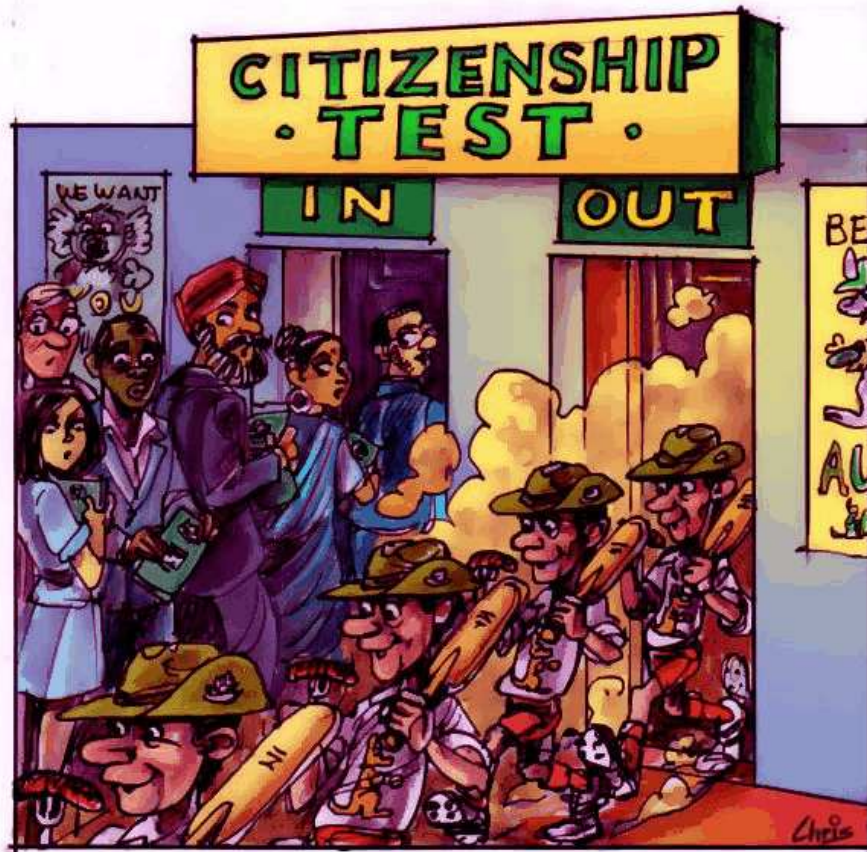


The case for a people's choice Governor-General	
<i>John Warhurst</i>	1
Stolen Generations apology 'about right'	
<i>Frank Brennan</i>	3
Apology a reminder that sin is social	
<i>Andrew Hamilton</i>	6
End of innings for Nine's weird world of cricket	
<i>Brian Matthews</i>	8
Legal fusion the way forward	
<i>Binoy Kampmark</i>	10
Lent is about relationships	
<i>Andrew Hamilton</i>	12
Citizenship test is no joke	
<i>Tony Smith</i>	14
Hyundai man set to work magic on South Korea profile	
<i>Bruno de Paiva</i>	16
Peace process perspective from Nahr el-Bared	
<i>Kylie Baxter</i>	18
Sex workers' drama transcends soap opera frivolity	
<i>Tim Kroenert</i>	20
Now is the moment for political leadership	
<i>Frank Brennan</i>	22
Reconciliation accepts indigenous Australians are unique	
<i>Pat Dodson</i>	25
The cultural heritage cost of Kakadu tourism	
<i>Colin Lane</i>	27
Confessions of a rogue library book buyer	
<i>Malcolm King</i>	30
Young people hard-wired to please adults	
<i>Michael Mullins</i>	32
Green consumerism counterproductive	
<i>Jen Vuk</i>	34
Champion of slow but steady shift in gender relations	
<i>Sophie Rudolph</i>	36
The business of unbirth	
<i>Peter Lack-Newinsky</i>	38
Crack troops of one mortgaged dream	
<i>P. S. Cottier</i>	45



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The case for a people's choice Governor-General

POLITICS

John Warhurst



Finding a new Governor-General is one of Kevin Rudd's major tasks this year. That may seem a surprising statement in the midst of coping with inflation and having negotiated a parliamentary apology to indigenous Australians. But both the process and the appointment itself will help set the tone for his government. Rudd should be creative on both counts.

The Prime Minister puts forward a name to the Queen for appointment. There is no provision for public input or even for consultation with the Opposition in parliament. History tells us the decision is often made by the Prime Minister alone or a kitchen Cabinet at best.

The process should become more open and consultative in keeping with community expectations and contemporary practice. Compare this process with the one just announced by the Prime Minister for the Australia 2020 Summit in April. In the latter case 1000 of the best and brightest Australians will come to Canberra to discuss Australia's future and debate the way forward. This process reflects the great talent available in the community and shows that not all ideas come from within government. It connects the government with the community.

The contrast with the traditional approach to selecting the Governor-General could not be starker.

The nature of the position of Governor-General means not everyone can do the job well of course. It has a formal constitutional aspect, a ceremonial political role and many community responsibilities. The person needs to be someone with experience, dignity, eloquence and the necessary people skills. Australians also want someone of great personal achievement in their chosen field.

But there are still many suitable people. It is not like that other top position to be filled this year, Chief Justice of the High Court, where the need for professional qualifications and experience limits the number of possible contenders. And even with the Chief Justice position there is much wider consultation, with state governments and bar associations, when seeking out the right person.

The Governor-General should represent the diversity of the Australian community. It is no disrespect to the present Governor-General, Major General Michael Jeffery, or to the previous incumbents, to say that our record so far is too narrow and conservative. Rudd should look to Canada and New Zealand where recent appointees have sent a far more inclusive message.

The need for diversity of backgrounds makes the case for appointing a woman and/or someone outside the traditional Anglo-Celtic mainstream very strong this time.

Random public debate on the next Governor-General so far has suggested many names. There should be much more discussion encouraged by the government.

There are several good reasons why Rudd should move quickly to open up the appointment process by involving the public and the parliament. There is already a debate going on and, individually, some people are emailing Rudd with their choices. Why not formalise it?

Not all knowledge rests within the Prime Minister's inner circle on this or any other issue. Public consultation will probably add a range of new names for consideration. The serious long-list should easily have 100 names. Let's not sell Australia short. There is a lot of talent out there. Just look at the members of the Order of Australia for starters.

The process of consultation will be beneficial in itself. It will connect Australians to the political process in a way that is lacking at the moment. That will do the office of Governor-General a lot of immediate good and will ultimately enhance our democratic culture.

The government consults over many things already. Younger Australians are increasingly being asked their opinion by TV shows. So let's ask them who they would like as Governor-General.

The advisory process to the Prime Minister should include an open hot line and a formal nomination process. The public would welcome such a modern step towards further new leadership.

Stolen Generations apology 'about right'

POLITICS

Frank Brennan

Sitting at my computer in Silicon Valley, California, I was able to watch the national apology on the web. I would have loved to have been there in Parliament House. I know there are some things I would have missed or not felt from this distance. But then, this was a national event played out not just in Parliament but in public squares and workplaces throughout the nation, and in cyberspace.



I had just got off the phone from an Aboriginal friend who told me she would be watching the telecast at home. She wanted privacy, but was pleased that the words of apology released the previous day were 'about right', setting the right tone, respectfully, graciously, and strongly.

The process leading up to this apology was right. The compassionate Jenny Macklin consulted widely in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. A cross section of the 'Stolen Generations' sat down with the new government to tell their stories and assist with appropriate words.

Not only did the prime minister touch all necessary institutional consultative bases, he took the time to sit with Nanna Nungala Fejo and her family. He heard her story then shared it reverently with the nation. This 'elegant, eloquent and wonderful woman in her 80s full of life, full of funny stories, despite what has happened in her life journey' became the human face for the nation trying to get right this gesture of reconciliation.

The parliament, its galleries packed with indigenous Australians and their supporters, carried the pain, the stories, the apology, and the gratitude that at last the word 'Sorry' had resounded in the chamber, with support on both sides of the aisle. Only once before, in 1991 with the institution of the Council of Aboriginal Reconciliation, was there a show of bipartisan support in the parliament. This time it was not left just to the ministers. The prime minister and the leader of the opposition shook hands across the despatch box while all members present stood.

