summit.

Efforts of development agencies like Caritas Australia have transformed the situation of millions of people. However, unbalanced trade rules, debt burdens and a lack of transparency in the global economic realm compound the suffering of people most in need.

Both of these meetings provide an opportunity for leaders to meet, discuss issues affecting the world, and provide a strong, positive pathway for the creation and realisation of a secure and fruitful future for all. However if, [‘every economic decision has a moral consequence’](#) then the voice of the most marginalised, those who suffer the most, should be amplified in these discussions.

While public commentary of meetings such as CHOGM focuses on the content of the conversations, there is great value in the conversation itself. Relationships made, strengthened and restored are important, as they assist open, honest and transparent relationships. They provide the foundations for vital, albeit at times difficult, dialogue about human rights and the realisation of human dignity.

At both CHOGM and the G20 meeting the current economic crisis will be at the forefront of conversations. Those conversations must include a discussion of how we can ensure the realisation of authentic human development in the midst of crisis — that is, policies that seek to promote the common good rather than bring wealth to a small segment of the global population.

The common good cannot be reduced to an aggregate of income, wealth or expenditure — it must be centred on the dignity of each individual.

As the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace recently stated in their note on the reform of

the international financial and monetary systems in the context of global public authority:

In this process, the primacy of the spiritual and of ethics needs to be restored and, with them, the primacy of politics — which is responsible for the common good — over the economy and finance. These latter need to be brought back within the boundaries of their real vocation and function ... in consideration of their obvious responsibilities to society, in order to nourish markets and financial institutions which are really at the service of the person, which are capable of responding to the needs of the common good and universal brotherhood, and which transcend all forms of economist stagnation and performative mercantilism.

As leaders come together to discern issues and find solutions there must be space for greater participation. We must embark on a dialogue working towards sustainable development for all. On the basis of this approach, we must find new methods to finance the funding gaps to ensure the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

New multilateral approaches to public finance may provide the answer. Innovative financing such as the Tobin tax, where a tiny levy would be taken from financial transactions, have the possibility to generate funds which could be used to alleviate suffering across the globe.

The answer may also be found in independent arbitration mechanisms, that prioritise the common good, provide accountability to financing decisions, and ensure debt renegotiation decisions have a legitimate forum that is both transparent and neutral.

CHOGM and the G20 meeting provide opportunities to devise new and sustainable solutions where justice and compassion are the core principles on which economic and political decisions are made. The world's leaders, teachers, parents, media and all who are in a position to inform, educate and inspire communities have a responsibility to bring hope, understanding and solidarity of action.

As stated by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace:

[T]he goal of the universal common good with its inescapable demands is waiting on the horizon. Moreover, it is hoped that those in universities and other institutions who educate tomorrow's leadership will work hard to prepare them for their responsibilities to discern the global public good and serve it in a constantly changing world.

## Australia's child abuse parable

### TELEVISION

*Tim Kroenert*

***The Slap* (M). Jonathan LaPaglia, Sophie Okonedo, Melissa George, Essie Davis, Alex Dimitriades, Sophie Lowe, Blake Davis. ABC1, 60 minutes, eight episodes**

'I've heard it's rubbish,' says a fellow-traveller on a suburban train. 'What do you think?'

'Have you reached the chapter about the old man?' asks a waiter in an inner-city café. I tell him it's the next chapter I'll read. 'You'll love it,' he says. 'Amazing how he gets inside the characters' heads.'

'Isn't it wonderful?' This spoken by a face that materialises from amid the post-football throng outside Melbourne's Etihad Stadium. 'I can't wait for the TV series!'

The simple act of reading Christos Tsiolkas' *The Slap* in public seems to be a provocation, or at least an invitation for unsolicited opinions from strangers. The very definition of a conversation starter.

Both the book and the faithfully rendered and impeccably cast ABC1 mini-series boast the tagline 'Whose side are you on?'. Indeed, the nature and structure seem custom-built to diversify opinion. The ABC's multi-platform approach even invites viewers to register their allegiances via an [online poll](#).

'Whose side are you on?' is, to some extent, a furphy. Each chapter, and each episode of the series, is told from the perspective of a different character. It is impossible to either wholly sympathise with, or wholly condemn, any character.

'I'd have hit him too,' is the verdict of one member of my book club, referring to the titular event — the corporal punishment, at a suburban backyard barbecue, of a recalcitrant child by a man who is not his father. None of us disagrees, per se.

