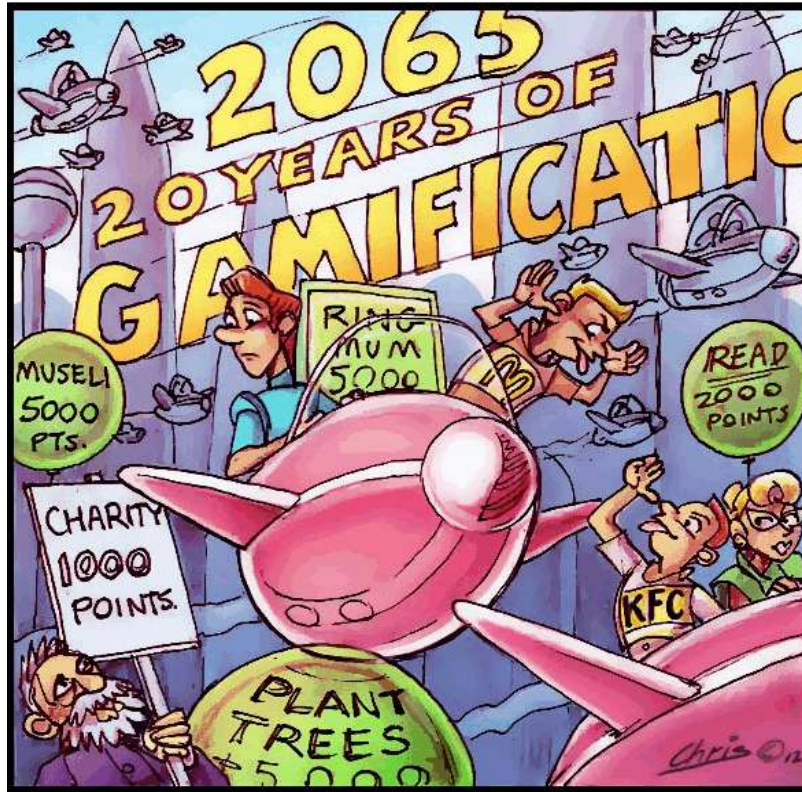


Abbott's asylum seeker turn-back policy is a bad joke <i>Tony Kevin</i>	<u>1</u>
Why atheists are wrong about science and religion <i>Peter Kirkwood</i>	<u>4</u>
Beyond the Liesel Jones fat spat <i>Catherine Marshall</i>	<u>6</u>
Updating the Malaysia solution <i>Frank Brennan</i>	<u>8</u>
Blaming Batman for gun violence <i>Tim Kroenert</i>	<u>10</u>
When gamers rule Australia <i>Michael McVeigh</i>	<u>12</u>
Vagina dialogue <i>Moira Rayner</i>	<u>14</u>
Child abuse dobbing laws <i>Frank Brennan</i>	<u>17</u>
Those crazy Greens <i>Dustin Halse</i>	<u>21</u>
Beatitudes for Aung San Suu Kyi <i>Paul Mitchell</i>	<u>23</u>
A new conversation about Church sex abuse <i>Peter Day</i>	<u>26</u>
Only good policy will save Labor <i>Michael Mullins</i>	<u>28</u>
When rape is a joking matter <i>Ruby Hamad</i>	<u>30</u>
The lighter side of dementia <i>Brian Matthews</i>	<u>32</u>
Truth and reconciliation in Toowoomba <i>Andrew Hamilton</i>	<u>35</u>
Dying politician's tilt at immortality <i>Tim Kroenert</i>	<u>37</u>
Contraception not the answer to maternal mortality <i>Eugene Hurley</i>	<u>39</u>
POW priest and the sacrament of sport <i>Brian Doyle</i>	<u>41</u>
Across the purgatory sea to Botany Bay <i>Maria Takolander</i>	<u>43</u>
Orwell in 2012 Australia <i>Fatima Measham</i>	<u>46</u>
Sin, spin and sex abuse in the church and military <i>Michael Mullins</i>	<u>48</u>
Ageism in the jobs market <i>Malcolm King</i>	<u>50</u>



Eureka Street is published fortnightly online, a minimum of 24 times per year by Eureka Street Magazine Pty Ltd

Requests for permission to reprint material from the website and this edition should be addressed to the Editor.

PO Box 553
Richmond
VIC 3121
Australia

Responsibility for editorial content is accepted by the publisher.

Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned.

Tel +61 3 9427 7311
Fax +61 3 9428 4450
Eureka@eurekastreet.com.au

©2012 EurekaStreet.com.au

©2012 EurekaStreet.com.au

Abbott's asylum seeker turn-back policy is a bad joke

POLITICS

Tony Kevin

For a few weeks in 2001 during the high-intensity Operation Relex period, Navy border protection vessel commanders were under standing orders from the Howard Government to attempt to turn back or tow back asylum seeker boats to Indonesia whenever they (or their senior onshore ADF commanders - it was never clear where such decisions were made) judged this could safely be achieved.

A few such turnbacks succeeded, but there were five asylum seeker deaths, huge stress, and the costs to Navy solidarity and morale were high.

In total, 12 Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel (SIEVs) were intercepted during Operation Relex in 2001. Of those 12, the Navy attempted to enforce government turnback policy on ten occasions. Of those ten attempts, only four boats and their occupants were successfully returned to Indonesian waters. Five asylum seekers died or went missing in two of these encounters.

Tony Abbott as Opposition Leader, on several occasions in 2011 and 2012, has affirmed with increasing vehemence his 'core policy' for asylum seeker turnback. He has pledged to resume SIEV turnbacks to Indonesia if elected, for example in October 2011:

It should be an option to turn the boats around where it is safe to do so. The Navy's done it before, it can do it again.

Coalition Immigration spokesman Scott Morrison further detailed his leader's thinking. He said an Abbott government would be prepared to 'own' any decision to tow an asylum seeker boat back to Indonesia and would not hold the ADF accountable for the results. He said the decision to return boats would be informed, but not decided, by a situation report provided by Navy personnel at the scene.

Our intention is to ensure that those charged with carrying out government policy [are] only responsible for its execution, not its enactment. We will make our policy decision and we will bear responsibility for the consequences. We won't be putting any naval and immigration officials at the end of the stick.

Clearly, the Navy is not at all comfortable at this possible prospect, despite Morrison's reassurances. Admiral Ray Griggs, current Chief of the Navy who commanded the frigate HMAS Arunta during Operation Relex, led two forced tow-back attempts — one successful and one not.

He testified in October 2011 to a Senate Estimates committee that safety issues under the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, as judged by

experienced mariners, would influence a commander's advice whether to attempt to tow or turn a SIEV back to Indonesia: factors such as the state of the engine, the state of the hull, the presence of life-saving equipment, radio, any navigational equipment. He noted:

There are risks involved in this whole endeavour. As I said, there were incidents during these activities [in 2001], as there have been incidents subsequently, which have been risky. There have been fires lit ... attempts to storm the engine compartment ... people jumping in the water and that sort of thing.

Griggs could have said a lot more. The notorious 'children overboard' affair itself originated in unsuccessful attempts by *HMAS Adelaide* to force an intercepted asylum seeker boat SIEV 4 to return to Indonesia, resulting in successive probable acts of sabotage by passengers to their boat's engines, steering gear and hull.

Most of the history of turn-back attempts in 2001 was ugly and violent. People on SIEVs were usually initially amenable and cooperative after Navy interception, as long as they believed assurances that they were being taken to Australian territory for processing. But if they came to suspect they might be being turned around by trickery or coercion and towed back to Indonesia, situations quickly became emotionally charged and dangerous, both for themselves and for ADF boarding parties.

To achieve successful tow-backs, commanders were forced to resort to lies and subterfuges in order to gain male passengers' trust sufficiently to be able to lock them away safely in the hold. In the case of SIEV 7, a vicious on-deck riot ensued when distraught passengers realised they had been tricked into being towed back overnight to the edge of Indonesian territorial waters. There was a suicide explosion attempt involving a man self-dousing with petrol while standing close to an Australian boarding crew.

Throughout this period, there were various attempts by asylum seekers to sink, set fire to or blow up boats in Australian custody, to prevent tow-back. These incidents put both passengers and supervising ADF personnel at high physical risk. The emotional distress to ADF personnel from such confrontations was also high. Some of them blamed asylum seekers for subjecting them to such risks and distress. Others blamed their orders.

The damage to service morale and solidarity was significant. One disgusted crew member described conditions on one Navy ship transporting angry asylum seekers to Nauru as akin to a slave ship. A senior naval reserve commander, a doctor, left his ship in Darwin after a month of Operation Relex operations, telling the press:

I participated in the boarding, attempted removal and actual forced removal of suspected illegal immigrant vessels to Indonesia ... nearly everyone I spoke to that was involved in these operations knew that what they were doing was wrong.

Even in the higher ranks of the Navy, there was evidence of divergent views, signs of an incipient breakdown of trust and solidarity between some senior officers more disposed to give the government everything it wanted and let government 'wear' the outcomes, and others who wanted to draw a professional line of conscience beyond which governments should not try to push them.

Can Abbott and Morrison really be serious about turning back boats? Do they really want to expose the Navy to these grave problems? The fear, the rage, the encouragement to self-harm and lethal criminality, the emotional damage to asylum seekers and Navy personnel alike, the risks to Australian—Indonesian relations?

It is vital that turn-back policies not be reinstated. The ADF and its friends should continue to resist this strenuously. It is essential to maintaining Navy morale and the integrity of the ADF's ethical and legal standards that they not be compromised by any government's improper pressures on them to step over the line here.