I now know many Australians in public squares stood and turned their backs on Brendan Nelson. Some members of the Stolen Generations were offended. With great respect, I beg to differ. I think he did well. He had brought the Liberal and National Parties with him, ensuring they did not rain on the national parade as they had in 1988 and again in 1997. He trusted both

the government and its indigenous advisers sufficiently that he was prepared to lock in his side of the Chamber even though they were not to receive the actual wording of the apology until the previous afternoon. He was able to assert his new leadership sufficiently to indicate unqualified acceptance of the prime minister's offer to set up a joint policy commission to work co-operatively for Aboriginal wellbeing.

Some took offence that Nelson referred to indigenous children today who need protection. No matter what our moral clarity now about the policies of the past, we are still bereft of solutions in addressing the desperate plight of many indigenous children, who are removed from families at staggering rates even though government agencies are committed to removal only as a last resort.

It is one of the tragic ironies that the apology was delivered just two hours before the Queensland Court of Criminal Appeal started hearing the Attorney General's appeal against sentence for the 'Aurukun nine' — boys and young men aged between 13 and 25 who had been convicted of the multiple rape of a 10-year-old girl between 1 May and 12 June 2006.

The government brief in that appeal states: 'It is evident that the offences were committed against a disturbed 10-year-old girl who lived in a community in which a girl of that age could be subjected to repeated rapes without any intervention by responsible adults. The offences were committed by men and boys who, on the tendered facts, recognised her gross susceptibility to them as sexual predators and who were prepared to ignore her tender age in favour of their gratification or, in some cases, their disinclination to disappoint their peers.'

Some of those accused come from the establishment families of a once proud community. Aurukun is one of only two large Aboriginal communities which has been singled out for special attention and assistance by Noel Pearson's Cape York Policy Institute chaired by Professor Marcia Langton.

What will be said of all of us in two generations' time when the historians start debating the morality and utility of what was being attempted with full indigenous cooperation in the Cape York communities and with unilateral intervention in the Northern Territory while we took time to get right our apology for past wrongs?

The question of compensation remains unresolved. Rudd was right to put the apology now and to separate it from the issue of compensation. Most removals occurred before 1967 when the Commonwealth had no power to deal with Aborigines in the states. Most of the living now affected by removals were not themselves stolen but their parents were. Though they would not be eligible for individual financial payments, they ought to be eligible for programs and services designed to overcome some of the pain and loss their families have experienced.

As for those who were stolen, to date, only one test case has succeeded in the courts. Tasmania and Western Australia have already set up compensation schemes. It will be sensible for the other states and territories to set up administrative arrangements for assessing

the claims of those who were removed without parental consent and in circumstances where their removal was not judged appropriately to be in their best interests. So Brendan Nelson was wrong to insist there should not be any compensation fund in the future.

All up, what a graced day in our nation's history. Our elected representatives on both sides have served us well. A heartfelt apology has been given and received. We are all the better for it.

Apology a reminder that sin is social

THEOLOGY

Andrew Hamilton

Today we have an apology. The Government has consulted about its contents, hoping that both sides of politics will support it and that indigenous people will accept it.

The consultation and the concern to find a generally acceptable form of words have been proper. Any apology made by a government, on behalf of a nation which did not own it, to its indigenous people who were insulted by it, would be destructive. Whether the apology could have been bolder will be much discussed.

Some Australians still believe that apologies by national governments, particularly for actions of previous generations, are incoherent and unreasonable. They argue that responsibility can be attributed only to individuals for actions in which they have been involved. So only individuals can apologise.

Most Christian groups have argued strongly that the government should apologise. It sits easily with stories told in their tradition about the shared responsibilities of peoples for their history and for its consequences. The prophets did not simply sheet home the abuses of tyranny, of extortion, of manipulation to the officials responsible. They imputed them to the whole people, who would also suffer the consequences. Similarly, virtuous behaviour in public life would be rewarded with national prosperity.

In the Gospels, too, Jesus preaches the Kingdom of God to the whole people, and demands its conversion. His followers saw the beginnings of the promised Kingdom in his rising from the dead. They also recognised in the faith of those who accepted Christ the seeds of a world made new. They focused first on what God had done for all human beings, and only then on the individuals whom God loved.

So in the Christian tradition apologies and acknowledgement of sin were always in order, whether made by individuals, by churches, by nations or by the human race. Because nations carried their history and were shaped by it, the passage of time never removed the need for an apology. Where scars remained from ancient injustices, and where one part of a nation still benefited from what its forebears had done while another suffered from it, apologies needed



to be made. Nor did individual apologies satisfy for the symbolic need for the nation to apologise through its rulers.

Apologies, of course, are symbols. They do not of themselves mend the harm caused by wrongful actions. But in the Christian tradition of reconciliation, apologies must have certain qualities if they are to be good symbols. They must be honest. This implies that they name accurately what has been badly done, focusing on the experience of those who have been harmed by it. An abstract account that slides over the human reality of oppression and despoliation lacks in honesty.

Apologies must also include a desire for restoration. This implies that those who apologise wish to remedy the disadvantage of those hurt by the original wrongdoing. Although they might do this by financial compensation to particular groups, the desire implies a larger commitment to the whole community affected. Those who make the apology are invited to imagine differently the welfare of the whole community. They will give a different priority to the needs of those affected by past wrongs.

From this perspective financial implications are not central to the apology, although the willingness to bear financial consequences might offer a scratch test of honesty. The heart of an apology lies in the commitment to a new pattern of relationships based on respect between different groups and on respect for the reality of their shared history. No apology by itself will forge this respect and commitment. It is a symbolic gesture that can create space for new possibilities.

Among those possibilities of new forms of respect we might hope that, in future relationships between the descendents of the overseas settlers and the original inhabitants, the latter will be consulted before actions are taken on their behalf. We might hope that they and their communities are seen as agents of change and not simply as its objects.

End of innings for Nine's weird world of cricket

COLUMNS

Brian Matthews



Some things never change. One of these is cricket on Channel Nine.

Technically, of course, Channel Nine cricket has marched triumphantly with or ahead of the times. The camera work is prodigious, the gimmickry is state of the art. Personally, I find the 'hot spot' informative and interesting. Conversely, 'Stump Cam' makes the pitch look like an airport tarmac seen through a rainstorm from a thousand metres and closing.

The stump microphone adds a potentially fascinating dimension to one's cricket enjoyment, but aside from relaying the sound of bat and ball, the scuff of boots, and the muffled barracking of fieldsmen, it only realises its true potential when no-one has noticed the volume has been accidentally turned up. It was from stump mike that we learned on a recent tour that for some extraordinary reason, the Pakistanis preferred to speak in Urdu, a language with which not many Australian players are familiar. Perfidious Pakistanis.

During recent controversies, however, the contribution of the stump mike was conclusive and damning but no-one took any notice. Although stump mike had Matthew Hayden clearly saying to Harbajhan, 'That's racial vilification, mate!' this was apparently a distortion of what he really said, which was, 'Love your turban'.

'Super SloMo' is truly poetry in motion but, while poetry can beautifully capture and enhance reality, it rarely resolves anything. Did the ball hit the ground before he grabbed it? Super SloMo's exquisitely unfolding, earth-stopping, fraction-by-fraction ballet only deepens the doubt, and doubt is what the batsman gets the benefit of every time. So forget it — leave it to the umpire and sack him if the batting side doesn't like the call. It's hard not to wonder if some of the technological innovations are used simply because, like high mountains, they are there.

But the one enduring certainty in Channel Nine cricket always has been and remains, sadly, the advertising. The original decision to advertise between overs was a bad one but it has stuck like most of the commentary team. The result is that the process of the game — cricket's leisurely quality, its terrestrial chess complexities — simply get run over, blurred into extinction.

Channel Nine advertising during decades of cricket provides a fascinating longitudinal study which suggests that, despite constant revamps and more technology, some television advertising formats are essentially ageless. In one form or another beautifully dressed, stunningly flawless housewives, who differ from the Venus de Milo only in having unedited arms, still have a succession of genteel climaxes induced by their joy at margarine, detergent, washing powder, luxury cars, their children, outdoor furniture etc. And their muscular TV husbands, when they can be lured away from the barbie or the television screen and a stubby of VB, still endorse the wives' choice with stupefied amazement.