But neither is anything in *The Slap* so black and white. The victim of 'the slap', three-year-old Hugo, has, with his precocious behaviour, damaged property and presented a physical threat to the other children at the barbecue. All this while his parents, Gary and Rosie, sit by largely passively.

We can't entirely blame Harry for intervening. But we may question his violent means. More so later, in the chapter/episode titled 'Harry', where we come to appreciate that violence simmers constantly within him. Dimitriades' stilly fearsome bearing perfectly embodies Harry's muted rage.

This is typical of *The Slap's* narrative approach. Each chapter not only furthers the plot, but

constitutes a character study, which presents a different perspective not just on the slap itself, but on a swathe of interrelated social and moral issues that bustle beneath *The Slap's* soap-opera surface.

Tsiolkas keeps the moral target moving. Arguably, *The Slap* is designed more for analysis than entertainment. It seems at times as if Tsiolkas was working from a checklist designed to get his book onto high school and university reading lists.

Its proliferation of issues includes multiculturalism — Harry and his cousin Hector (LaPaglia) are Greek Australian; Hector's wife Aisha is Indian in the book, Mauritian in the series (actress Okonedo has Nigerian heritage); one character is an Aboriginal Muslim convert; Anouk (Davis) is Jewish.

Race, though, is almost incidental compared with *The Slap's* ruminations on gender, sexuality, age, friendship, coming of age, fidelity and class. In this regard *The Slap* stands as a kind of epic parable of middle class Australia.

Anouk is a screenwriter in a male-dominated TV industry, and considering aborting an unplanned pregnancy. Harry is a self-made man who built himself a luxurious lifestyle on the foundations of his blue-collar beginnings; by pointed contrast, Gary and Rosie are determinedly Bohemian.

The chapters examining the youthful experiences of teenagers Connie and Richie (Lowe and Davis) are among the most authentic and affecting. They are adolescents for whom morality and justice are but aspects of the fraught task of trying to establish self-identity on the verge of adulthood.

That waiter I mentioned earlier was right, too, about the chapter dealing with Hector's elderly father Manolis. It powerfully evokes the inner life of an elderly migrant traversing his 'old neighbourhood', which has irrevocably changed, and reflecting on his own societal displacement by both race and age.

It's early to make a definitive judgment of the TV series (episode four of eight, 'Connie', screens tonight) but so far it has captured the depth and drama of the source material. At times it has improved upon it, dramatising aspects of characters' lives which were revealed in the novel through introspection. This heightens the dramatic impact but makes it no easier to take sides.



## Putting the faith back into development

### POLITICS

*Duncan MacLaren*

The Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Australia, former Admiral Thisara Samarasinghe, could be investigated for war crimes by the International Commission of Jurists (Australian section). He is accused of being in command when subordinates fired on some of the 40,000 civilians reckoned to have died during the war's final weeks.

The Australian Government can be sure that the reaction of the Sri Lankan government will be fierce.

I returned from Sri Lanka recently, having facilitated a meeting on the Church and development in Sri Lanka for Caritas Sri Lanka and its partners from Australia, Europe and the US.

I got to know and love Sri Lanka through my work for Caritas in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami. In subsequent visits I was pleased to see the huge progress made through the efforts of Caritas and other agencies in serving the Sri Lankan people — people of all faiths and ethnicities — as houses were built, livelihoods restored and hope and confidence began to flourish.

It was heart-warming to see people of all faiths working together to build a better and more just Sri Lanka out of the ruins of the old.

With the end of the war, we are now in a new Sri Lanka. That war cost the country dearly in terms of lives lost, distrust sown and loss of revenue. There is still a great deal to do to build up the country, get rid of the poverty gap and heal the divisions of the past.

Sending people back home to their bombed villages with no assistance and forcing them to live under the trees with nothing is not only inhuman but, as it will be seen as collective punishment against innocent people, will sow the seeds of future discontent.

As in all wars, no matter how many victories you win or ceasefires you sign, unless work is done at the grassroots to get rid of the injustices which caused the war, unless people are treated with mercy and everyone works towards community reconciliation — unless peace with justice is put in place — then the danger of resentments spilling over into conflict will always be present.

A new development model which has reconciliation at its core is needed. As in the tsunami response, this is where the role of religion can contribute to the wellbeing of the country.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, the development theory of 'modernisation' basically taught that all old traditions, including religion, had to disappear for people to be 'developed', for

people to become 'modern', by which they meant almost solely growth in income and material welfare.