In respect of Morrison's reassurances that government would wear the responsibility for any adverse consequences from Navy turn-back operations, the Nuremberg trials made quite clear that military commanders can never escape personal accountability for illegal actions that cause civilian death by arguing that they were only following government orders. It is rather amazing that Abbott and Morrison appear not to comprehend this.

Another problem with reinstated turn-back practice is that it would encourage a return to the negative 2001 public view of asylum seekers as essentially threatening and hostile people — as enemies of Australia. In this environment, the risk of proper Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) practice being neglected or compromised in Australian Border Protection Command operations would be magnified.

As retired RAN Commodore Sam Bateman warns: whatever policies might be adopted by any future Australian government to deter or slow down numbers of boat people arrivals, these policies should never put Australian border security professionals into situations where they were under political or chain-of-command pressures to violate or put at risk their own SOLAS obligations to all people whom they encounter at risk at sea.

Turn-back is, quite simply, inconsistent with decent SOLAS practice in border protection.

Why atheists are wrong about science and religion

VIDEO

Peter Kirkwood

Back in April this year, Melbourne hosted the second [Global Atheist Convention](#), a follow-up to the gathering of thousands of atheists from around the globe that took place there in 2010. Both events featured the most prominent of the so-called New Atheists, Richard Dawkins.

To believe Dawkins, and many of the other speakers at the conference, you'd think there is a deep gulf between science and religion, that the two are intractably at loggerheads and have nothing useful to say to each other.

But this is at odds with what many other theologians, philosophers and scientists tell us. They say science and religion are both quests for truth dealing with different aspects of human experience. This is well summed up in Galileo's famous statement that 'the Bible tells us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go'.

He in turn was quoting an eminent churchman of his time, historian and curial official, Cardinal Cesare Baronio. Both these men, one on the side of science, the other on the side of religion, recognised the legitimacy of both.

Chris Mulherin, featured here on Eureka Street TV, similarly has a foot in both camps; an Anglican clergyman with a substantial academic background studying and lecturing in science and the philosophy of science.

He is now doing his doctorate on the relationship between scientific and theological ways of knowing. He argues they are different but complementary ways of understanding, and summarises the difference by saying that while science deals with mechanics, religion deals with meaning.

Mulherin's first degrees, both from the University of Melbourne, were in Mechanical Engineering and English and Philosophy. Following this he gained a Master of Science, also from the University of Melbourne, on the philosophy of science, with his thesis focusing on the nature of scientific knowledge.

Next he gained a Bachelor of Divinity with honours from the Melbourne College of Divinity. He was ordained an Anglican minister, then worked for 12 years, from 1994–2006, as a university chaplain and minister in Argentina.

After returning to Melbourne, he began his doctorate at the MCD University of Divinity. He now lectures at Catholic Theological College and the Anglican Ridley College, tutors at the University of Melbourne, and is a minister at St Jude's Anglican Church in Parkville.

Since 2010 Mulherin has worked as a freelance writer and contributor to ABC Radio National. He wrote a very thoughtful blog for the ABC [analysing and](#)

[commenting](#) on the 2010 Global Atheists Convention.

He has also written about very personal events in his life. In 2010 he wrote a moving and eloquent account for [Eureka Street](#) of the passing of his son, Ben, who died from cancer. He spoke not only of the course of Ben's illness, but also with depth and clarity about the grieving of the whole family.

He often speaks at conferences, has penned scores of articles for popular and academic journals, and has contributed chapters to three books: *Knowing and Being: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Michael Polanyi*; *Hermeneutics and the Authority of Scripture*; and, most recently, *God and Science: In Classroom and Pulpit*.

Beyond the Liesel Jones fat spat

SPORT

Catherine Marshall



The brutal media critique of swimmer Liesel Jones on the eve of her record fourth Olympics was a typical example of society's tendency to chew up and spit out its heroes once it deems them to be no longer useful.

Using as its evidence grossly unflattering photographs of Jones in her swimmers, the media suggested she wasn't fit to compete in the games, and that she was taking a taxpayer-funded holiday to London before retiring from competition.

When a public outcry over this treatment of Jones ensued, the outlets ran with the story's momentum, analysing it from new angles, polling readers on their opinions of Jones' physique, and losing no opportunity to republish the offensive pictures.

Jones chose to ignore the attack — officially, at least — but if it dented her confidence she may well have taken strength from Australia's first ever international sports champion, a man who found himself down and out and all but forgotten once his form began to fade.

Edward Trickett went from being the most popular person in Australia — people would stop to acknowledge his portrait, which had been affixed to lamp posts in Sydney — to contemplating suicide as he lay in a gutter.

Years earlier, on 27 June 1876, he had been crowned World Champion Sculler when he beat Englishman James H. Sadler on the Thames, rowing the Putney to Mortlake course in 24 minutes and 36 seconds, and becoming the first Australian to win a world championship in any sport.

'No-one had ever beaten an Englishman in rowing,' says Kent Mayo, curator of the McCrossin's Mill Museum in Uralla in NSW, which has in its collection Trickett memorabilia. 'Edward Trickett, the corn stalk from New South Wales, beat the world champion to become Australia's first ever international sporting champion.'

When Trickett arrived back in Sydney, 25,000 fans turned out to greet him.

He successfully defended his title for five years, not even faltering when his hand was crushed by a keg of beer, causing him to lose several fingers. He was eventually beaten by the Canadian sculler, Ned Hanlan, and retired from rowing to become a hotelier and publican in Rockhampton.

But the Great Depression of the 1890s was setting in, and Trickett's star had begun to fade. 'He moved back to Sydney ... but all his mates were bankrupt and he had nobody to turn to,' Mayo says. 'He became terribly depressed and on a

Friday night, near where Martin Place is now, he contemplated suicide in the gutter.'

Nearby, a group of Salvation Army officers were preaching beneath a lamppost and playing joyful music. Trickett pulled himself up and walked towards the light. 'One of the Salvos said, "Hey, aren't you Edward Trickett, the great scully? You're not looking too bright.'"

It was an encounter that probably saved Trickett's life: he cleaned himself up, became a Salvation Army officer and turned his life around.

In 1916 he settled in Uralla, where his son lived; while helping him excavate a gold mine, a shaft collapsed on Trickett, and he died from his injuries. He lies buried in the isolated Salvation Army section of Uralla's cemetery, 'away from everything else, except the morning sunlight and the frosts, in the rarely visited north east corner near a ragged stand of gum trees,' Mayo writes on his website.

In 1982, Trickett's beautiful marble obelisk tombstone was desecrated, and Mayo obtained permission to move it to his museum, where it stands today, polished and proud.

But there's an even more important artefact in Mayo's possession, 'the most significant item in the whole of Australian sporting history', and its presence in this little town, so far from the bright stadium lights and the halls of fame, is a poignant reminder of our ability to so easily forget.

Swaddled in layers of bubble wrap and locked inside a bright red toolbox is the silver-plated trophy Trickett won when he beat James H. Sadler on the Thames in 1876.

Holding up the trophy so that it catches the sunlight, Mayo says, 'This is a really good example of what a 'why not?' attitude can bring you.'

Back in London, 136 years after Trickett's initial success, another 410 Australians are getting ready to give it their best. But while Trickett faded into sad, almost tragic obscurity, today's athletes — as Jones has found to her detriment — can't hope to escape the suffocating and often puerile attention that is focused on them.

Fuelled by a relentless news cycle, the social media frenzy and the anonymity afforded online commentators, our natural curiosity has morphed into rabid voyeurism. Journalists, knowing they cater to an increasingly desensitised readership, have responded by doling out the kind of insensitive reporting that has seen one of our champion swimmers reduced to the sum of her 'fat' content.

The Olympics are about fairness and sportsmanship rather than the fit of one's swimmers. As Jones prepares to make history herself, becoming the first Australian swimmer to qualify for four Olympics, I hope she will know that her supporters far outweigh the people who have chosen to denigrate her.

Updating the Malaysia solution

POLITICS

Frank Brennan

There is a lot of political point-scoring over whether particular countries have signed the Refugee Convention. The High Court said the Malaysian Agreement could not be upheld because, among other things, Malaysia had not signed the Convention. Tony Abbott agrees — even though he would return boat people to Indonesia, which has also not signed the Convention.



If we are to develop a regional framework it will have to be with countries that have not signed the Convention. Nauru has signed it, but is not a transit country and can never be a building block to a regional framework.

A fact of life that is so often conveniently ignored is that there is not a signatory country to the Convention in the arc from Yemen to Australia, the route used by almost all asylum seekers fleeing to Australia. Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia are not signatories.

China *has* signed the Convention, but regularly refouls North Koreans back across the Tumen River. PNG, a signatory, refouls Irian Jayans back into Indonesia. Nauru signed the convention in June last year to attract financial aid. Cambodia is a signatory but its human rights record leaves a lot to be desired.

By any reasonable interpretation Australia's mandatory detention is also a breach of the Convention. As the Regional Representative of UNHCR in Australia put it before a Joint Parliamentary Committee on Australia's Immigration Network in August 2011, 'Australia's mandatory detention policy ... is arguably in contravention of Article 31 of the Refugee Convention'.

Malaysia has made considerable progress in human rights. Together with ASEAN, Malaysia has embarked on the development of a human rights instrument, something that we have refused to do.

The much criticised agreement with Malaysia was a major breakthrough in an agreement between a signatory country and a non-signatory country. It was described by the regional director of UNHCR in Australia to the Legal and Constitutional Committee of the Australian Parliament on 30 September 2011 in the following terms:

Many persons of concern to UNHCR stand to benefit from this program by having their status regularised. It would mean all refugees in Malaysia would, in addition to their registration and ID documents from UNHCR, be registered within the government's immigration database and thus protected from arbitrary arrest and detention.