Occasionally, an ad grabs our attention because it is genuinely smart and witty — like Carlton Draught's *Carmina Burana* extravaganza. Much more often the aim seems to be to induce a kind of catatonic desperation. Metropolitan Plumbing is the front runner here having replaced an ad in which the name is repeated about a thousand times with one in which water drips. This effect only ceases when the remote control hits the screen and cracks it wide open.

Channel Nine has perfected the art of making their cricket coverage more or less one continuous advertisement. Ads run across the bottom of the screen; voices over-advertise memorabilia; future Channel Nine programs are touted by one of the commentators with excruciatingly phony enthusiasm. Even the incomparable Richie Benaud's natural urbanity trembles as he extols 3 Mobile phones: 'It's good to be Three', he intones as if welcoming the return of the Black Death.

Still, it's all we've got. Apart from when competing with the news, or some hardy perennial program that Nine dare not risk cultural revolution by skipping, or that matchless nightly watch on obesity, loan scams and fallen celebrities, *A Current Affair*, Channel Nine is where the live cricket is. And some things do change. Tony Grieg no longer uses a 'weather wall' to discuss what he calls the 'wund velocity' and while he still occasionally gives the 'putch report' its penetrability is no longer measured by his caw keys.

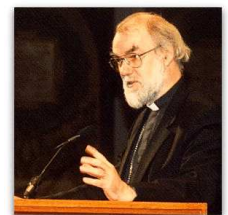
'Good move, that,' as Richie might say.

Legal fusion the way forward

INTERNATIONAL

Binoy Kampmark

He was called everything from an old goat to a man who had lost his way. Such was the reaction to the foundation lecture at the Royal Courts of Justice, given last Thursday by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams. In it, he called for some measure of accommodation by secular societies with other faiths, taking Islam as his example. It was not satisfactory, he argued, to abide by a 'uniform law of a sovereign state' to the exclusion of other forms of religious and communal behaviour.



The innocuous lecture, strewn with paginated references, should be read in its entirety. In a climate where the word Sharia evokes beheadings, impenetrable veils and dogmas, a full reading was too much to expect. People in non-Muslim societies see Islamic fundamentalism creeping up on them.

The word Sharia tends to be a red rag to a bull. Williams' lecture had London's Fleet Street up in arms. Williams was accused of encouraging a theocracy. The notorious *Sun*, under the headline 'What a Burkha', called him a 'silly old goat' and a dangerous one at that. Williams, it argued, was giving Muslims 'a choice over which law they follow'.

The Telegraph was more conciliatory, noting the existence of Sharia councils within Britain that Muslims had turned to over such areas as marital disputes. Not to be outdone by the *Sun*, it concluded that Williams' statement might be seen as appeasing extremists.

The Archbishop was simply stating an operative principle: that foreign laws and moral codes have a place in a secular setting. To put it another way, he is against 'an unqualified secular legal monopoly'. To say that Sharia law has a place in the English system — that Muslims may see the protocols of Sharia to be determinative — is stating an already evolving, and to a large extent, benign practice.

The issue of, as Williams terms it, 'constructive accommodation' between secular authorities and religious codes is already taking place in Western countries. Some might even argue that it has already been achieved. Since the growth of Muslim communities in some Western countries, a growing number of lawyers have become experts in Islamic dispute resolution. More sober commentators have pointed out the practice of the Beth Din Rabbinical

Court among Jews. Britain's legal system, and others within the common law world, often accommodate foreign precedents, some religious. Williams might have pressed home this point, but didn't.

Sometimes, courts will resort to private international law to resolve disputes. This is what lawyers term 'conflict of laws'. Religious matters are not ignored, primarily because religious authorities across cultures have proven instrumental in the realm of property and marriage. Would a marriage sanctified by a Rabbi be recognised before a secular authority in Britain, or Australia? Certainly, as long as the civil requirements are completed. If the practices of a rival code collide with the liberties of the secular state, the religious precedent will be ignored. This much, Williams admits.

Municipal courts can find themselves sitting like international courts, even though most members of the public would not know it. Experts are brought in to confirm the law of another country. The law is then applied, and the 'conflict' resolved. There is little hysteria at the prospect that an English court might apply Russian law to a divorce case, but this is hardly exceptional. This would not be different where Sharia rules of secession and property may be considered applicable. Legal systems can be surprisingly versatile.

Williams might have treaded more carefully, but his point, seen in the context of legal practice, is far from the endorsement of the burqa, or a vote for theocracy. It is simply a reiteration of the obvious: that legal systems and obligations often have mutually sustaining and re-enforcing values. The outrage has seemingly come about in being told about it, and the root of this reaction is one word: Sharia.

Lent is about relationships

EDITORIAL

Andrew Hamilton



This February a new movement has popped up. Young people have contracted to swear off grog for the month after the excesses of Christmas and New Year. The practice is called the February Fast.

It would be hard not to applaud this initiative, and indeed any initiative that makes drinking a servant of sociability and not its master. It is also hard not to be reminded of Lent and of the practices of going without that we associate with it. It smells of the same return to sobriety. It goes just a little way under the skin of the daily pleasurable round to ask what we want out of life.

Lent is also a time in which Christians are encouraged to look beneath the daily routine to ask what's what. It leads up to Easter and to the events of Jesus' death and rising. Here what's what goes deep — to matters of life and death. At this level what really matters are our relationships — with God and with other people. The small things we take on or give up make sense if they focus us more deeply on these relationships.

During this Lent more public matters may also take us beneath the surface of our everyday life to ask what matters. The general disturbance in financial markets, the uncertainties about the direction of the global economy and steadily rising interest rates in Australia suggest that we cannot take life for granted.

Some people who are heavily indebted and with limited resources to meet repayments will be forced to reflect painfully on their commitments. All of us will be led to reflect on what matters in Australian life. When the human face of greed looks less attractive and its human hands less sure, we return to other values.

Within days we await the apology to indigenous Australians. It returns us to look again, often uncomfortably, at the what's what of our history. We confront the reality of the way in which white settlement meant indigenous dispossession and fractured and uncomfortable relationships between the original Australians and descendents of the settlers. It also offers the chance to ask how, in the light of an honest acknowledgment of our past, we want to relate in future. [Frank Brennan](#) has written of the need for the apology.

Lent has no exclusive rights to suffering. World news displays it all year long. In *Eureka Street* we have recently discussed the plight of Palestinians, of Burmese, and of the Dalits in India. The famous Manchester *Guardian* headline, 'We warn Russia...!', reminds us that neither journals nor their readers can do much to stop wars and halt tyranny. But common decency compels us to attend to the people who suffer from these things. Lent brings us back

to relationships, to the faces of the people whose sufferings are concealed behind the abstractions of politics, economics or brutal philosophies.

The February Fast is a good form of abstinence. Lent goes a bit further. It leads us to pay attention, not to what we are giving up, but to who we are giving up on.

Citizenship test is no joke

AUSTRALIA

Tony Smith

The Rudd Government should immediately abolish the tests introduced by the Howard Government to determine eligibility for Australian citizenship. The tests have deterred applicants, discriminate between immigrants on several criteria including country of origin and type of visa, and embarrass the rest of us. It must be possible to find alternatives that achieve the better purposes of the tests.



When the tests were proposed, many sets of likely questions appeared. It was easy to satirise the tests because various policies of the Howard Government suggested it wanted 'people like us' (PLU) to qualify for citizenship while excluding the non-PLU. The choice of a test also reflected the hard nosed approach to determining merit that the government applied to [education and to social welfare](#) .

The most sinister aspect of the tests was the possibility that the government wished to move away from a human rights based approach towards reciprocity. The notion that people acquire civil and political rights simply by being born involves Australia in all sorts of messy procedures such as rescuing boat people and providing overseas aid. It would be tidier, simpler and more efficient to have a system of responsibilities that began and ended with Australian citizens. Unfortunately, the tidy approach is often the most inhumane.

The government's attitude was demonstrated clearly enough in its moves to prevent asylum seekers using Australian appeal processes, and in its complicity in allowing the US administration to [deny its terror suspects, such as David Hicks, access to courts](#) .

Tests, including language tests, have been used in the past to exclude people for political reasons. The treatment of anti-fascist campaigner Egon Kisch in 1934 was a most bizarre case of politics masquerading as bureaucracy. To escape the condemnation of non-British Europeans, immigration regulations allowed for the testing of visitors in any European language. Kisch was an expert in several languages, and so the government of the day exploited the benign clause to apply a test in a Scots dialect.

While the case had many complications, surely one lesson was that governments should not be allowed to implement policies that are an open invitation to cynical exploitation.