This was a purely Western model which is now seen wanting. Now there is a growing interest in the role of religion on development as there is a general realisation that faith is a primary source of meaning for most communities in 'developing' countries, that religious organisations are often closest to the poorest, are the most trusted institutions, and have the largest networks to respond.

All faiths put the human person at the centre of development, not economic theories which tend to forget we are dealing with people, not things.

The righteous Muslim seeks social justice for the poor and disempowered. For Hindus, working for the betterment of their communities is an integral path of liberation. The Buddhist contribution to development is to remind us that material progress alone will never satisfy human desire.

And the Catholic view is that development must be based on the innate dignity of the human person and lead to human flourishing.

All point to another central truth — that values and beliefs are important to organisational behaviour and change, which are necessary for authentic development to happen.

It is to be hoped that in evolving a new paradigm for development in Sri Lanka, the voices of all faiths will be listened to. However, there is one caveat. No faith community can act alone.

Just as the response to the tsunami was a success because people of all faiths worked together for the good of all of Sri Lanka's people, so they must come together to dialogue and work in harmony to promote good integral human development practices, rooted in the culture of the people. They must underpin the cessation of violence with the justice element of peace.

There is no place for a fundamentalism which, in sociologist Anthony Giddens's words, 'refuses dialogue in a world whose peace and continuity depend on it'.

Fundamentalism isn't about faith but fear and ego. We should never forget that the tsunami was blind to both ethnicity and religion. Sinhalese and Tamils, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims and Hindus were all swept away by the fury of nature. It is only by all Sri Lankans of all faith traditions working together that the country can be healed and can prosper.

After the tsunami I met a woman in Galle in southern Sri Lanka. Her only son had helped her out of the water that had flooded their village. He was then speared by a railing and swept away.

She recounted her tale time and time again in tears, and said how grateful she was to the

people of the community that was housing her. They came from differing religious communities but had looked past such differences to our common humanity, and had opened their hearts and doors.

In rebuilding Sri Lanka, people of all faiths working with the government must do likewise. Equally, those who betrayed the rules of war must face justice. That is the least those who lost friends and loved ones in the final days of the war can expect.

## Depression treatment beyond Jeff Kennett

COMMUNITY

*Lyn Bender*

Under the Chairmanship of its founding father Jeff Kennett, Beyond Blue, the hitherto respected initiative, has been highly successful in countering the stigma attached to a diagnosis of depression.

Recently the organisation and Kennett seemed to have come to a fork in the road. There was an outcry and calls for Kennett's resignation in the wake of his assertion that only children in the care of heterosexual parents could achieve optimum mental health.

Despite being criticised as alienating and exhibiting bias against the gay community, Kennett was re-elected by the Beyond Blue board.

Nonetheless this controversy should not eclipse more important questions. After ten years of good groundwork, do we need something new from Beyond Blue and other key mental health institutions?

According to the World Health Organisation, depression affects 'about 121 million people worldwide', is 'among the leading causes of disability worldwide', and, although it 'can be reliably diagnosed and treated in primary care', 'fewer than 25 per cent of those affected have access to effective treatment'.

Beyond Blue and the current zeitgeist has largely been identified with the medical disease model. Treatment has favoured a limited number of sessions — six to 18 sessions under Medicare, now [reduced](#) to ten. It has promoted a cognitive behavioural approach plus medication.

There are strengths and limitations in this approach.

The promotion of understanding, removal of stigma and encouragement to seek help requires the countering of stereotypical and unhelpful attitudes. In the bad old days those suffering from debilitating depression have been regarded as having character or personality flaws. People in a depressed state often have been judged as lazy, unsociable, and just not willing to make an effort.

It has therefore been necessary for Beyond Blue and similar groups to package a fairly simple message. The disease model is readily understood and has been progressively less imbued with moral condemnation.

However the one-size-fits-all view can foster problematic misconceptions. The notion that mental ill health is a bundle of symptoms and neurological processes can exclude the full



range of human distress. Depression is not always readily or lastingly addressed by current approaches, and may remain intractable (in 20 to 40 per cent of cases, according to WHO).

How does this fit with the intimations of 'cure' implied by the statement that 'depression is treatable'?

The highest price paid for depression is suicide. Suicide Prevention Australia has emphasised the importance of social inclusion, having a sense of belonging, and feeling part of a community as being crucial in the reduction of suicidal depression.