It would also mean that all refugees in Malaysia would have the right to work on

a par with legal migrants in the country. This would also entitle them to some insurance and health schemes as documented for legal migrant workers.

For Malaysia, this agreement was quite remarkable progress, given that Malaysia has about 200,000 persons of concern to the UNHCR, is much poorer than we are and has a history of communal tensions.

But the arrangement was not enshrined in law and so was discounted by our High Court and critics.

With so few signatories in our region, any regional cooperation framework will have to be constructed with non-signatory countries — particularly Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. A regional framework cannot be conjured out of thin air. It must be built on the building blocks available, such as the Malaysian agreement, which should be updated and the caps on numbers removed.

If this agreement offered anything, it offered the chance of accelerating the process of developing sensible, practical and robust asylum policies in the region. If this agreement is viewed through a regional lens it can become the catalyst, together with Bali, to start the process of building a durable protection system and delivering protection dividends for all asylum seekers.

In our region, the critical way forward is the active participation and partnership with UNHCR which should be better funded and resourced by Australia. That approach will be more fruitful than a sterile debate and point scoring about who has signed the Refugee Convention and who hasn't.

Blaming Batman for gun violence

FILMS

Tim Kroenert

***The Dark Knight Rises* (M). Director: Christopher Nolan. Starring: Christian Bale, Anne Hathaway, Gary Oldman, Michael Caine, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Tom Hardy. 164 minutes**

Nicola Roxon and Shadow Minister Christopher Pyne can agree on one thing at least. 'One of the good things John Howard did ... was his gun control legislation,' noted Pyne on Monday night's Q&A, taking up Roxon's point that gun control, and not violent entertainment, was the larger issue in the wake of the Colorado 'Batman' massacre. Pyne called America's approach to gun control 'seriously wrongheaded' requiring 'dramatic' attention.

As a matter of fact, Christopher Nolan's Batman films — 2005's *Batman Begins*, 2008's *The Dark Knight*, and the current *The Dark Knight Rises* (collectively the Dark Knight Trilogy) — take a decidedly thoughtful approach to violence in general, and gun violence in particular, compared with your run of the mill action blockbuster.

In *Batman Begins* and *The Dark Knight*, it is Batman's (and his alter ego Bruce Wayne's) refusal to kill under any circumstances that distinguishes him, explicitly and fundamentally, from those film's respective villains, Ra's al Ghul (Liam Neeson), The Joker (Heath Ledger) and Harvey Dent/Two-Face (Aaron Eckhardt). In *Rises*, he openly shuns guns, much to the chagrin of his sometime agent provocateur, 'cat' burglar Selina Kyle (Hathaway).

Most of the violence in *Rises*, especially between Batman and his newest archrival Bane (Hardy), is of the hand-to-hand variety. This includes a climactic scene where opposing armed mobs oddly seem to discard their weapons in favour of fists. Bane's henchmen use guns, but Bane's preferred method is to break men's necks with his bare hands — decidedly more brutal, but not conducive to mass murder.

These characters, villains and heroes alike, are to some extent doppelgangers, reflecting each other's traits and beliefs, and prompting them to self-examination. This is particularly true of Wayne, whose grappling with the nature of goodness and justice in light of the actions of those he opposes are the films' philosophical core and most compelling aspect. All but The Joker are vigilantes; Batman's moral code sets him apart.

This is most evident in the rivalry between Batman and the cultish order, the League of Shadows, represented in *Batman Begins* by Ra's al Ghul and in *Rises* by Bane. Prior to becoming Batman, Wayne trained with the League in martial arts and philosophy before parting ways with it over ideological differences. The League sees Wayne's home city Gotham as being irredeemably corrupt, and in

both films plots to save it by destroying it.

Wayne, though, sees the destruction of human life as fundamentally unjust. Implicit in his refusal to kill his foes is a belief that no one is beyond redemption. This is evident in his decision not to execute the anarchic mass murderer The Joker in *The Dark Knight*; and, in *Rises*, in his decision to come out of retirement, and resume as Batman in an attempt to overcome Bane, rather than hiding, or running, away.

The Dark Knight Trilogy is surprisingly, poignantly humane by the standards of Hollywood action films. *Rises* finds Wayne too damaged — physically, psychologically and emotionally — from his past exploits as Batman to succeed alone against the formidable foe Bane. He requires and receives much practical and moral support.

Fatherly butler Alfred (Caine) tends to his physical and emotional wellbeing. Longtime ally Commissioner Gordon (Oldman), guilt-ridden over the morally equivocal climactic events of *The Dark Knight*, seeks personal absolution even as he fights alongside Batman for Gotham's salvation. Upstanding young cop John Blake (Gordon-Levitt) helps consolidate Wayne/Batman's moral compass and becomes an unlikely protagonist.

These good men who support and sustain Wayne/Batman are the heart and soul of *The Dark Knight Rises*. They stick in the memory more firmly even than 'cool' villains such as Bane and his trigger-happy henchmen.

The massacre at Aurora was tragic, but as far as US politicians are concerned, blaming Batman is as good as hiding your head in the sand. Pyne and Roxon's fellow Q&A panellist Simon Sheikh, National Director of GetUp!, alluded to an American journalist's comment that the massacre 'was akin to a natural disaster'. 'That suggests to me that in America there's this view that this is somehow uncontrollable, that there's nothing they can do.

'The reality', continued Sheikh, 'is that this bloke didn't commit a crime right up until the point where he started opening fire ... It's obviously about gun control. Let's hope that in an election year they actually can get together and formulate some responses to this.' In other words, take a leaf out of John Howard's book. Or Batman's.

When gamers rule Australia

FICTION

Michael McVeigh

Mr bob_turner_aragorn235@zmail.com,

Assistant Secretary

Department of Citizen's Affairs, Canberra

2 February 2065

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to your Parliamentary Report on Gamification. I particularly appreciate the opportunity to gain 1000 extra citizenship points with this submission. I hope my feedback will help you improve the experiences of Australian citizens as they Play The Game.

I think Gamification has had nothing but benefits for Australians. I had a doctor's check-up this week and received 500 point bonus! I've just switched to regular bran from the dried fruit cereal each morning. I know the fruit cereal is worth 50 more points because of the heart benefits, but I've discovered that if I have regular bran and a bowl of fruit then I can accumulate 300 points for breakfast each day.

I had to replace my toothbrush because the chip stopped registering whether I was brushing for the required three minutes to achieve 60 dental points each morning. They gave me the points for the days I missed though.

The 400 points I get for taking public transport to work each day cancels out the 400 point penalty I take for working more than an hour away from home. I've considered your suggestion to move closer to the city, but the apartments there are so much smaller than the ones in the suburbs. I don't think I could ever get used to sleeping in a cupboard, even if I would get a 150 point bonus each day for saving on heating bills.

I have taken to reading government news releases each morning. My colleagues didn't know that you got ten social awareness points for clicking on each report. If you read ten reports, you can actually get more points than you do participating in the morning exercises.

Speaking of social awareness points, I'm not sure they're working properly. A homeless man came up to me the other day and asked for some bus money. I explained that I couldn't help him out because I only donated money through registered charities, where I could get a monthly point bonus. He yelled angrily at me and walked away.

I think you need a way to make it beneficial for people to help out homeless people on the street. Maybe you could give us 40 points for giving away our bus tickets or something.

It's been nearly 20 years since we started Gamification, but I think there's still a lot to be worked out. I mean, it's awesome that every aspect of our life is now like a game. I'm old enough to remember what it was like to have to drag yourself away from *Warcraft Universe* to go to work each day. Now, I can turn on my computer and instead of just doing the accounts, I can play *Number Wars* to make everything balance.

It *is* a lot more satisfying. Even boring things like staying healthy and looking after the environment are better now that we can earn citizenship points to exchange for prizes and cash at the end of each year.

But it would be good if other aspects of our lives could be more like games. Have you thought about giving people point bonuses for talking with their families? My mother keeps calling me after dinner as I'm about to start playing *Warcraft Universe* for the night. Sometimes she talks to me for up to 15 minutes before I can get her off the phone. I'm a level 654 Mage, and I have responsibilities to be there for my Cabal. I can't afford to spend time just talking with family for no benefit. But if I could earn some points for it ...

You may note on my Citizenship Profile that I'm not a member of the Australian Nutrition Club. It's not that I don't want to be healthy. It's just that I'm only 685 Happy Meals away from becoming a Level 4 McDonald's customer, which will give me access to the fourth level VIP room in selected restaurants, as well as 5 per cent discounts at all their clothing and appliance stores. I just can't afford *not* to eat at McDonald's.

The use of Gamification by corporations is another issue I wanted to raise. I'm wondering if there is some way it could be better regulated. See, I've started going out with a KFC customer. We were always arguing about where we're going to go for dinner, so now we just eat separately. It's going well, but I'm worried about what will happen if we get married. Will our kids be McDonald's or KFC kids? I don't want to always eat alone.

I've tried to see if there is some way she or I could switch restaurants, but the corporations won't let us. Is there something the government can do?

I've nearly reached the required words, so I'll leave it there. I'm now up to 8560 points for the year, so I'm looking good for the government's 1,000,000 point threshold so far. I don't really want to have to sign up for jury duty or a soup kitchen to make up a point deficit this year. There's really no benefit to me in any of that.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Myke_n00b23hunter_the_3rd@zmail.com

Vagina dialogue

MEDIA

Moira Rayner

Some things can't be said with a knowing smile or impunity. Holocaust jokes, for example, or *Zoo Weekly's* competition for 'the hottest boat people', clearly cross the line from 'edgy' to plain old bad taste.