The elites who run Australia have traditionally ignored issues of citizenship. The Constitution granted by the British left us as subjects of the crown, not as republican citizens encouraged to decide our own destiny. Until recently, there has been bipartisan avoidance of genuine commitment to civics education. No-one would, or should, seriously suggest tests for Australian born citizens, so it is difficult to justify the demand for others to be conversant with our history, traditions and system of government.

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference [recently condemned the tests](#) . It suggested instead a series of 'formation sessions' in which applicants could learn about Australian values and the responsibilities of citizenship. This seems to be a practical suggestion that deserves serious consideration.

Such sessions could have a sense of equity about them if they ran parallel to ongoing voluntary civics education programs for the Australian born. They could be conducted by professionals in adult education, who are accustomed to operating sensitive programs under open scrutiny. And they would enable genuine feedback to take place through questioning and general discussions.

All dedicated teachers know learning is a two way process and that teachers can be intermediaries between their students and society. Such sessions would produce genuine side benefits for the learners and the system. Learners would come to understand the unwritten conventions that bind society and not just the literal meanings in booklets. This would enable them to become independent more quickly and so to contribute to society. Hearing the concerns of the learners could lead to improvements in the provision of general government services.

A test, by contrast, can achieve only a limited range of educational objectives. It ignores cultural norms and pretends that literacy is not an issue.

The Labor Party achieved office last year amid great optimism. The adoption of a program of [social inclusion](#) is a legitimate step towards addressing concerns that many Australians were relatively deprived, if not completely excluded, by government policy over the previous decade or so.

But when Prime Minister Rudd jokes about the need to retain questions on mid-20th century cricket and the Minister for Immigration insists Labor will retain the citizenship test, the new government's credibility on issues of inclusion is damaged. A citizenship test is an instrument for creating hierarchies, divisions and exclusion.

Hyundai man set to work magic on South Korea profile

INTERNATIONAL

Bruno de Paiva



If the election of Lee Myung-Bak as President of South Korea said anything about the desires of the majority of South Koreans, it is that they want to play a key role on the international stage.

Surrounded by the economic powerhouse Japan, the totalitarian dictatorship of North Korea and the ever-booming China, it would come as no surprise if many South Koreans feel a little unnoticed when it comes to world affairs.

Known for his bold, brash policy initiatives and fervent capitalist ideals, President Lee was voted in on the platform that he would make South Korea the seventh largest economy in the world (it is currently 11th).

Lee has been criticised by a variety of Korean and international political and economic experts for such promises, who deem them unrealistic and dangerous, but if anyone can make such promises reality, it could well be the 66-year-old, fresh-faced President.

After all this is the same man who took the tiny, unproductive company Hyundai and turned it into a household name throughout most of the developed world.

The construction side of the Hyundai conglomerate had around 90 workers when Lee started his tenure. When he finished it 27 years later, there were more than 160 000 workers worldwide on projects granted to the company largely through Lee's efforts.

This same man then became a mayor of Seoul, a city of 10 million, where he will be long remembered for another major scheme, the revivification of the Cheongyecheon stream in the centre of the South Korean capital. Many residents of the densely populated Seoul voiced their anger and opposition toward the plan at the time. Some even filed lawsuits against Lee for what they claimed were damages sustained as a result of his decision to resurrect Cheongyecheon.

Lee's spirit and determination did not seem to be damaged as a result of all of this as he came through with his major plan, which has given a bit of pizzazz to what is largely a charmless, everyday city.

Things have not been all rosy for Lee though. While his presidential campaign was a massive success, it was somewhat tarnished by allegations of corruption involving the manipulation of stocks in a business allegedly co-founded by Lee earlier this decade.

The business, BBK, was founded in the US and Lee has been videotaped admitting to founding a company of the same name; however he has since staunchly denied having anything to do with such a business. While this could understandably offer some cause for concern, the election results showed that the allegations have had little effect on South Koreans, especially when compared to his other policies and plans.

It may not just be the promises and economic policies outlined by Lee during the South Korean election campaign that appealed to 49 per cent of South Koreans, but also how he will implement them when he takes office on 25 February.

What most South Koreans said as a result of the election was that they no longer want the predictable, robotic lifestyle tag. They want spontaneity, flamboyance and audacity while retaining the passionate Korean values of hard work and righteousness.

South Korea has quietly and steadily grown into a powerhouse over the past decades. After so many years on the backbenches of international affairs the majority of South Koreans now feel it is time to showcase themselves to the world — that was what was conveyed in the South Korean elections.

Playing as great a part as their regional neighbours in world economic and political affairs is a hard task. It will certainly take a great deal of time, commitment and persistence from South Korea for that to ever happen.

However, if there is one person who can pull it off, it is Lee Myung-Bak.

Peace process perspective from Nahr el-Bared

INTERNATIONAL

Kylie Baxter

The view of the peace process in the West Bank is bleak, but the outlook from the refugee camps of Lebanon is even darker. Lebanon, long a playground for regional powers, has threatened to implode since the 2005 assassination of Rafic Hariri. Syria's influence remains strong and many blame Damascus and its local allies for the string of assassinations. Last Sunday's violence, which erupted from street protests over electricity cuts, was one representation of the popular frustration at the political deadlock which engulfs the state.



In the middle of this tense saga are the Palestinian refugees. The 1948 Palestinian exodus had profound regional ramifications. In Lebanon, an influx of around 100 000 people, mainly Sunni Muslims, raised demographic questions which were (and remain) challenging in a state premised on a delicate sectarian balance. Over the years, Arafat's PLO also played a significant role, utilising Lebanon as a theatre for the expression of Palestinian political autonomy under the Cairo Agreement of 1969 and as a base for militia action against Israel. Lebanon's deadly civil war was triggered by external pressures, internal instabilities and — as many Lebanese are quick to point out — the armed Palestinian presence.

In 2008, these factors still combine to make Lebanon one of the Middle East's most volatile states. In an era of heightened regional tensions between Sunni and Shia communities, Lebanon stands at the frontline. The mood in Beirut is one of frustration and quiet depression. One does not need to be proficient in Arabic to grasp the intention behind *Khalas* (enough) and *Salam* (peace) which are the constant refrain of Beirut's cab drivers, commuters and coffee drinkers.

The political elites which have failed, on 13 occasions, to elect a president draw the condemnation of the people they are meant to serve. The dangerous turn in recent violence — the targeting of a US vehicle, the deaths at Sunday's protests and yet another car bomb aimed at destabilising the Army which is the last bastion of Lebanese authority — does not bode well.

In this climate, expecting Lebanon to ameliorate the suffering of the Palestinian refugees is an enormous request. However, their situation only exacerbates an already unstable situation. In Lebanon, some 150 000 refugees (of a community of around 350 000) reside in a series of official camps.

In the northern camp of Nahr el-Bared, the situation is critical. This camp was entirely

destroyed in the battle between the Fatah al-Islam militants and the Lebanese Army in 2007. Lebanese and Palestinian sources concur that the militants were overwhelmingly external, an uneasy mixture of foreign fighters with a smattering of local Lebanese and Palestinian recruits inspired by a jihadist mindset.

To open the book on Nahr el-Bared is to be immersed in the endless rumour mill of Lebanese politics. Palestinians generally articulate a belief in a deliberate Lebanese campaign to destroy the camp. Lebanese tend to identify the confrontation as further proof of the powerful regional actors working to destabilise the state. Either way, once the Army entered camp the destruction was systematic and in the current political climate, investigations into actions and events are slow.

Despite the good intentions of the Siniora government, for Palestinians and Lebanese alike, the talk of imminent reconstruction is difficult to believe. In a period of national economic hardship, the pouring of money into a Palestinian enclave would no doubt fire tensions. Moreover, the sheer scale of the devastation suggests a reconstruction program would span years.

History has demonstrated that to wait for an invitation to return is to tempt fate, so the refugees return to the rubble around Nahr el-Bared in a determined rejection of yet another displacement. The conditions are untenable and this has engendered a growing Lebanese awareness that the deprivation of the Palestinians merely creates the conditions for further external manipulation that the state can ill-afford.

Despite the language of participatory assistance, the Palestinians of Nahr el-Bared are now predominately beneficiaries of international aid. As a long-term displaced community, their situation raises complex questions about humanitarian assistance; political advocacy reveals the challenges inherent in the international conceptualisation of this issue.