The notion of inclusiveness captures the importance of paying attention to the anguish that may be engendered by being part of a marginalised group, such as same-sex attracted groups, displaced persons, Indigenous peoples and people from diverse cultures.

Culturally sensitive, humanistic, spiritual and longer-term psychotherapy may have much to offer those afflicted.

Esteemed clinical psychologist Dorothy Rowe [cautions](#) against an oversimplified view of depression. In her view, the real problem arises from some kind of threat or insult to the sense of being a person. 'This can be hard to uncover, and difficult to ameliorate. It is never amenable to a quick fix.'

In Rowe's view, unprocessed sad events that become imbued with self blame and guilt can become depression. She emphasises the importance of truly hearing the person's story and their experience. This takes time.

The current disease models run the risk that sadness, mourning and grief may be unrecognised and treated only as symptoms. And the problem with the notion of eradicating and preventing depression as though it was a viral disease, is that it sidelines the 'human factor'.

One of my clients, a young woman aged 22, had been prescribed anti-depressants when her father was diagnosed with cancer. When he died two years later and she was referred to me, I suggested that her medication should be reviewed.

She told me of her session with the psychiatrist who had prescribed the medication. 'He asked me a lot of questions, was writing a lot but didn't look at me. He said "You are not saying much" and that he thought I was resistant. He said "You don't want to be here do you?" I said, "My father died four weeks ago!" He didn't even say "I'm sorry" or something normal like that. He just went on writing.'

We are all born to wrestle with the indisputable existential realities of life. We all suffer innumerable losses, and we all eventually surrender die. Depression is a state of mind that is reductionist. Its amelioration will thrive on expansion of our collective understanding.

## **Love the monarch, spurn the monarchy**

POLITICS

*Moira Rayner*

Perth's CBD is locked down this week for Gillard, Cabinet, CHOGM and another visit from the Queen.

Despite a rash of self-consciously visible 'security' guys, life in this land of the lotus-eaters is the usual boring, cow-like, steak-fed vacuity, but in a nice way: no cheering, no jeering, and no-one's even trying to occupy St George's Terrace.

There is no evident competition for invites to the Garden Party, or sense of excitement. Well-coiffed lawyers and mining entrepreneurs may be hardening their arteries in air-conditioned rooms, and the people are not on the Move.

In a simpler time (when I was simpler) a visit from our head of state seemed to make us feel better about ourselves, if not quite as excited as I was when she came to my home town in 1954.

Then, we were not long out of a war during which her handsome, kind and appealingly vulnerable father-king and formidably tranquil mother had played royal parents to their loyal Commonwealth. Now, their young and pretty, newly-married, -bereaved and -crowned daughter was visiting her colonies on the royal yacht.

Then, there were fairy lights; unselfconsciously red, white and blue bunting over the ruins of a burnt-out department store; a wondrous arch of fresh red, white and blue flowers, and I was one of the plump schoolgirls in bloomers feeling proud to perform synchronised calisthenics in rows, sorted by height, for the royal couple.

The magic was still there a little later, when I was first taught how to curtsy when, as the youngest pupil, I was selected to deliver to Queen Elizabeth and the Queen Mother the requisite posy of flowers. Looking on, I felt devastated when a prettier girl was presented for the deed, but felt better when Patricia reported in horror that the Great Woman had black teeth, when you got up close.

I can still curtsy, but I won't. But I didn't mind stopping everything to watch the fairytale wedding of her eldest son Charles to Diana wearing a fashionably crumpled confection of silken bed sheets, when our queen's star was fading but the light of celebrity was upon Diana rather than the Prince of Wales, culminating in the aura that accompanied her desperately sad funeral not many years later.

When I was a child, I collected pictures of the royal family, models of the coronation coach, ceramic memorabilia of coronations past and present which my mother put proudly in her

china cabinet.

When I was a child and later a law student, I understood the history of the monarchy and the great constitutional battles that made the sex, marital obligations and religion of the so-called head of state, and its intrinsic but unexercised powers, so important. I even understood, historically, why the combination of executive power and authority as the spiritual as well as earthly head of a church made it 'impossible' for Roman Catholics to be perceived as loyal.

There were still vestiges of this background in my heart when, with a sense of nigh treachery, I was elected to the ill-fated 1998 Constitutional Convention as a republican.

If Australia is ever to become a republic, its people must feel passionately about it. We don't. There's been no imminent threat to our security; no local wars, no call to arms, no legitimate demand for common action.