The American stand-up who cracked a [rape joke](#) then suggested the heckler who yelled 'No rape is funny' was impeding free speech and should be gang-raped found that there are consequences of free speech — namely, free and robust negative feedback.

But neither, it seems, can we use the proper terms for mammalian genitalia. Recently Johnson & Johnson ran 'Carefree' ads that talked unblushingly of women's vaginas, inter-period discharge and daily smells. (We are all somewhat sensitive of intimate smells, from bad breath to sweat and secretions.)

According to some of the complainants, we shouldn't talk about such things. Or not like that. Or not on my television. We would, it seems, prefer be coy about our LadyGardens, or 'monthlies', or secret women's business.

The ad hit the jackpot in the UK, New Zealand and in Australia because it called a vagina exactly what it is, and talked about what their products are meant to do, in plain and simple language. Are we really offended by such frank terminology? Or should we be?

Republican congressmen in the Michigan House of Representatives said as much when a congresswoman (married with three children, Lisa Brown), in opposing their bill to limit access to abortion, concluded her 13 June speech by saying, 'I'm flattered that you're all so interested in my vagina, but no means no.'

The Speaker promptly banned her from voting on not only the bill in question but an unrelated bill on school employee retirement benefits, because of her 'violating the decorum of the House'. One of the offended Republican congressmen exclaimed that what she had said was so offensive that 'I don't even want to say it in front of women. I would not say that in mixed company.'

So even women shouldn't say or hear the word vagina. Such a bad word, vagina.

Vaginas have several purposes, from congress (sexual) to birthing. They may take many shapes, colours and configurations. Their (drawn) artistic images were removed from a Facebook page set up by Spinifex Press just a week or so ago. They don't show up on women no matter how tight their jeans or bathing togs. One is the true, unspoken, subject of Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*.

They are objects of fetishism, sexual objectification, obsession, pleasure and

revulsion. Some are mutilated or disfigured by cultures seeking thereby to control women's perceived 'lust' or filth; or forbidden in temples and church, tainting the full humanity of their possessors who may traditionally be required to sequester themselves during menstrual bleeding, discharge, or after birth.

Here's the thing.

Though I was surprised when I saw that ad, I was not offended. It's manipulative, because it's designed to, and effectively attracts, attention.

I'm used to feeling space-invaded by ads for packed condoms that look like deodorant roll-ons, which look like vibrators; product placement of nostrums for flagging desire such as 'horny goat weed' or pills like Viagra; by dirty great yellow billboards shouting 'Make love last longer', and visions of phallic shaped ice-creams, or white-foamed and overflowing snack drinks, during kiddy-TV watching time.

Until very recently commercial products for absorbing menstrual blood simply didn't exist. This had a dreadful effect on women's participation in community and public life, as well as their religious oppression.

One magnificent Indian man who saw and understood that embarrassment about menstruation harms women's rights, has found a way to produce low-cost, highly-effective menstruation pads and tampons. These allow adolescent girls in village communities to continue to go to school after menarche, and adult women to move freely about, communicate and participate in the social and cultural life of their community, all month round.

This great man has lost his house, his family and his marriage, but his factory and marketing to the poorest of the poor is, in every sense, a divinely benevolent ministry.

Here in the West we are seeing the next phase of normalising menstruation. It has taken a long time. The very first person to say 'period' in a commercial was Courtney Cox (now Arquette) in 1985. Before that, ads just hinted that Johnson & Johnson made something that created more feminine and desirable women. Its ads for the superior absorption of pads with wings for 'heavy days' appeared to prove that menstrual blood is blue.

Since every woman bleeds, every woman has to manage menstruation for years. Since there is little competition for the huge women's market, period-products fall to be marketed in accordance with women's sensitivities. Since period products are pricey, and we are still affected by cultural conditioning not to discuss menstruation, Johnson & Johnson can't lose with this message. Even the criticism does its promotional work.

Women are more than our vaginas, which have daily functions compatible with public life; menstruation and odours are all normal and prudish (as opposed to familiar, jocular) euphemisms that encourage denial, concealment, ignorance,

myths and humiliation for every woman.

It's all rather a storm in a diva cup.

Child abuse dobbing laws

THE MEDDLING PRIEST

Frank Brennan

The Church's handling of sexual abuse claims has been back in the media spotlight. Following the *4 Corners* program 'Unholy Silence' which exposed the dastardly deeds of 'Fr F' in the diocese of Armidale during the 1980s, the bishops of Armidale and Parramatta, seeking to be completely transparent, have appointed a respected lawyer, Tony Whitlam QC, to conduct an inquiry into the Church response to Fr F.

The inquiry will focus on a meeting of Fr F with the 'Australian Catholic Bishops Special Issues Resource Committee' on 3 September 1992, and its aftermath. It will be up to Mr Whitlam to chase the paper trail and presumably interview all persons involved in the 1992 meeting. Twenty years on, recollections may well be hazy and varied, but that is not surprising.

The Judicial Vicar of the Diocese of Armidale was in attendance at that 1992 meeting and provided the bishop of Armidale with a detailed report a week later which is at variance with 'the file note of that meeting' referred to by Cardinal Pell on *4 Corners*. The Archdiocese of Sydney has described the Judicial Vicar's report as 'a private report' and referred to 'notes of the meeting held by the Church's Professional Standards Office' but says that 'any official record of the meeting would be with the Armidale diocese'.

The appointment of a respected independent lawyer with no Catholic Church affiliation is the best means of ensuring that no stone is left unturned in revealing whatever can now be known about the case of Fr F. The NSW Police have also announced their own inquiry.

Even the Church's harshest critics need to remember that this case arose before the Church set up the Towards Healing protocol in 1996. That protocol was comprehensively revised and fine tuned in 2000 and again in 2010. A bishop receiving complaints about Fr F today would have far better processes available to him.

Also the church authorities would work closely with any child's parents who brought a complaint to the bishop helping and encouraging them to go to the police. If a victim came forward years later making a complaint today as an adult, the church authorities would continue with their own processes only if the victim decided that he or she did not want to go to the police.

Let's hope and pray that the bereaved families of Damian Jurd and Daniel Powell can at least be assured that the Church is doing all it can 20 years later to disclose all that happened in dealing with Fr F, learning belatedly any lessons that might be learned. Let's spare a thought for those other priests who did their best at the time to remove Fr F from ministry and access to children.

Let's also hope that any other victims of Fr F will come forward to the newly launched police inquiry and tell their story. Should they think the Church could help them, they could engage the Towards Healing protocol.

Unfortunately the media has run together the appointment of Whitlam in New South Wales with the call by some victims' groups in Victoria to abolish the seal of the confessional. There are three separate issues: mandatory reporting to state child protection officials of abuse of a particular child, reporting to police of suspected criminal activity by a particular perpetrator, and the seal of the confessional.

In all states and territories there are laws for the mandatory reporting of child abuse. These vary enormously across jurisdictions. What a relief for everyone involved if they could be uniform. In most states, professionals like teachers who are engaged with children are required to report suspected abuse of any child. There may well be a case for including clergy who deal regularly with children in any uniform list of mandatory reporters.

Only in New South Wales is there a general 'dobbing' law which requires anyone who has information about any serious criminal offence (not just child abuse) to refer the matter to police. Persons from various professions, including clergy, can be prosecuted for failing to report only with the approval of the Attorney-General.

I have no problem with the same law applying to clergy as to other professional groups in requiring mandatory reporting of child abuse. I have no problem with the same law applying to clergy as to other professional groups in requiring them to hand on information about criminal activity when that information is obtained in the course of their professional activity. But I would insist on one key difference.

A priest should never be required to disclose anything heard under the seal of the confessional.

The state has the same right to regulate matters for a priest outside the confessional as to regulate matters for all other citizens outside the confessional.

We do not live in a police state. We live in a pluralist democracy which respects human rights of all persons, including the right of religious freedom.

Catholic priests are bound by the Church's Code of Canon Law which provides: 'The sacramental seal is inviolable; therefore it is absolutely forbidden for a confessor to betray in any way a penitent in words or in any manner and for any reason. A confessor is prohibited completely from using knowledge acquired from confession to the detriment of the penitent even when any danger of revelation is excluded.'

Last week, Melbourne Victims' Collective coordinator Helen Last said, 'Priests need to be mandated to report from within the confessional and without the confessional'.

This followed upon the release of the Submission Guide published by the Victorian Parliament's Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Organisations asking 'To what extent should the reporting of suspicions of abuse be circumscribed by laws, customs and ethical codes of religions? (For example, should the sacrament of the Catholic confessional remain sacrosanct in these circumstances?)'

This question was comprehensively considered and decided in Victoria by the Report of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry which was tabled as recently as February this year.

The panel chaired by retired Judge Philip Cummins recommended, 'An exemption for information received during the rite of confession should be made.' The report noted: 'a statutory exemption to the reporting duty should be provided in relation to information received during a religious confession. In Victoria, information revealed during religious confessions is considered privileged when admitting evidence before courts.'

Victorian Premier Ted Baillieu has ruled out changes to the seal of the confessional. He says members of the Inquiry 'all concluded that the sanctity of the confessional should remain. I think that's a powerful argument.'

The seal of the confessional is a red herring when it comes to protecting vulnerable children. Usually when hearing a confession, a priest will have no way of identifying a victim. He will have no idea of the date of any offence; it may have occurred decades ago. He will have no idea of where any offence was committed; it might have been Parramatta, but then again it might have been Paris or Parabadoo.

He more than likely will not even know the identity of the penitent; he might not even get to see him or her behind the confessional veil.

If the only information available were from the confessional, chances are that it will be information which is useless to police or child protection officers. If confessional reporting were mandatory, chances are that the perpetrator would simply not come to confession. So even in brute consequentialist terms, there is no point in making confession reportable to the state.