In the popular imagination, refugees survive in tents at the frontline of some distant conflict. This is the field of acute humanitarian assistance. In the initial aftermath of the 1948 conflict, this was provided to the refugees from Palestine through the establishment of the United Nations Works and Refugee Agency (UNWRA).

But 60 years later, UNWRA's apolitical mandate is continually renewed while a founding principle of its establishment — assistance until a resolution in accordance with UN Resolution 194 on the right of return is achieved — appears ever more distant.

Essentially, for Lebanon, as for the Palestinian refugees, the solid core of this issue remains the simple fact that a comprehensive political solution, not just economic assistance, is required.

Sex workers' drama transcends soap opera frivolity

TELEVISION

Tim Kroenert



***Satisfaction*: 60 minutes (10 episodes). Rated: MA. Director: Daina Reid. Starring: Diana Glenn, Kestie Morassi, Peta Sergeant, Alison Whyte, Robert Mammone, Rebecca Moore.**

'Glamorous' is one word that does not apply to last year's low-budget Melbourne film, *The Jammed*. Dubbed the Catholic Film Office's 2007 Film of the Year, *The Jammed* provided a sledgehammer deconstruction of one of the more morally queasy aspects of the sex industry: human trafficking and its context of abuse of vulnerable migrant women.

The 'glamorous' moniker is better suited to another recent Melbourne production related to the more up-market end of the sex industry. The ten-part series *Satisfaction*, screened by Foxtel's Showcase movie channel, takes place in the luxurious 232, a fictional high-class city brothel, where demand is high and prices are higher.

The workers' lucrative living and commensurately comfortable lifestyle suggest their career path is one to be envied. But it's more a matter of 'normalise' than 'glamorise'. In many ways the women's profession is just that. They go about their duties studiously. Often the work is a chore. Sometimes it presents a challenge to be met with persistence and lateral thinking. And occasionally, there's enjoyment to be had.

It's more amoral than immoral. The series isn't interested in clichéd condemnation, but it's not exactly celebratory either. By its nature the work brings its share of demeaning or downright seedy moments. The ever-present possibility that the next client could be a pervert or a sicko means the façade of safety and security is never entirely convincing.

Satisfaction's heart and its dramatic strength do not lie amid the extravagances and dangers of the club, but in the personal lives of the characters. Their everyday conflicts are exacerbated by the nature of their profession, so that impending guilt and shame seem to fizz just beyond the on-screen action. Thus the voyeuristic appeal of soap opera evokes insights into the fallibility and emotional complexity of humanity.

A subplot involving lesbian 'fetish queen' Heather (Sargent) and her partner's attempts to become pregnant takes surprising and affecting turns. Lauren (Whyte), recently abandoned for another woman by her husband of nearly 20 years, discovers a new sense of independence

and individuality, despite the dubious respectability of the work. And when single mum Chloe (Glenn) is faced with her teenage daughter, Bonnie (Moore), discovering the truth about where her mother goes at night, the fallout is close to devastating.

Satisfaction loses its stride during the second half of the series. A subplot involving tough-but-sensitive club owner Nick's (Mammone) connections to organised crime borders on silly. Likewise uptight 232 receptionist Natalie's (Morassi) infatuation with a rubber-clad client. But it returns to form in time for an emotive final episode cliffhanger.

It's a far cry from the high-impact social punch of *The Jammed*. Still, *Satisfaction* is sufficiently edgy and emotionally honest that it's far from frivolous. A second series will go into production halfway through this year. Meanwhile, no doubt Showcase will rerun the first series for all it's worth.

Now is the moment for political leadership

COLUMNS

Frank Brennan

Next week when the Commonwealth Parliament sits for the first time since the election, Kevin Rudd and Brendan Nelson have an opportunity to apologise, in our name, for those wrongs suffered by Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, in our name. We have been talking about this for over a decade. Now is the time to act.



Let's consider the history of this apology. At the 1997 Reconciliation Convention in Melbourne, the *Bringing Them Home Report* was launched, highlighting the plight of those indigenous children removed without lawful authority and without consideration of their best interests.

Prime Minister John Howard made a personal apology. He said: 'Personally, I feel deep sorrow for those of my fellow Australians who suffered injustices under the practices of past generations towards indigenous people. Equally, I am sorry for the hurt and trauma many here today may continue to feel, as a consequence of these practices.'

Having been rapporteur at the Convention, I then wrote to Prime Minister Howard suggesting a formula of words for a collective apology by the Parliament. His Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, John Herron responded: 'The Prime Minister acknowledges and thanks you for your support for his personal apology to indigenous people ... However, the government does not support an official national apology. Such an apology could imply that present generations are in some way responsible and accountable for the actions of earlier generations; actions that were sanctioned by the laws of the time and that were believed to be in the best interests of the children concerned.'

It's true some of the injustices suffered under the practices of past generations were 'sanctioned by law and were believed to be in the best interests of the children concerned'. Regardless of what our politicians said, those injustices could not attract compensation in the courts. There were other injustices which were not sanctioned by law and were not necessarily believed to be in the best interests of the children. Some who suffered these injustices are still alive, and they may be entitled to compensation, regardless of what our politicians might say or not say. Their compensation claims were neither helped nor hindered by John Howard's 1997 personal apology. And they would be neither helped nor hindered by a Commonwealth

parliamentary apology in 2008.

Most, if not all such injustices, occurred prior to 1967 when the Commonwealth did not even have the constitutional power to intervene on Aboriginal issues in the states. Yet the states have been forthcoming with their own apologies, including Jeff Kennett in Victoria who a month before Senator Herron wrote, moved the motion, seconded by the leader of the Opposition, that the Victorian Parliament 'apologises to the Aboriginal people on behalf of all Victorians for the past policies under which Aboriginal children were removed from their families and expresses deep regret at the hurt and distress this has caused and reaffirms its support for reconciliation between all Australians'. There has been no raid on the Victorian treasury coffers in the last decade.

Back in May 2000, Dr Brendan Nelson hosted a dinner for Australia's key indigenous leaders at Old Parliament House to honour the memory of Senator Neville Bonner. Relations were tense between indigenous leaders and the Howard Government. Nelson spoke eloquently and impressed many of us who were there.

Three weeks later while addressing the school community at Pymble Ladies College in his Sydney north shore electorate, he mused on the issue of an apology. He told the parents and children:

'In the same way that we actively embrace and own ... the idealism, self-sacrifice and values of earlier generations perhaps most notably those who defined our emerging nation at Gallipoli, can we not feel a sense of shame about other actions? There is not a parent here today who does not feel that they are doing the best they can for you. Yet you and your children will look back from the future and wonder why on earth we did some of the things we did in the name of the 'right thing'.

'There is no position that is right or wrong in this ... Before the nation does apologise should it do so, most Australians need to understand what happened, why it happened and the impact that events had not only on Aboriginal people, but also us. Past injustices are not dealt with by creating new ones now.'

Eight years on, the senior traditional hard men of the Liberal Party like Bill Heffernan and Shane Stone have indicated that it is time to act. The Herron-Howard rationale for inaction is no longer tenable. It is not good enough to have each new prime minister having to make a personal apology. It is time for the Commonwealth Parliament to make an official national apology.

Kevin Rudd has done the right thing, committing his government to broad indigenous, community and cross-party discussion about how best to express the apology. The bottom line is that it must include an unadorned 'sorry', apologising to indigenous Australians for past injustices, and for the hurt and trauma still suffered as a consequence of those injustices.

It is time for our national leaders to draw the line on our behalf so that we can move on, committed to reconciliation and narrowing those critical gaps in health, education, and life expectancy. It is time for Brendan Nelson to exercise political leadership and for the Coalition parties to match personal sentiment and national commitment. It is time for Kevin Rudd to move, and for Brendan Nelson to second, the motion that we apologise and commit ourselves to put right the wrongs of the past so that we Australians can move forward shaping a reconciled future.

Now is the time because we Australians have had more than enough years to understand what happened, why it happened and its impact on all of us.

UPDATE following Wednesday's decision of Dr Brendan Nelson to offer conditional support for a bipartisan apology:

The Coalition parties are to be commended for their decision to support the parliamentary apology. There is still the delicate politics of finalising the wording. Minister Jenny Macklin has been meeting respectfully with a broad range of indigenous Australians who want the parliament to apologise. Prime Minister Rudd has dealt honourably with the Coalition discussing the matter directly with Brendan Nelson. History teaches that we are not quite there yet.