Howard's manipulation of the Convention and Malcolm Turnbull (though he would never admit it), and the wilful refusal to accommodate ordinary Australians' wish to choose their own head of state, led to the debacle of the 1999 referendum. Faced with a Clayton's republic and after decades of increasingly torpid, mediocre or cynical governance, we voted it down and settled back to something like passive aggression.

Like many of us, Australians born, or chosen, I hold dear the old lady who continues to serve, but have no fear that democracy will shatter when her father, her life and the monarchy slowly come to their natural end. There is not now nor, since England's King Charles II lost his head and the Pope lost his Italian State 200 years later, will there ever be any divine right to rule, but there is need, now, to earn the trust of every succeeding representative of the people.

When the Queen visited Dunedin in 1954, we cheered, threw streamers and chased her car down Princes Street. As the Queen visits Perth in 2011, I am aware of a movement of the spirits within me: an ache looking for ease, for someone who might lastingly represent a sense of shared values, kindness, confidence and hope, and a sense that the world is or can readily be put in order.

In times of great uncertainty, we need to be governed by wisdom, compassion and longevity.

Here in the state which does not value the oldest rock paintings and the oldest society in the entire world, I feel its absence most keenly.



## Roasts and race in segregated South Africa

### COMMUNITY

*Cecile Yazbek*

From my letterbox I retrieve an envelope with bright South African stamps and my mother's handwriting. I rip it open and stand on the pavement reading a cutting from the *East London Daily Dispatch*, newspaper of the town in South Africa where I was born.

The article is called 'My Kinda Town' — in which street sweepers, traffic cops and domestic workers spill their dreams and desires to a journalist bent on humanising the foot soldiers of mundane life. The face of the man in the photograph, a car guard on the East London beachfront, stares out at me.

As I read, my mind flees Hyacinth Street, Sydney, and lands as a ten-year-old in the courtyard of my South African home. There, under the wash lines eight-year-old Anthony Fortuin, named in honour of my father, was clinging to me. From the scullery window where she was washing dishes, his mother, our cook, Katrina, screamed, 'Let her go, what you thinking? Lord, this child of mine is naughty.'

'Mum, where are you, Mum?' My daughter calls from inside the house. 'It's lunchtime.' Irritated at finding me in a reverie on the street, she takes the proffered cutting and stares at the photograph. 'Who is this man?'

According to the article, 54-year-old Anthony Fortuin cleans gutters and guards cars around the aquarium in East London. He says some people give him money. When he gets 50 Rand he buys himself a piece of pre-cooked chicken, otherwise he eats brown bread.

*Where is your mother? my memory screams for him. Your mother, who roasted fat chickens and legs of lamb in our oven, your mother who cooked giant pots of meaty bones for our dogs, her brown arms pitted with burns from our kettles when alcohol impaired her vision and rattled her hands?*

'All I want,' says Anthony, 'is a workman's vest so that people know why I'm here.'

\*\*\*\*\*

A few years ago in the Valhalla cinema in Sydney I watched a film of the music of the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. The heroism of the 1976 school children humbled me and inspired hope for the generations to follow. I wept from beginning to end.

In the seat next to me, a man with brown arms and a brown face shuffled and wept too. I conjured his Robben Island political prison story from his restless sighing. I wanted to hug him but it would have been only to comfort myself.

The course of our lives would never have intersected so intimately that we wept together, had we not left a bedevilled South Africa and crossed oceans and skies to land in Australia.

At the same cinema, a few years later, I watched John Pilger's film on economic apartheid in the new South Africa, and the unrelenting poverty of the majority in such a wealthy country.

I was born and educated in South Africa. One of the most valuable things I learned was to keep my eyes and ears open. It was that which eventually sent me to live overseas. The lineages of learning created in us whites gave us multi-generational privileges denied to Anthony, who grew up in my childhood courtyard.

The beachfront he patrols is the same stretch of road where, in the '70s, my lawyer-father cruised his limo packed with street kids, giving them the ride of a lifetime. That was after I'd been to university, while Anthony was riding the troughs and crests of a thoroughly disadvantaged life.

\*\*\*\*\*

After lunch, I sit at my computer.

'Dear JD,

'Your column, yet another lance in the abscess of my memory, has caused me grief and I thank you for taking my thoughts to that distant time and place.