Most, if not all priests, would prefer to go to jail than disclose material from confession which could 'betray in any way a penitent in words or in any manner and for any reason' even if the penitent be a child molester, a murderer or a terrorist. And that's not because we don't feel compassion for children or other innocent persons. We respect the sacredness of the sacrament where the penitent and God relate in the presence of the priest.

Kids will be better protected in future if we put to one side the furphy about the seal of the confessional and address the real questions about uniform mandatory reporting and clear guidelines for reporting any suspected serious crime.

Honouring the memories of Damian Jurd and Daniel Powell and the grief of their families, we should focus on the real issues which might help all children be better protected in the future.

Those crazy Greens

POLITICS

Dustin Halse



Over the past fortnight a number of ALP heavyweights have publicly assailed the Greens. The coordinated attacks have been ferocious and vitriolic.

According to New South Wales ALP General Secretary Sam Dastyari the Greens are 'extremists not unlike One Nation'. Not to be outdone, Paul Howes, the Australian Workers' Union National Secretary wrote an opinion article denouncing the Greens as a 'fringe' party in pursuit of 'extremist agendas'.

Strategically, the assault is an attempt to highlight the apparent gulf between the ideas of the Greens and those of Labor's traditional support base. The Greens, we are told, will never represent mainstream Australian values. Instead, they are a dangerous and opportunistic political party driven by a defective moral compass.

But who better represents mainstream Australian values — the Greens or the ALP? And is it correct to label the Greens as 'extremist' or a 'fringe' party?

The claims made by Dastyari and Howes appear more indolent and unfounded after the facts are considered.

The Greens have consistently stated that Australia must work to significantly reduce carbon emissions. In 2011 the Garnaut Review reported that most Australians believe Australia should take action on climate change without waiting for global consensus. On 1 July the Gillard Government's Clean Energy Act commenced.

The Greens argued that the spoils of the mining boom should be spread more evenly among Australians. Polling conducted by the ALP and the Coalition confirmed that nearly 70 per cent of Australians believe they are not benefiting from the mining boom. With Greens support Gillard introduced the Mining Resource Rent Tax.

The Greens strongly advocated for an official apology to be issued to the Stolen Generations. The measure was overwhelmingly supported by a majority of Australians. In 2008 one of the first parliamentary acts of Prime Minister Kevin Rudd was to issue an apology to the Stolen Generations.

The Greens have consistently called for equal marriage rights for gay couples. Polling data confirms that a majority of Australians support amending the Marriage Act to allow gay couples to marry. At the December 2011 ALP National Convention a non-binding motion in support of recognising gay marriage was carried. Prominent government ministers Anthony Albanese and Penny Wong linked the motion to the ALP's history of social reform.

The Greens opposed Australia's involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan. In February 2003 millions marched in capital cities across Australia to protest against the Howard Government's commitment to the invasion of Iraq. One of the first actions of the newly elected Rudd Government was to bring Australian troops home.

And this is a truncated list of comparisons.

What about the 'fringe' and 'extremist' labels? The Greens' primary vote in the House of Representatives has increased from 1.9 per cent in the early 1990s to 11.8 per cent at the 2010 election. In the Federal Parliament the Greens have ten representatives and are crucial to the ALP minority government. While the party's vote may appear modest, it has steadily increased over the past 15 years and is no longer a repository for protest.

The Greens draw support from what electoral experts term the 'post materialist' voter. These voters tend to be between the ages of 18–35 years, are more likely to hold a university degree and less likely to be religious. Greens voters are also more likely to be employed in a range of professional vocations, and as a result tend to earn higher incomes. In addition Greens voters predominantly live in inner metropolitan locales.

Former ALP member for Melbourne and finance minister Lindsay Tanner noted in 2010 that the Greens 'are harvesting growing support from a particular demographic that first emerged as a key part of Labor's support base in the late 1960s'. Poignantly, he commented that Greens voters are 'comfortable enough to be able to put aside immediate self-interest when assessing their political options'.

Linking the Greens to One Nation is a sinister and ill-considered claim. The Greens are progressive as opposed to extremist. The party envisions a country that is environmentally, socially and economically responsible. They are the only party of political influence to have a comprehensive set of written and openly accessible policy statements. In many areas they represent mainstream Australian values.

Perhaps the Greens' moral compass is not as skewed as some in the ALP would have us believe. Indeed, the Greens may be ahead of the curve in appealing to a progressive demographic that has traditionally voted Labor.

The issues attracting voters from the ALP towards the Greens are not going away. In order to arrest its current decline the ALP must more broadly reengage the Australian people. Previous Labor leaders have successfully confronted significant challenges. Another opportunity presents itself.

Beatitudes for Aung San Suu Kyi

POETRY

Paul Mitchell

aliens

are everywhere i'm tired of them doing tests on
perfectly normal people always coming in peace
but never staying that way their constant
association with reptiles seems a tactic
and they give little thought to our rules
always making crop circles keeping their distance
often not coming at all and then coming so many
large synthesisers innocent phone calls
speaking English poorly they have no sense of time
or the importance of radio reception look at that
saucer on the floor if you can put some milk on it
give your green-eyed cat a drink that'll fix them

Beatitudes

for Aung San Suu Kyi

Blessed are those who watched
with stormcloud eyes
the ground open to swallow them
while fork-tongue drivers
drove whipcrack highways
on luxury serpents. Blessed
are those run down & flattened
fang-holed & spat on
for good measure of the trade index.
Blessed, those daughters set on high wires
to balance dollar signs, while bored crowds
jeered for another fall in interest rates. Blessed

too those with empty chests, soles ripped
from their shoes, fed to dogs. But most blessed
are those who stole the hound scraps
nailed them to their feet
& kept on marching.

Give the poem room to speak

Please, sit down. Let's talk. I know
you might be put off by line breaks
and other conventions, but let's look
past these to see what really shines:
a car roof at midday, a streetlight
in afternoon fog. Now, that wasn't so hard.
We could also try what hurts. The hair tie
round your wrist the day he left,
the raindrops in your daughter's hair
on her first day at school. The moment
you first realised you are going to die.

That was more difficult.
But we'll get along fine.

What the Dickinson?

I heard a fly Buzz
and I was well and truly alive.
Things weren't going Brilliantly
they sometimes felt like Death, really.
But I was Alive — and that Fly
was buzzing hard against the glass.
He wouldn't stop for me, or anyone.
But that's Okay. Neither would I
stop trying to make my way
in the World, my limbs

scurrying from Place to Place.
And god? Well, yes, he was still
in his Heaven and, by all reports,
as busy as a Bee. The Fly left
the Room and I turned on
early Pink Floyd, See Emily Play.

New product range

This opportunity of a lifetime
has arrived again.

The latest thing
too late for me.

This new taste sensation
has an old smell about it.

I can't afford to go
so I'll never never know.

But I can wait, I can wait
until I drive it.

I don't believe this
is beyond anything
I've ever experienced
because I am worth
freedom from choice.

I want the most important
person in the world to be
someone else.

A new conversation about Church sex abuse

RELIGION

Peter Day

Since my ordination to the priesthood 12 years ago, the millstone of sexual abuse revelations within the Catholic Church has weighed heavily. Indeed, such is the extent of the crisis, that in some circles *priest* and *paedophile* have become interchangeable words. It is as if we have moved from an unhealthy 'A priest would never do that' to an equally unhealthy 'He's a priest, so he probably did do that'.



I do not presume to speak for anyone else. I am not a spokesman for the church. My intention is to help break open a new and broader conversation in which truth might hold sway against a collective silence and inertia.

The spectre of sexual abuse has become a defining moment for the Church; one that, if not addressed more universally, more openly, and more humbly, poses a serious threat to the Church's life and authority. We are, after all, dealing with something akin to crimes against humanity.

Just think: priests and others vested with authority in our Church and trusted as its representatives have raped children; caused emotional trauma that has led to suicides; and covered up or remained silent, and in so doing have protected paedophiles.

Yet amid the thousands of shattered lives, the institutional church is tending towards resuming normal programming while this overwhelming problem corrodes from within.

The Church is desperately in need of a long-term collective, coordinated and global response. Something of similar scope and dedication as the recent translation of the Roman Missal: an intensely focused institutional endeavour that demanded the attention, energy, and gifts of hundreds of church leaders throughout the world.

In seeking to deepen the Eucharistic experience and to elevate and brighten the language of prayer, Church leaders must also ensure that the weightier matters of Church life are not neglected: justice, mercy and truth. The language of the Missal can only edify and elevate when those who have compiled it, who sing from it and pray from it, are just as actively attentive to the language of love, and all its demands of us.

Catholics are served by some extraordinary leaders who are courageously addressing this crisis head-on; but too many have acted, and continue to act, like the 'hired men' of John's Gospel 'who abandon the sheep as soon as they see a wolf coming, running away, leaving the wolves to attack and scatter the sheep'.

Underpinning this 'hired men' culture is a pervasive clericalism in which men feel set apart, vainly pursuing the trappings of power and prestige. What can emerge is a culture of careerist clerics and prince bishops who place personal gain, reputation, and their own survival ahead of everything else, even the lives of the young. They find themselves living within a kind of ecclesial-gated-community walled by self-interest and a protective silence.

Although they are a small minority, they are a very powerful and damaging one.

The Church is founded on the example of one who (as described in the biblical book of Philippians), while 'being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped; but emptied himself taking the form of a slave'. Is it too much to ask that such an institution be vulnerable, open, and transparent for the sake of others, especially the powerless, and ensure 'servant leadership' is embraced as a core quality in its leaders?