Back in August 1988, Prime Minister Bob Hawke had invited Opposition Leader John Howard to second the first motion to be moved in the new Parliament House acknowledging the place of indigenous Australians in our history and in our national life. At the last moment, the wording of a bipartisan resolution could not be agreed upon despite John Howard's willingness because of some refractory elements in the Coalition. Hopefully Brendan Nelson has minimised the risk of those elements derailing this important national event.

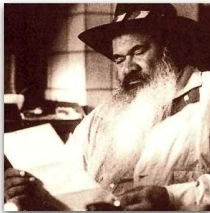
When the motion of apology is moved next week, those on both sides of the chamber might recall Neville Bonner's Jagera Sorry Chant sung in the old Parliament House at the 1998 Constitutional Convention. Sir James Killen observed, 'I never thought that the word 'gracious' could be used in relation to indictment, but this chamber, and indeed the country today, has been presented with a gracious indictment against it, and that indictment has been presented by my old friend Neville Bonner.' It is now time for a gracious, heartfelt, unanimous apology acknowledging our national indictment for past wrongs.

Reconciliation accepts indigenous Australians are unique

ES CLASSIC

Patrick Dodson

On the day the Native Title Amendment Bill passed through the Lower House, Patrick Dodson and Frank Brennan came together in Melbourne to talk reconciliation. The following excerpt from Dodson's speech appeared in Eureka Street in December 1997.



The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation has been a unique opportunity in this country. The parties in Parliament unanimously agreed to the legislation that set up the Council some six or seven years ago and provided to the Australian nation an opportunity, over a ten-year period, to try to come to terms with those things that have been the cause of discord and division, that have been the cause of misinterpretation, that have been the cause of hurt and frustration, and injustice.

But [it is an opportunity] also to look to the future — how we might go forward into the next century as friends, as equals and as people with some pride in our effort at grappling with these complex, cross-cultural interpretations and understandings about each other. The Council also addresses the physical requirements, like health and housing, education and employment, so that the quality of life for indigenous people in this country is something about which we no longer cite reports highlighting the over-representation of the indigenous people on many of the social-indicator areas.

I think this country has responded well, generally, to the process of reconciliation. Cast your minds back to five or six years. Probably, for a lot of you here, the word 'reconciliation' has a Catholic resonance, but for those for whom it doesn't — and there are many in this country — it seemed a big type of concept, a concept that was about whether I, personally, wanted to do something in terms of reconciliation or not. It was a matter for me to make some choice.

That's still a strong view held by some of our political leaders — that this is just a matter of individual choice. That defies the history we are gradually understanding better: the history of dispossession of the Aboriginal people; those policies that have led to the denial of their full citizenship of this country, and the legislation that denied that; the bureaucratic activity that Lorded over and determined the direction of life for many Aboriginal people, which has probably gone on unknown to most Australians; and those more heinous activities like the

removal of children from their mothers, their families and their country ...

The way forward in the reconciliation process is fundamentally to reassess our notions of who the Aboriginal people are ... we have a desire to see equality, we have a desire to see justice, we have a desire that people enjoy the benefits of our society, but the indigenous people are unique in this nation: they are the first Australians. And by virtue of that they are entitled — even though it's not recognised or accepted — to maintain their own cultural identity. And part of that cultural identity are their beliefs; their connection to land; their ability to hand on to their future generations their traditions and customs, interpretations and views of the world ...

For the indigenous people, the reconciliation process is about how the nation can walk into the next century with pride in having resolved the causes of division and discord. Now, you'd have to be, not an optimist, but you'd have to have some faith in something other than politicians, if you believe that's going to happen in the next three years. And that faith is in people like yourselves — in the Australian people who believe that we have come to a stage in our country where the nonsense of whether the pendulum has swung too far or not stands naked by the very facts of ongoing injustices to the indigenous people ...

We are, I believe, at the point where many Australians want to go into the next century feeling that we've put ourselves to the test, as it were, we've tried our bit to contribute. But we must be very clear that there are some people who would dash it to the ground; there are some people who would turn it into something else.

And that is what we have to be vigilant about. We have to work through those complex issues, we have to build relationships where we can recognise friendship, warmth, where we get a sense of belonging, where indigenous people can see the window of opportunity through the eyes and hearts of many good non-aboriginal people in this country, as I've had those opportunities from many, many non-aboriginal people that I've met ...

There are many Australians in that category and that should not be forgotten. But there are some people who wish to turn back the progress and the development and the direction that has been developed in the last 30 years in this country. They want to take us back to the simplicity of the 'assimilationist' philosophy, and simply say we're all the same, there's nothing unique about the indigenous people. Well that's been the message for 200 years, and it hasn't advanced our relationship. I suggest it's wrong and it's outmoded.

We have to find a way where the indigenous people are able to feel and understand that their right to their cultural identity is something we, as Australians, are prepared to make a place for.

The cultural heritage cost of Kakadu tourism

AUSTRALIA

Colin Lane

We sat, perhaps 200 of us, Australian and overseas visitors, atop Ubirr Rock to watch the sun set over an ancient land. The sunsets in Kakadu are spectacular. It's as if the sun is absorbed into the landscape. The sky, trees, rocks and wetlands are all bathed in an orange glow. The beauty of it silences us all.



From Ubirr the wetlands, verdant and abundant with birdlife, stretch to the fringing escarpment whose rocky cliffs look to be crumbling with age. In a place so full of the beauties of nature, one feels keenly the absence of its traditional owners. For us to experience this view, they lost their land.

I recently visited the Top End. The Northern Territory is not like down south. Its vegetation is different, its weather is different, its people are in many ways different. It's a place that many Australians know little about. The wartime secrecy surrounding the bombing of Darwin seems to have never been entirely lifted. I never knew, until I visited the city, how many Japanese raids — over 60 — it experienced.

The Aboriginal presence in the NT is much more obvious than it is in Melbourne or Sydney. I feel sad and a little angry that I have to travel several thousand kilometres across the country to fill in the absences about Aboriginal history that Australians of my generation — schooled in the '70s and '80s — were never taught.

I don't know enough about Aboriginal history, culture, economy and environmental practices because I wasn't taught about them at school. I'm afraid that, in the very recent past, this ignorance has reached the highest levels of our political leadership.

The Howard approach to 'practical reconciliation' always betrayed a profound ignorance about the reasons for indigenous disadvantage, but also an extremely shallow understanding of how societies function. At an individual and societal level, lack of power — that is, lack of control over one's life — is deeply destructive. Disempowered communities quickly become frustrated and dysfunctional. Disempowered individuals retreat into despair or lash out in anger — dysfunctional communities, even nations, do the same.

One of the biggest problems for Australia's indigenous people is lack of power. The destruction of ATSIC, even though the organisation was a flawed vehicle for indigenous

empowerment, only exacerbated the problem. 'Practical reconciliation' and the intervention into indigenous communities also reinforce disempowerment by doing things to or for indigenous people, rather than giving them the power and resources to do things for themselves.

The local people of Injaluk in Arnhem Land are proud custodians of an ancient and living artistic tradition, which is manifested in many forms, most spectacularly in rock painting. Injaluk Hill is a veritable open air art gallery, with rock paintings dating back thousands of years expressing everyday domestic themes and themes of great spiritual depth.

When I visited Injaluk and other Arnhem Land communities a permit was needed. This is, after all, Aboriginal-owned land, and, as the traditional owners frequently pointed out, you don't just walk into a suburban backyard without asking for the owner's permission.

The permit system has given the community some power over their land, over who visits, in what numbers, and, importantly, with what purpose in mind.

Significantly, and this is a point that has largely been neglected in the discussion about the former Howard government's intervention in the Northern Territory, the permit system gave the traditional owners control over their cultural resources. Having the power to control and manage their own cultural resources is important to the maintenance of cultural identity, social cohesion and vitality. It is also an important element of economic development. Retaining control over tourism to the rock painting sites ensures that traditional owners can reap some of the benefits of tourism.

Perhaps even more important than this, though, is that the permit system has allowed better management and preservation of a priceless, irreplaceable but extremely vulnerable cultural heritage site. In neighbouring Kakadu, with its national park and World Heritage status, rock art sites are carefully protected by barriers and rangers. The protection measures at Injaluk take the form of local traditional owners who guide visitors. This system of protection has been dependent on the permit system that allows traditional owners to control visitors to their land.