'I remember Donald Woods, as editor of your newspaper, receiving hatred from a few and great respect from the many whom he raised up for all to see.

'I will mail a vest for you to pass on to Anthony.'

At 5pm, the journalist in South Africa, replied. 'Thank you for reading my story. I'm sure Anthony will appreciate receiving a vest from overseas.'

Later, my mother tells me my sister drove to the beachfront to look for Anthony but didn't see him.

'Well,' I tell her, 'JD saw him there this morning on his way to work.'

If he wears a fluorescent vest, our courtyard brother cleaning rubbish will be seen by all.

## **Farmed out**

POETRY

*Helen Hagemann*

### **Country gate**

There were many gates that swung in and out of our street where we lived. Some were exceptional in iron grillwork. Others shared the nose of a dog. A few hung over their shadows, or lay bereft on their sides forgetting the rituals of open or closed. I used to swing on the front gate, eager to see a space refusing to be still. I could lay my body over the rounded top rail as if watching the morning's wrinkled map of footprints in sand, black ants erupting from tiny volcanic nests. Our gate was chain-link steel, an intricate pattern that Gran could have made with her rug and crochet skills had she had stronger needles. Now the gate is no longer there, pulled down for four apartments. My parents are no longer there, father going fourteen years before my mother. This sounds very sad, but it isn't. I believe they are swinging somewhere in heaven. Not on St Peter's gate, but in a body of metal and cushions, similar to a porch swing, a touch too heavy for a cloud perhaps.

But they'd be there alright sitting side by side,  
enjoying the view, swinging, back and forth,  
back and forth, as children do on country gates  
looking at the world from a different angle.

**farmed out**

i

old jam tins are sleepers in a rubbish dump  
a scarred hollow of digging, even  
before the rust came, the yard had a kind of design:  
trees as old as frost, melon sky at sundown  
a coattail earth of flax and ants navigating  
sound before the paddocks came

ii

ordered out on finance plans they cuddled children  
with their debts. he drew fear from flood and seedless  
sun. she traded contradiction for curves and valley  
hips, verdant sod of earth, reckless drift of goats.  
when the bailiff came, the end of lamb and beef,  
she clung to rock and let the salt erupt from hands  
and tongue the way the body bleeds its bitterness.  
he roped a bulky contents under tarp,  
sped through every gate, clouding exile  
and the bright disturbance of his wheat

iii

here on this white paper words rim  
the borderline of their passion  
it moves in some direction to inhabit lives

as couplets of unknown pain.  
poems cannot see collapsed hearts  
fresh wounds, first rage, so in here  
their darkness spills on fingers to form silence  
like a letterbox, where only the clouds go by

**Coda: a house of pockets**

at the age of five  
day after day  
I am trying to play soap bubbles  
on the veranda  
in a cubbyhouse of coats  
but our dog keeps bursting  
his nose in  
each drop  
heavy on his paws  
soaking the surface of my floor  
instead of round drifts  
of rainbow colours  
broadening out my experience  
they land like Noah's flood  
plop, plop, splat!  
I wait five minutes  
until he's gone  
wipe my hands in the containment of pockets  
he just doesn't understand  
I'm raising the waters of foam  
to be like Gran

the perfect air show that floats  
from her concrete trough

## Closing the case of Bishop Bill Morris

RELIGION

*Andrew Hamilton*



Before making their joint visit to Rome the Australian Bishops promised that they would take up there the dismissal of Bishop Bill Morris and the process followed in it.

On their return they have issued a brief [letter](#) about the matter. They report that they met the heads of the two chanceries involved, and also held discussions among themselves. They do not seem to have spoken with Pope Benedict about the matter.

They explain that the Pope asked Morris to resign when the latter could not provide satisfaction that his views on catholic ministry were in accordance with Catholic teaching. The Pope dismissed him when Morris refused to resign. In acting in this way Pope Benedict was exercising his responsibility to confirm the church in unity of faith.

The Bishops accepted the action of Pope Benedict and reaffirmed the basis of their own position in communion.

They finally asserted their commitment to heal the wounds of division, to extend fraternal care for Morris, and to strengthen the bonds of charity within the Australian Catholic church.

The letter is an act of closure. But it bears reflection. The number of meetings mentioned makes it clear the bishops took seriously their commitment to raise the issue. We can also imagine the frustrations, mixed feelings and eventual satisfaction or disappointment they may have experienced.