The people of God — in the pews, in the villages, in the schools, people everywhere — are longing for Church leaders to face the truth with humility. It should be their core 'business' to protect the sanctity and dignity of the young. The consequences of not doing so do not bear contemplating.

It is not good enough to adopt a siege mentality by blaming an 'aggressive anti-Catholic media'. It is not good enough to say 'that happened a long time ago under someone else's watch'. It is not good enough to say 'that's an Irish problem, that's a Boston problem', or that it is 'disloyal' to raise these matters publicly.

There has to be a collective, universal response: to remain silent and passive is to perpetuate the effects of the abuse on both victims and the Church.

Dioceses might like to consider that on a given date, the faithful are invited to engage in some symbolic action within the Sunday liturgy, such as a prayer for the victims and a pledge to reform those destructive elements within Church culture. They might also consider establishing their own truth and reconciliation commissions in which victims are given a voice, and leaders are encouraged to listen.

There could also be a worldwide gathering of leaders to specifically address this crisis. What a message such a universal gathering would send to our children, our people, our world.

It is better for a man, for a Church, to roam the streets destitute, foraging for bread, for truth, than to roam the corridors of power, feasting on privileges and on food that does not last. The leaders of the Church have a profound responsibility: humbly and gently to walk alongside others, especially the most vulnerable.

Only good policy will save Labor

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

Following Government whip Joel Fitzgibbon's comments on the ABC's Q&A last week, it was clear there is a growing consensus that 'time is running out for Julia Gillard'.

It's commonly assumed that this refers to the need for her to turn around her performance in the opinion polls, as if that is an end in itself. But electors are more interested in a government that can enact good policy for the wellbeing of the country, and time *is* running out for her to do that before the 2013 election.

When Labor was elected in 2007, Kevin Rudd was given a mandate to respond to the 'great moral and economic challenge of our time' with legislation for a carbon emissions trading scheme. He lost his nerve and trashed the mandate. Voters subsequently trashed Labor because Gillard maintained the fixation with opinion polls that had caused Rudd's downfall.

The passage of time showed that it didn't make a great deal of difference whether the leader was Gillard or Rudd. In all likelihood, it doesn't really matter who leads Labor to the 2013 election. What is more important is that they are able to demonstrate good policy achievement with a minimum of political compromise made to secure the popular vote.

Labor's judgment on the degree of necessary political compromise has been lacking. It is consequently on track to allowing the Coalition to win the 2013 election by default.

Miriam Lyons of the Centre for Policy Development [writes](#) of good policy ideas that are considered 'politically toxic'. An example is the inheritance tax recommended by the Henry Review. It would be a 'fair and efficient' solution to the problem of a shrinking revenue stream that comes with an ageing population. Such ideas are often championed by conservative groups, with the International Energy Agency wanting fossil fuel subsidies eliminated and warning that we must stop building coal-fired power plants within five years.

Back in 2010, the Edmund Rice Centre published a [background paper](#) in its *Just Comment* series. It fleshed out Tony Abbott's stated vision at the time for a 'kinder, gentler polity' that he thought might enable him to work with the Independents in a minority government.

Tony Windsor, whom Abbott was courting, favoured kindness and gentility, rather than bashing heads or killing good policy. Windsor's approach to dealing with the rural backlash to the politically challenging Murray-Darling water buyback scheme was to acknowledge there was no 'one size fits all' solution. Politicians had to visit farming communities to 'walk slowly with the people that are affected and

see if there's a range of options that will fit their particular stressed circumstance'.

Gaining the trust of the electorate, rather than stoking fears about invasions of boat people or industrial relations reforms, is a better way to win an election. But it takes time. And yes, it is running out.

When rape is a joking matter

MEDIA

Ruby Hamad

Last week, US comedian Daniel Tosh [sparked a furore](#) when, warming up his audience for a 'hilarious' rape joke, he was heckled by a woman yelling, 'rape is never funny'. Tosh's response is a subject of contention. The woman claims he said, 'Wouldn't it be funny if five guys raped this woman, like, right now?' However, the club's owner says Tosh scoffed, 'Looks like this girl's been raped by five guys.'

Either way, the response cuts to the heart of what is fair game for comic fodder. Some feminists say it is never funny to joke about rape because, statistically speaking, there are [bound](#) to be rape survivors in every comedian's audience. Other writers and comedians came to Tosh's defence, crying censorship.

Taking to Twitter to defend himself, Tosh wrote, 'there are awful things in the world but you can still make jokes about them #deadbabies'. In this he is correct. Comedians can serve a higher purpose than simply making us laugh. My favourite comedian, Bill Hicks, used comedy as a medium for exposing society's worst ills. Hicks aimed to [enlighten](#) as well as entertain as he told what he perceived as the truth.

But what is the 'truth' about rape, and can we ever laugh at it? A friend of mine, Zach Rhinier, works as a stand-up comedian in New York City. When I asked him if it is ever okay to joke about rape, his response echoed that of many feminists, 'Only if it mocks the rapist, but not a victim.'

Tosh's brand of humour fails because it ridicules women rather than rapists and the culture that allows rape to flourish. Tosh's TV show, *Tosh.0*, frequently takes aim at women. In one [notorious segment](#), 'Lightly Touching Women's Stomachs While They're Sitting Down', Tosh plays clips of women being touched non-consensually, including their confused reactions, and then encourages male viewers tape themselves doing the same.

Make sure the woman is seated, stresses Tosh, so that 'she's aware that you are in fact feeling a roll'. The point is to shame women for not living up to society's impossible beauty standards. Worse still, Tosh encourages men to ignore any protestations: 'Be careful, because they like to pretend they don't love it'.

Where have we heard that before? Tosh is essentially employing the same language rapists use to justify their actions, while giving his three million viewers permission to harass women.

Tosh and his fans consider such jokes harmless. But in fact they reinforce the assumption that women's bodies exist for male use — which is precisely the attitude that underlies rape culture. Touching women without permission,

especially in a manner that exploits their insecurities, undermines women's safety and autonomy.

Many, if not most, women have at least one story about being inappropriately and non-consensually touched. It first happened to me while I was riding the escalators at a train station with some school friends. There was a group of teenage boys behind us and one of them, egged on by his mates, placed his hands under my netball skirt and touched my genitals. I was 13. He wasn't much older.

I did not turn around. I did not protest. I did not acknowledge his actions. I just stood there, humiliated, pretending that nothing was happening. He was guilty but I was ashamed. This is the 'rape culture' Tosh perpetuates when he encourages men to treat women's bodies as their personal playground.

So is it possible to tell a rape joke that doesn't mock the victim?

Yes, as Ever Mainard, a US comedian, proved when performing a [rape joke](#) this year in Chicago. 'The problem is that every woman ... has that one moment when you think, "Oh! Here's my rape!"' Mainard goes on to liken the feeling of inevitability to a game show. 'You're saying no but he's saying yes. Here's your rape! A suspicious van in a dark parking lot next to your car ... your keys fell? You're fumbling around? Here's your rape!'

In this skit Mainard blasts a culture that sees 50 per cent of the population living with the fear (whether justified or otherwise) that it is only a matter of time until they are raped. She lets individual women know they are not alone in this fear and exposes the failings of a society where something as mundane as walking to a car and dropping the keys could end in rape.

Likewise, Sarah Silverman [blows the lid](#) on a 'comedy secret', confiding that rape jokes are not as 'edgy' as some comedians perceive them to be. After all, 'who's going to complain about rape jokes? Rape victims? They barely even report rape.' Here, Silverman takes aim both at lazy comedians for choosing easy targets, and highlights the trauma victims feel. These women, Silverman is saying, are attacked twice, once by their rapists, and again by a victim-blaming culture that so stigmatises them they feel they are better off staying silent.

Unlike Tosh's offerings, these jokes enlighten as well as entertain. They serve a purpose. To paraphrase Homer Simpson, they're funny because they're true.

The lighter side of dementia

BY THE WAY

Brian Matthews

A friend of mine, with whom I drink some strong coffee and grapple with the world's dilemmas every Thursday morning — which explains why, as you no doubt have noticed, many vexing global and local problems are suddenly and mysteriously resolved on that day each week — told me recently about his strange encounter.

He was walking along a city footpath, approaching a busy intersection, when he noticed an elderly woman standing at the traffic lights, which were showing green. She looked uncertain and distressed. When, hesitantly, he asked her if she needed help, she replied that she didn't know where she was.

It was immediately obvious to my friend that she didn't mean she was simply having trouble with directions — this street or that? left or right? — but that she had no idea where she was or how she'd got there.

Compounding his feeling of helplessness with a nervous politeness, he said, 'Perhaps if you tell me your name ...? Or do you have a phone number I could ring for you?' But she didn't know her name and she couldn't remember a phone number that might be useful or, indeed, any phone number.

The traffic lights flicked through their cycles, cars and buses and trucks crossed and passed in long impatient queues, motors ticked or growled, a fire truck went *wow-wow-wow* on its urgent business, and the two people continued to stand in silent bewilderment at the corner, the one irresolute, the other profoundly lost.

And just when my friend was thinking to find a quieter place for her while he worked out what to do next, she turned to him, her face alight. With one deft movement she opened her mouth, removed her denture and held it towards him. On the 'gum' was clearly inscribed her name and a phone number.

It was a strange business — a sort of happy ending undercut by the heart-rending reality of the woman's plight, her disorientation in a world she once knew, her severance from a past she once owned, and the reasonable certainty that things were not going to get any better for her.

For all that, it's impossible not to see the comic potential of the scene, someone whipping out dentures to prove identity — identities — yet impossible also not to feel callous and guilty in doing so. There but for the grace of God, etc., a grace which, in the future perhaps, may be withdrawn, leaving me or you or that loved one or some relative as much adrift and dependent as the woman rescued temporarily by my friend.