There is a great fear among the traditional owners in Arnhem Land and other parts of the Northern Territory about the dismantling of the permit system. To destroy the permit system would be a profound blow against indigenous communities. It would expose valuable cultural heritage sites like Injaluk to unsympathetic and destructive tourism, and prevent traditional owners from managing such sites for their own benefit.

More distressingly, though, it would further contribute to the disempowerment of indigenous communities and foster the kinds of social dysfunction Australian governments claim to be concerned about. The Rudd Government should at the very least overturn this element of the Howard intervention, and properly consult indigenous communities about

measures to tackle poverty and disadvantage.

On the way back to Kakadu from Arnhem Land we detoured past the Ranger uranium mine. One can't help but compare that blighted landscape with the serene, breathtaking beauty of Ubirr Rock and all its surveys. One can't help wondering, too, if the stuff they dig from Ranger's pit will have more bearing on the future of the permit system than Injaluk's fragile art Injaluk — no matter which party rules in Canberra.

Confessions of a rogue library book buyer

COLUMNS

Malcolm King



When I look back at my career as an academic (10 years was enough), I do not recall a sea of young smiling faces, intent on learning the difficult art of writing.

I see a library, stretching row upon row, of new books.

For three years I was the writing programs director at a large university of technology. My job was essentially that of 'fixer'. I had enough responsibility to be held accountable for everything but too little power to make enduring changes.

Being head 'fixer' amongst a sea of divergent personalities (both staff and students) was a unique pleasure. I was certainly the odd man out as I stubbornly clung to logic and process. But, like the Good Ship Venus, we sailed on with morale swinging between enmity and eros.

I never really fitted in. I was a bit of academic rough trade. More Joe Orton than Mr Chips. They say writing is indelible but teaching writing was, for me, like writing one's name on the wind.

Burning within was a desire to build something permanent, something tactile.

The idea to defraud the other faculties' book budgets came from Janet, a senior librarian and fiction lover. I am not sure to this day whether I was a tool of Janet's nefarious intentions or vice versa.

In the winter of 1998 I was perusing the tatty old library stacks when Janet sidled up to me and said, 'Do you know that most of the faculties don't spend their library allocation? They forget or just don't care.'

We were in the midst of phase four of the third round of organisational restructuring. Buying books and DVDs would seem like fiddling while Rome was burning.

I am not a noble man. I am full of self-interest and given half a chance, I would speculate wildly on the stock market with other people's money. Here was my chance to build a small legacy. Something permanent.

Plus, to be honest, sooner or later my political patrons, the Vice Chancellor and Dean,

would be blown away by the winds of change and I would go with them into a new future.

The next week, in my pigeon hole was a manila envelope. Inside was a spreadsheet of every school in the university and their library budget. Some schools hadn't touched their allocation in years. It was a tidy sum, amounting to many tens of thousands of dollars.

What I lack in integrity, I make up for in guile. I asked Janet whether it was possible to access the unspent monies to restock and build a modern literature library complete with DVDs.

Janet was a cool customer. She was the type of woman I would like on deck if I was going to sail around The Horn. Steely. Full of resolve.

'Yes, I think that could be done.'

We were a team, and the university valued teamwork.

In October 1998 I prepared one of the largest single book orders in the history of the university. I ordered \$27,000 worth of books split between a large Australian owned-bookstore in the arts precinct and a few other smaller bookshops.

By May 1999 Janet and her cabal of secret literature-loving librarians had categorised and shelved the books. They had been paid for by the unspent book budgets. The head librarian and her coterie of bun-haired passive aggressives in building 101 were none the wiser.

Between August 1999 and September 2000 I purchased \$50,000 worth of books. The librarians had to order more stacks and rearrange the library to fit them in. Don't you love that new book smell? They were delicious and gleamed like apples in the sun.

Even though the university was now in phase seven of its Orwellian audit on 'where money was coming from and where it was going', they still had not yet twigged that there was a cell of book buying anarchists wearing sensible shoes in their midst. This was double good.

By the end of 2002 I had bought \$120,000 worth of books and DVDs. Janet resigned to go sailing in the Pacific with her husband. She was a noble woman. Devious but noble.

It was about this time that my patrons fell Roman-like on their swords or simply got better jobs in the corporate sector. I too thought my best work was done. My old humanities school was quickly turning into an agency of the electronic games industry.

On my last day I went to the library and walked down aisle upon aisle of new books. Their colourful spines ran riot under the fluorescent lights. I had done good by doing bad and I was free.

Young people hard-wired to please adults

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

We cannot complain that the Government is seeking to protect children. But surely the best way forward is to put child protection in a wider context that points to positive-thinking solutions beyond censorship.



Salesian Fr Chris Reilly of [Youth Off The Streets](#) provides that in his recent [submission](#) to Justice Wood, who is presiding over the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW.

Reilly has spent the last 34 years working with marginalised, disadvantaged and abused young people. He believes the root cause of the problem is that adults are disconnecting from young people.

He reflects on the practice of Native American communities, where every adult takes responsibility for every child. Their guiding principle is that 'it takes a village to raise a child'.

The implication is that our global village has not accepted this responsibility. Instead it looks upon children as material for commercial and sexual exploitation. It seems young people are vulnerable to this, but they are also open to positive influence from adults who take the trouble to connect with them. In other words, careful nurturing will yield results.

Fr Reilly says: 'It is not the reality that young people are disconnecting from us. I believe young people are 'hard-wired' to please adults.'

The logic is that they will do what adults want them to do. He refers to young people's fashions that mimic adult attire, 'even to the point where three-year-olds can now get padded bras to wear'. Such early sexualisation creates a climate that is conducive to sex abuse.

Fr Reilly is particularly critical of alcohol companies that target minors with their marketing campaigns. He says governments must 'acknowledge the damage alcohol and its marketing does to young people and the part it plays in physical and sexual violence'.

If governments do not acknowledge this, there is little chance the wider community, and indeed advertisers, will accept that such exploitation of minors is abhorrent.

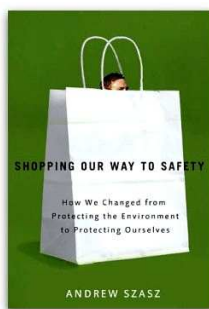
The Federal Government has chosen to make blocking undesirable internet the focus of its

Clean Feed initiative. But it seems 'Clean Feed' could more profitably embrace the funding of fresh content that is 'clean', and likely to perform an active nurturing role.

Green consumerism counterproductive

BOOK REVIEW

Jen Vuk



Szasz, Andrew. *Shopping Our Way to Safety: How We Changed from Protecting the Environment to Protecting Ourselves*. University of Minnesota Press, US, 2007. RRP \$49.95

Don't let the affable photo of Andrew Szasz on the inside dust jacket of *Shopping Our Way to Safety* fool you. Szasz is one straight shooter — a smiling assassin. And he has America's ignorance in his aim.

At the foundation of the professor's argument lies the rapid rise of the 'shopping green' movement in the US and its impact on the environment. So far, so good, but hardly startling. Surely the negative flipside of the western world's proclivity for bottled water and the soy bean is now common knowledge? The carbon footprints alone should be enough to put us off our soy skinny latte.

But Szasz moves beyond this, arguing that by buying bottled water, organic food or sunscreen (his examples) consumers are buying into what he coins 'inverted quarantine' — 'shutting the healthy individual in and the threatening world out'.

It hits a nerve, doesn't it? After all, who among us hasn't turned to one or all of the above, thinking we were doing our bit not only for our own health but for the health of the 'global village'? Perhaps this is why Szasz resists pointing the finger, instead acknowledging that our 'inverted quarantine reflex' has been shaped by the increasingly compromised world we live in.

Adopting its tenets, however, has disastrous consequences. Essentially, by doing so we allow ourselves to be carried away by an illusion. 'When consumers believe they are buying a defence from environmental hazards they're much less inclined to actually do something about them.' The result isn't simply ineffective; it's counter-productive and, ultimately, counter-revolutionary.

A classic historical example includes the great US fall-out shelter panic of 1951. But the gloom and doom is balanced (almost) with a few shining examples of large-scale positive change. The recent phasing out of the production and use of ozone-depleting CFCs is a case in point. A classic inverted quarantine response would have been to encourage the mass use of

sunscreen without further societal action.