The Bishops will be criticised for looking at the business through the lens of their own relationship to the Pope. But this was a matter of integrity. They are Catholic bishops whose responsibility for the unity in life and faith is exercised with and through the Pope as successor to Peter.

In the Catholic understanding the Pope has the personal responsibility and right to defend the church's unity in faith and unity. Once the bishops knew that in dismissing Morris, the Pope understood he was discharging this responsibility, they knew he was acting within his rights.

This is common Catholic ground. But the issues raised by Morris' dismissal were not about the Pope's right to act, but about whether his decision was wise and prudent in the manner of its making. It was not about the authority to govern but about the exercise of governance.



The reason why many people questioned the decision was that the best standards of governance in Western democracies are characterised by transparency, natural justice, and due process. It is common experience, not least in the treatment of asylum seekers, that when these are lacking, decisions are often made that do not respect the human dignity of those affected.

The sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church has raised sharp questions about its standards of governance. That is why Morris' dismissal aroused such concern about due process and transparency.

The Bishops' description of the actions of the Holy as 'fraternal and pastoral, rather than juridic in character' points the questions raised about governance even more sharply. In Australia, at least, we have come to recognise how decisions reached in informal processes can harm and leave without recourse the people affected by them.

In the case of Morris this fraternal and pastoral process led to juridic consequences: the dismissal of a bishop and damage to his reputation.

Morris is necessarily the object of the Bishops' letter. From his perspective the letter could only be seen as the endorsement by his former colleagues both of the process that led to his dismissal, and of the verdicts that his faith in respect of ministerial priesthood is not that of the Catholic Church, and that he was breaching communion.

It is hard to imagine that someone who has given himself so faithfully to the service of the Catholic Church will not feel in this judgment a sense of personal rejection.

That invites reflection on the Bishops' admirable commitment 'to do whatever we can to heal any wounds of division, to extend our fraternal care to Bishop Morris, and to strengthen the bonds of charity in the Church in Australia'.

These are commendable aims. But the unaddressed issues of governance will make them more difficult to realise. They drive a wedge between the human meaning of fraternal care and healing the wounds of division, and the more restricted meaning available in church circles.

In human terms the care we offer to a brother who believes he has been unjustly treated will be fraternal only if we are open to the possibility that the judicial process worked unjustly. We can heal wounds of division only if we are open to the possibility that each side might have acted wrongly. We can build bonds of charity only when we go out to people with open hands.

But if we are constrained to insist that our brother accept not only the court's verdict but also the fairness of the process, our care will not ordinarily be described as fraternal. If we address division by insisting that the other side must acknowledge our version of events, the result will not ordinarily be described as a healing of wounds. The meaning of fraternal care

and the healing of the wounds of a division will be a private meaning. Others might describe our attitudes as reinforcing boundaries.

If unity and bonds of charity are to be built, it is best done by winning, not losing, our brothers and sisters. Even after reading the Bishops' letter it is easier to see what has been lost than who will be won.

## Even Gaddafi deserves compassion

EDITORIAL

*Michael Mullins*



President Barack Obama [declared](#) that ‘justice has been done’ when he announced to the world on 1 May that America’s most wanted man, Osama bin Laden, had been killed.

There’s no doubt he was echoing popular sentiment in his own country. That’s what politicians do. But it wasn’t true. [Justice had not been done](#) .

Indeed the chance that bin Laden might one day face justice in a court of international law was lost with his assassination by US agents in Abbottabad.

Early Friday morning Australian time, Obama gave the corresponding [speech](#) for the death of the Libyan tyrant Muammar Gaddafi. To the extent that the two deaths are comparable, the Gaddafi speech was more truthful than the bin Laden one. Obama did not so much as mention the word justice.

His matter of fact message was simply that Gaddafi is dead, and his death ‘marks the end of a long and painful chapter for the people of Libya, who now have the opportunity to determine their own destiny in a new and democratic Libya.’

The sombre tone was appropriate, as was his implicit distinction between the Gaddafi regime and Gaddafi the man. The regime was odious, while the man undoubtedly suffered from some form of mental illness that had unspeakably tragic consequences for the people of Libya.

He was human and deserved a degree of compassion. Obama did not spell this out but made it clear that he was welcoming the demise of the regime rather than that of the human being behind it.

What is worrying is the jubilation of Libyans themselves. It is understandable, but it leaves no room for compassion for the man, whose state of mental torture caused so much pain. On Friday morning Al Jazeera [was reporting](#) that Gaddafi had been further humiliated when his lifeless and bloodied body was dragged along a road. Over the weekend it only got worse as we read that his body was on display in a commercial freezer at a shopping centre.