A certain amount of forgetfulness or disorientation has always figured among

the expected, dubious gifts of ageing. In our time and in our country the aged are very much with us — they are economically, commercially, medically, numerically and intellectually significant to an unprecedented degree.

Accordingly, the phenomenon of age has entered public and political discourse, along with all its advantages — evanescent though many of them sometimes appear and, with the wonderful exception of grandchildren, often are — and its disadvantages, which seem innumerable and irremediable.

It has also entered the world of our humour. Most of us know, have laughed at and possibly told, jokes about dementia. It's a kind of defence, like telling jokes in a lifeboat.

And there is, if it is carefully handled, a lighter side to forgetfulness. The rather good idea of inscribing an elderly person's dentures is inventive but bizarre and that's why, when my friend recounted his experience, there was some laughter — even if of the vaguely incredulous, half shame-faced kind.

Part of the reason for this reaction is that, no matter how serious the context, teeth are forever on the brink of being comic, try as they might to rise above their Luna Parkish possibilities. The Goons understood that teeth, along with knees, were always battling for dignity and decorum in the chorus line of human body parts.

Ondrej Jajcaj, a Slovakian living in Vienna, whom you may have come across in some fugitive news item, is certainly onto the wide-ranging possibilities of teeth.

Jajcaj, feeling bullet-proof as we all do until we reach a certain age, was undeterred by the grisly rictus of which teeth are the main component when he targeted the teeth of the dead. And not teeth from your common or garden dead but from those of great musicians, Johann Strauss Jr and Johannes Brahms. He opened their graves and, the effluxion of time having made it unnecessary to open their mouths, stole their teeth.

Describing himself as a 'Freedom Undertaker', Jajcaj built his archive from clandestine tours of the Vienna Central Cemetery, leaving a trail of opened — or, as Jajcaj might say, liberated — graves.

This evidence was no doubt what aroused the suspicion and interest of Thomas Vecsey, a Vienna state prosecutor, though the fact that Jajcaj posted details of his Strauss/Brahms dental coup as a video on YouTube may also have had something to do with his growing notoriety.

Well, next Thursday, I'll be off to see my coffee-drinking friend. He is going to tell me some news about the elderly woman whom he has, in his compassionate way, kept in touch with and continued to help as best he can.

And I, for my part, once I get a word in, will segue seamlessly into the strange case of Ondrej Jajcaj, which he won't want to hear but won't be able to stop me

telling him.

And so we beat on through another week, 'borne back ceaselessly into the past'.

Truth and reconciliation in Toowoomba

RELIGION

Andrew Hamilton



World events like the civil war in Syria, the financial crisis in Europe and the political deadlock in Australia and the United States make evident the need for symbols of trust and reconciliation. Gestures such as the National Apology to the Stolen Generations in Australia and truth and reconciliation commissions in South Africa have made possible a new approach to old division, even if those possibilities have often been squandered.

Religions have traditionally been good at offering symbols of trust and reconciliation. Confessional rites abound in the Christian churches and there are many formal greetings that speak of reconciliation. Churches have had a small role in brokering national and international disputes. For that reason it is a pity that so many recent stories of the Catholic Church have spoken of mistrust rather than of trust, of dividing rather than of reconciling.

So it is a pleasure to reflect on the consecration of the new Bishop of Toowoomba, Robert McGuckin. The details of this celebration spoke creatively of trust and opened possibilities of reconciliation.

In prospect the consecration of the new Bishop must have seemed to demand skills like those required when negotiating entry to a harbour surrounded by dangerous shoals and currents.

His predecessor, Bishop Bill Morris, was very popular in the diocese. But he had been removed from his position in an unsatisfactory process that caused widespread disquiet. The consecration could easily have been seen as an assembly of complicit men imposing their will on a resistant people. That would have made it more difficult for the incoming bishop to gain and build trust among his people.

In the event the ceremony allowed a space for trust and for reconciliation. Morris was present at the ceremony. He handed the crozier, the symbol of the bishop's office, to McGuckin and accompanied him to the bishop's chair. In his remarks at the end of the ceremony, McGuckin praised Morris and thanked him for his help and his service to the diocese. His words of appreciation were met by the congregation with sustained applause.

All this sounds gracious and natural. But it required a high level of trust, given that the consecration was the culmination of a series of events that had been marked by mistrust. Morris and McGuckin both showed considerable magnanimity. The congregation responded with equal magnanimity, the seedbed for mutual trust.

The symbolism of the ceremony had broader implications. It revealed the

importance of the distinction between moving on and letting go.

After *faits accomplis* such as the invasion of Iraq and the dismissal of Morris, the voices of pragmatism are always heard advising us to move on. The deed is done: it should now be forgotten and we should get on with life. This is the logic of power and submission. When power has been exercised we should submit, applaud and avert our eyes from the casualties. This is what moving on means.

The symbolism of the Toowoomba ceremonies was not about moving on. In applauding Morris so long and loudly, the people expressed their esteem for a man who was deeply trusted. But they also expressed their judgment on what had been done to him. They were given the opportunity both to remember what they saw as an injustice and at the same time to let go of anger, paralysis and alienation.

It was a statement that the faith that bound them together as fellow human beings and Catholics transcended the injustices, angers and compromises that divided them. Letting go expresses the logic of love and trust. It leads people to remember what has been done badly and the people hurt by it. But it also leads them to engage with others in a new order, even if this has come about through bad behaviour.

The ceremony itself took place on the feast of St Benedict, which was not without its own ironies. But the monastic Rule which bears Benedict's name is full of symbolic gestures of trust.

The Rule commends obedience. This is often presented in terms of power and submission. But for Benedict's Rule obedience is about listening to Christ. It begins and ends in love. Because Christ is found in others, obedience is about mutual trust between monks and abbot. Perfect love sidelines irony.

The consecration of Bishop McGuckin was a domestic event in a country church. But it threw into relief the poverty of our public life and the desperate need of symbols of trust such as those seen in Toowoomba.

Dying politician's tilt at immortality

TELEVISION

Tim Kroenert

***Boss* season one (MA). Starring: Kelsey Grammer, Martin Donovan, Kathleen Robertson, Connie Nielsen, Hannah Ware. 8x60m episodes**

If there's one thing to be grateful for in an era where television has surpassed cinema as the premier medium for premium dramatic content, it is that it should allow an actor like Grammer to prove his greatness once again.

He'll be forever identified with Dr Frasier Crane, the absurdly snobbish psychiatrist he played for 20 years on the American sitcoms *Cheers* and *Frasier*. The eponymous spin-off in particular was endlessly witty but also offered a touching (and only occasionally mawkish) portrayal of middle-aged men searching for authenticity in their familial and romantic relationships. Grammer's performance appealingly combined hamminess with gravitas.

This gravitas that expands into outright charisma in *Boss*, a 2011 series which is currently underway on Foxtel's W channel (Wednesdays, 8.30pm). Grammer won a Golden Globe for his portrayal of Tom Kane, a fictional and ruthless mayor of Chicago, determined to leave his mark and cling to power, seemingly at any cost.

Grammer brings a captivating obstinacy but plenty of empathy too. Episode one opens with a lingering shot of Kane's creased and shadowed face as he receives the news, during a secret warehouse rendezvous with his physician, that he is suffering from a degenerative neurological disorder. *Boss* focuses on Kane as a man trying to exude invincibility in public for as long as possible, while privately he is forced to confront his own mortality.

The series deftly blends fact and fiction. Kane's ordeal takes place against the backdrop of the controversial O'Hare airport expansion, which in real life was slowed by a series of legal challenges and other complications. In the series, Kane has become the project's greatest champion; its achievement could constitute his own tilt at immortality, a notion that takes on greater urgency now that death is an imminent reality.

Grammer is supported by a solid cast, including Donovan and Robertson as Kane's closest advisors; Nielsen as his wife, in a marriage where political expediency has long supplanted warmth and affection; and Ware as their estranged daughter, a religious minister and wavering ex-addict.

But *Boss* is every inch Grammer's stomping ground. His charisma is weighted with a grave sense of pathos, but also a hint of the sinister villainy he honed while providing the voice of Sideshow Bob (children's entertainer, criminal, Republican) on *The Simpsons*, albeit here it is ramped up to brutal, tyrannical proportions.

That Kane can physically assault an unsuspecting minion during an

expletives-ridden tirade, twisting his ear and forcing him to his knees as he roars down at him red-faced, yet still maintain the audience's sympathy and interest, is testament to the epic depths of a character that could eclipse even the great Frasier Crane.

Contraception not the answer to maternal mortality

HUMAN RIGHTS

Eugene Hurley

More than 350,000 women die every year from difficulties related to pregnancy or childbirth. Some of the highest maternal mortality rates are on our own doorstep in East Timor and Papua New Guinea. It is imperative that we do more to provide basic health services in developing countries to save women's and children's lives.



But Foreign Minister Senator Bob Carr's announcement of a doubling in AusAID funding for family planning and the article he wrote with Melinda Gates last week in *The Lancet* [target](#) pregnancy itself as the problem, rather than the lack of good basic health services.

This debate comes out of the London Summit on Family Planning which is looking to sign up governments to a huge boost in funding for contraceptives like the long acting injectable Depo-Provera, sterilisation and IUDs. These are methods that once administered are difficult for women in developing countries to reverse.

When basic health in developing countries is so limited, when a population has no access to basic, life-saving antibiotics, especially in the most remote regions where maternal mortality is most severe, it is unrealistic to think these methods can be administered responsibly.