Intriguingly, while the CFC about-face holds particular significance for us here in Australia, Szasz doesn't seem all that interested in engaging an audience beyond America's borders. His research is impeccable, exhaustive and by no means footnote lite, and yet the writing itself is doggedly US-centric; an oddly blinkered viewpoint from which to tackle such a globally relevant topic.

Thankfully, Australia's own navel gazing seems to have gone the way of our previous government, with the announcement of a 1000-person summit in April this year to help establish 'a long-term strategy for the nation's future', including 'climate change — the single most pressing challenge to Australia over the coming decade'.

According to the workings of Szasz's paradigm this is the first step in a long walk to a brighter future. 'To achieve real protection and security we must give up the illusion of individual responses and together seek substantive reform,' he writes. In other words, for hope to be put into action complacency must make way for the caveat: 'good things happen when people refuse inverted quarantine'.

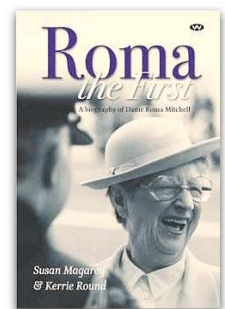
Champion of slow but steady shift in gender relations

BOOK REVIEW

Sophie Rudolph

Susan Magarey and Kerrie Round, *Roma the First: a biography of Dame Roma Mitchell*. Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2007.

Dame Roma Mitchell has many claims to fame — as the first female Queen’s Counsel, the first woman to be appointed a judge to an Australian superior court, the first woman to present the Boyer Lectures, the first woman elected Chancellor of an Australian university and the first woman to be appointed Governor of an Australian state.



To compile a biography of such a full and illustrious life while also exploring the complex personality behind these achievements is quite an undertaking. Susan Magarey and Kerrie Round have produced a compelling 400-page insight into this unique, ambitious, intelligent and caring Australian woman.

Roma Mitchell was born on 2 October 1913. *Roma the First* chronicles her life from growing up with a small, close-knit family in Adelaide. We read of her education in the 1930s at Adelaide University in the largely patriarchal legal system, her career studded with achievements and awards, challenges and triumphs, and, finally, her ‘retirement occupation’ as Governor of South Australia at the age of 77 (which forced her to give up some of her charity and volunteer work).

Roma the First is more than a story of a remarkable woman. It provides insight into the history of the common law system in Australia and its relationship with political and social life. In particular it highlights the progressiveness of law reform in South Australia during the second half of the 20th century and the central role Mitchell played in this reform.

It also draws attention to the slow shift in gender relations in Australian society and the huge contribution Mitchell made in challenging gender stereotypes and social expectations of women.

Magarey and Round give detailed accounts of Mitchell’s fashions, parties and guest lists, and the social and cultural activities she attended in Australia and on her numerous trips overseas. These both demonstrate careful research and give shape to the type of society Mitchell was engaging with and criticising.

The authors, both of whom work at the University of Adelaide, are clearly inspired by the passions and principles of Mitchell's life, and their voices enter this biography in the form of italicised sections providing comment and reflection.

Roma the First illustrates the many aspects of Mitchell's life with sensitivity. It paints a picture of a tenacious, committed woman, supported in her varied and challenging work by her strong Catholic faith, but willing to challenge and explore any doctrine that stifled people's (and particularly women's) right to make choices about their lives.

In our society where the stories of the achievements of Australian men are readily available, it is heartening to hear of the tremendous achievements and contributions of a great Australian woman. May Dame Roma Mitchell's story be heard widely and may we hear many more like it in times to come.

The business of unbirth

POETRY

Peter Lach-Newinsky

Six Elegies For My Father

1. entrails

on the day my father died
the morning headline
blared a scandal:
medical students had abused
donated corpses, mother's voice
was stronger than it had been for years
I read nature was more
anarchic self-organisation
than central state and even men
who experienced the Great
Industrial War of wired trenches
did not become pacifists, helped
Helmut butcher the two sheep
I'd killed the week before
a brief gust of weak
nocturnal rain did nothing
but wash a little dust
off the iron that night
I dreamed I was
giving a man
instructions on how

to train his unruly dog

2. janus

descending down

into a cellar cool room

garage smells like the storeroom

at Coca Cola my father worked in

where I waited after school

for the long drive home

from Naremburn now

his body a marble sculpture

white blotched skin in white silk

soft cold hands crossed

to touch lightly as the bird

he nursed and released

from the opened window

when I was five the face

in deep sleep the mouth

opened on the chipped

false tooth the eagle nose

the strong skull

reasserting itself

through the temporary skin

a bad shave but beloved

eyebrow spikes to stroke

earlobe I once sucked

over fifty years ago

in a morning bed
familiar as father
from the left
from the right
a frozen sleeping
stranger

3. over, through and under

extended turbulence over India
jumbled voices in the head
snatches of old tunes
perforating the engine hum
waking over the Ukraine
where his childhood was
Vinnitsa, Zhitomir, Lvov
where horses still pulled
grandfather Arkady's artillery
through the thawing mud
on the screen a little plane
tracks its caterpillar pilgrimage
over another 1500 kilometres
of green and virtual land
towards a farewell
to my dead father
at the bottom of the plastic tray
under the Malaysian rice breakfast
a real palm leaf

4. liminal

not at the funeral parlour
(burst water pipe)
not at the garage cool room
(was no punk)
not at the chapel
(no coffins allowed)
rather: 17 kilometres
through the jungle
of autobahn clover leafs
and agribiz wastelands
to the invisible Father
Rhine, centre of the centre
Bingen, mystic Hildegard's
place between the grey concrete
apartment buildings a grime-red
Lutheran church 1904
eternalising the Swedish king
who in the 30 Years War
helped lay waste the land
this coffin is not my father
yesterday's embedded marble king
there/not there during it all
where liminal father liminal son
non-embedded still flying
not home here old friends
dead just cold air

in which candles
and Russian liturgical chant
on CD fight to warm
weave now a shroud
of memory music words solo
tears come and go
come and go
in the car going back
mother's voice:
'such is life's end
are we in Bingen?'

5. chrysalis

the ceremony closes
with a Russian Easter Song
the black urn he chose
against his wife's wishes
is embossed with
the icon of a vibrant
Resurrection
he dies in a German winter
that declines to be one:
prunus, forsythia
blossoms, a brown butterfly
pulsing softly, confused
on a wet black path
on the day I fly off
the headlines say

we have 13 years
left to save the world
and I almost tread
on a wasp
coming home
torrential rains have emerged
from the thousand year
drought

6. what you need to unbirth

simple poplar coffin with rose carvings, six handles
cushion and blanket
male gown and stockings
dressing and bedding of the deceased
transport to cemetery
pursuing of administrative formalities
request for marriage certificate
forms for crematorium and urn air transport
transport of the deceased to crematorium
viewing of corpse with doctor of the deceased
forms for the doctor
small ceremony at the cemetery
written cancellation of pension, medical insurance, church taxes
urn in wine red/brown with embossed gold cross
six death certificates (three free, three payable)
two international death certificates
cremation approval by town administration

extract from marriage certificate
fee for viewing of corpse by administrative doctor
small coffin bouquet for funeral ceremony
candles and candle holders for funeral ceremony
hand bouquet for the deceased
coffin storage fee at cemetery cool room
technical cremation fee
total in dollars

Crack troops of one mortgaged dream

POETRY

P. S. Cottier

The terrace next door

Seven kids and a parrot in a small terrace house.
Where squawking ended and shouting began
I could not say. But one sudden day, they spread wings,
left cage and house empty, my ears ringing on quiet.
Until six stoned students, without a single book,
set up camp. Smiling hammocks in the backyard sun,
contents content. Guitars, flute, piano-accordion,
folding time like an unwritten essay, due last week.
The six sixties clones left, sweet smoke signals blown.
Five rugby boys scrummed in, all frantic barbecues,
discarded runners, toxic socks smelt over fence,
and a screen bigger than the house, to pack in the front line.
Was it the four intense Vietnamese, who came next to next door?
Inexplicably neat, the terrace became clipped hedge suburban.
Or the three goths clothed in darkness who never met my eyes,
papers piling archaeologically on pavement, abandoned?
Better those times than the perfect couple's renovating din,
as they improve the street out of sight, pave it with expectations.
Each hammer blow smashes the ex-rental like a musty egg,
as they grow golden equity, crack troops of one mortgaged dream.