The celebratory nature of the response bodes ill for the future of national unity, in that Gaddafi supporters will continue to feel antagonised rather than included.

United Nations secretary general Ban Ki-moon was resigned to the reality that ‘In the coming days, we will witness scenes of celebration as well as grief for those who lost so much’. But he stressed it is the time for all Libyans to come together because ‘Libyans can only realise

the promise of the future [through] national unity and reconciliation’.

If, in any sense, Libyans believe they achieved justice with the death of Gaddafi, it will certainly be lost if national unity fails.

## Reuniting church and state

### RELIGION

*Gary Bouma*



There is a biblical story in which Jesus responds to a challenge about 'paying taxes', put to him by parties who wanted him to side with one of the political factions of the day, with the dictum 'Give to God the things due to God and to Caesar the things due to Caesar'.

His answer caused consternation then, and through most history since then. The passage has been used to legitimate the separation of church and state, and a kind of differentiation of responsibilities that usually, of late, leaves church and religious voices marginalised.

The Lutheran doctrine of the 'two kingdoms' was used by Hitler's Germany to silence the critical voice of churches who felt bound by this theology to leave the state to govern. Today, politicians who dislike criticism argue that churches and religions should stick to 'spiritual matters'.

Is such a position legitimated by this passage? I argue no.

We live in a time when religious voices have returned with greater strength to the arenas of civil discourse. Far from receding to the margins, groups once quiescent are lobbying and voicing critique alongside those like Catholics who have maintained a sustained voice. Questions are raised, for example, about gambling, and the dependence of 'Caesar' on the avails of gambling.

I am waiting for a sustained cry from the Christian community about the outrage of a nation more concerned about one teenage lawbreaker in a foreign jail than about its own incarceration of thousands of men, women and children in detention centres.

In a very real sense these critical voices are part of what religious groups are called upon to 'render to Caesar'. In holding 'Caesar' to a moral standard the Christian communities render to Caesar the things due to Caesar and seek to make the world a better place, usually.

Holding in accountability the many 'Caesars' of the world — governments, corporate executives, officials, and judges — is part of ensuring that civil society works.

But there is another side to this coin of accountability. One of the roles of 'Caesar' may be to hold the church accountable. One of the duties owed to 'Caesar' by the church is to be accountable for what it does to civil society, social cohesion and the wellbeing of the larger community to which the church is one contributor. The society and the church are interdependent.

Churches might reply that 'we are accountable only to God'. Indeed some bishops seem to behave like the last of the divine right monarchs. This is reminiscent of corporate executives claiming to be accountable only to stockholders, or to 'the market', seemingly placing the actions of the person and corporation beyond critique. It is an easy 'out' that does not bear close consideration.

The injunction to render unto Caesar what is due to Caesar requires the church to be accountable. There was much denial of accountability in the demands made by churches that they be exempt from anti-discrimination legislation on the grounds of [freedom of religion and belief](#).

Australia channels an enormous proportion of its tax dollars through faith-based organisations. It therefore has a deep interest in ensuring that the services these funds are supposed to provide to all Australians who need them, actually are made available to all Australians.

However, some of these faith based organisations seek and are given exemption from the law in order to discriminate in the provision of social, health and educational services to Australians.

Then there is the effect of church teaching on society.

Consider the example of interfaith relations. Catholics have a well established, theologically grounded policy in this area, and have worked to help Catholics develop positive orientations to those of other religious groups. Anglicans have not been proactive in the same way.

The [result](#) of this became evident in the report from the recent Scanlon Foundation-supported Monash University research into Australian Social Cohesion. In 2011, 22.8 per cent of Catholics versus 34.1 per cent of Anglicans reported holding negative attitudes toward Muslims. This compared to a national figure of 25.5 per cent.

Theologies and church teaching are not without effect. Negative teaching about groups in a society reduce social cohesion and effectively marginalise groups.

Some Christians seem quick to critique other religious groups for the social impact of their teachings. Are these groups likewise prepared to be held accountable by their own society for the impact of their teaching that marginalises, demonises or dehumanises others?

Giving to God what is due to God and to Caesar what is due to Caesar raises a complex network of accountabilities. It does not separate the church from society, nor does it give either the church or the state a zone of non-interference where either may do as it sees fit, free from accountability.