The Catholic Church is one of the world's biggest service providers in maternal health and early childhood development. It approaches aid work recognising that the family is at the heart of human development. This is an approach which promotes the sanctity of life and the dignity of all human beings.

Parents must be allowed the judgement as to how many children they have and how much time they wish to leave between births. Any work by population bureaucrats must respect that freedom. Any effective and responsible program must have comprehensive, balanced education at its core, respecting parents' dignity.

The solution to poverty is not the sterilisation of women and men in developing countries, but more economic justice so they can share in the world's wealth.

Families in developing countries have more children when they are poor because that makes sense to them culturally and economically. Reducing people's poverty may allow parents to decide to reduce the number of children they have because they have a more secure future.

Natural family planning for regulating the number of children in a family promotes human dignity and respect between spouses, helping to bring about a better human order in the wider community. Methods like Billings,

Sympto-Thermal, Napro-tech or Creighton have similar reliability to oral contraceptives. The Church does not support artificial birth control or abortion as methods of family planning.

The problem with the Summit is that it is calling for billions of dollars for programs that will divert money from basic health care and will clash with the values of so many women and men in the developing world.

The Summit organisers claim more than 200 million women in the developing world lack access to contraceptives, information and services. This claim is based on a calculation of 'unmet need' where not one woman was asked if she wanted to use contraception. 'Unmet need' refers instead to the total number of women in the developing world who might possibly want to use contraception and are not already using it.

Even more disturbingly, one sexual health charity told *The Guardian* last week 'demand had to be created as well as supply'. So where women in developing countries do not wish to use contraception, they have to be persuaded otherwise.

The World Bank has published a paper that makes it clear the overwhelming majority of married women in developing countries not using contraception don't want to use it, either because they disagree with its use or have concerns about side effects. Some said they had a lack of knowledge, but very few said that cost or access was an important reason.

Respecting women's dignity means better maternal health care services, not a cheaper substitute. Women are dying because they are poor and don't have basic maternal health care, not because they are having children.

POW priest and the sacrament of sport

NON-FICTION

Brian Doyle

One time when I was visiting Sydney from the US, I got into a conversation with an elderly priest who had spent most of his working life on Bougainville Island.

We sat out under the gum trees, watching parrots whir by, and he told me about halting an incipient battle there once, between rebels and government forces, and about a boy he had known who people in the village thought was a fish in human form, and about one time a song was sung from one end of the island to the other without ever stopping, people singing it in turn for weeks, and many other things.

And then he got onto cricket, his favorite sport, which he had played as a boy and young man, quitting the pitch only when he was 40, in a ceremony attended by most of the people he'd worked with on the island; in the course of this event he had burned his cricket bat on the field, and marked everyone's forehead with a smudge of the ash.

We were all laughing, he said, but there was a sweet reverence to the moment which I do not forget. There are more sacramental moments than we know.

Talking about cricket on Bougainville sent him back to one particular cricket match which he had witnessed as a prisoner of the Japanese Imperial Army in early 1943. The Japanese had taken the island in 1942, he said, and he was imprisoned with many other residents, both islanders and Australians.

He continued: It was not an especially harsh camp initially, nothing like the camps in Burma and Thailand, and we were allowed to read and play cricket and conduct religious services. But then as the war turned against the Japanese, and the Allies took a corner of the island, things grew darker. There is a great deal to tell of that time when things grew harsh, but I wanted to tell you about this one day, when we decided to play cricket.

It was a Sunday, and we set up stumps in the morning, and dressed in the best clothes we had left, and made up teams and assigned positions. One captain was a minister, a remarkable man, and the other was a teacher. The camp guards looked angry but no one stopped us. I opened the bowling.

There was something desperate about the game. It wasn't like in the films, where we were making a statement to the oppressor. It was more like we were starving for something. I'll never forget that game. Everyone played as hard as they possibly could. I don't have the words for what it was we were so desperate for, but you could feel it in every man and boy.

I have tried to tell people about this game and they say things like nostalgia or

courage or memory or peace but those are not the right words. They don't get deep enough. It's like if we had not been able to play that game we would have sickened and died. I don't know quite what else to say.

We played all day. We didn't break for tea or lunch because we were afraid the guards would make us stop. We finished finally at dusk when one fellow jumped for a ball in the air and nearly caught a fruit bat. There are days when I think if we had not played that game none of us would have survived the war.

So the next time someone makes fun of sport and says it's all childish nonsense, or scrabbling for money as they say now about sport on the television, remember that game. There's something deep and sacred about sport, though we don't have good words yet for what that is. But I think those words may come in the years ahead. I would guess they will be beautiful words, rhythmic and delightful. I wish that I could hear them. Perhaps I shall.

Across the purgatory sea to Botany Bay

POETRY

Maria Takolander

Degeneration

After Max Nordau

Let us expand the category of the degenerates
 who muddy this utopian age of pure
 money and science, to include poets
 (in addition to criminals, prostitutes, anarchists and lunatics).

The problem with the poet is that he lacks the rigour
 to adapt himself to the existing — the cause
 of his dwindling — and becomes an idle meddler,
 a cavalier visionary, monstrously ignorant of reality.

The danger of the poet, as with an ugly fetish,
 is his power to exercise suggestion, although of course
 those hysterics moved by his influence
 are already, *ipso facto*, degenerate subjects.

Let it be said that poetry is atavistic.

 It is a twaddle, a babbling and stammering,
 that only imbeciles and academics profess to understand.
 Clear speech, by contrast, is for capital minds.

(We must concede, however, that the poetical method
 wielded by one such as V, notwithstanding
 his asymmetric skull and pointed ears,
 yields experiences that are perplexingly beautiful.)

White Australia

Black Caesar, a gargantuan escapee from a West Indian
sugar plantation, pilfered £12 from a dwelling house
in London — and was cast away with the First Fleet:
378 days on the purgatory sea to Botany Bay.

Sophie, a Malagay slave in Mauritius, torched a barn housing a collection of leather straps — the flames soaring like the sounds of the black horses inside — and was packed off in a ship-sized crate to New South Wales. Priscilla, in Jamaica, did not poison her master, but she watched him purge his peculiar sickness into his wife's bedpan — the ceramic one with floral motifs — day after day, without great discontent. A Khoi Khoi man, smaller than Ned Kelly and paler of face, became a bushranger in Van Diemen's Land — although Black Caesar, famous for his hard labour and gunmanship among the Founders at Sydney Cove, was the first. Before he bolted he even got a shot away at the Aborigine Pemulwuy, who had killed the governor's gamekeeper; (Pemulwuy took seven pieces of buckshot that time and still did not go down in history.) Of course, the colonial office properly stopped it all, but by then Martin and Randall, also among the Founders, had set up Dixieland — outside Sydney — their progeny spreading like mice or men right across this wide brown land.

Diurnal

The universe yawns,
cavernous as a mirror.

*

Half of earth's creatures:
star-struck and blind.

*

A dream, earth-bound
and sudden as a cockroach.

*

Night is true.

And not true.

*

Supple dawn light
blesses small spaces.

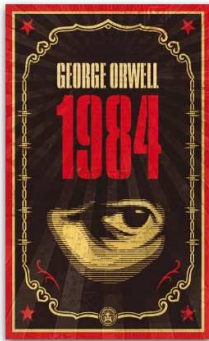
*

My son in his highchair
looks into a mirrored spoon.

Orwell in 2012 Australia

MEDIA

Fatima Measham



As word of the [national security inquiry](#) filtered through Twitter last week, one wit remarked, 'Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is meant to be a cautionary tale, not a manual'.

Not enough Australians are aware that the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Intelligence and Security (JCIS) is considering reforms of national security legislation which would fling open state access to telecommunications content. Those alarmed by the scope of the changes, such as [Electronic Frontiers Australia](#) and the [Pirate Party](#), have only until 6 August to send their [submissions](#) despite their [requests](#) for an extended deadline.

There are many areas of concern, such as expanding interception to social networking activities (Twitter and Facebook) and internet telephony (Skype), as well as lowering the threshold for offences that may trigger interception from seven years' imprisonment to possibly three.

The two most controversial items involve establishing an offence for failing to assist in the decryption of communications, and mandatory data retention for up to two years.

What do these mean?

For one thing, people may be imprisoned for failing to provide the key to encrypted data or simply refusing to give up passwords. In other words, intelligence agencies may extract evidence where they believe it resides even if they have not established what it is or even if it's there — and you could be charged for not helping. The offence presumably applies even if you are a third party. (A [similar law](#) has been in place in the UK since 2007.)

Mandatory data retention, on the other hand, compels ISPs to store telecommunications content for the prescribed two years. This means data generated even by non ASIO targets, people like you and me, would be stored so it could be mined for current and future, unspecified investigations.

These proposals, like many post-9/11 security measures, are presented as being for our good. According to JCIS chair Anthony Byrne, 'It is vital that our security laws keep pace with the rapid developments in technology.'

The inquiry discussion paper identifies challenges posed to the intelligence sector: dominance of communication via internet protocol, diversity of the telecommunications sector, and the highly variable protection mechanisms employed by people who wish to avoid detection.

The paper also lists anonymous pre-paid services, inter-carrier roaming agreements, calling cards and online subscription services as factors that 'make it necessary for agencies to seek data from multiple providers *to ascertain whether any data exists*' (emphasis mine). In addition, it suggests that a third party computer may be used to target devices without prior knowledge of the user or owner. Your computer, for instance.

These constitute a disturbing concession that our intelligence sector is not equipped to deal with the increasing sophistication of covert online activity — without resorting to questionable laws.

Data retention is problematic not least because ISPs don't have the infrastructure to retain such astronomical volumes of data. (A similar plan in the UK is estimated to cost the government nearly AUD\$4 billion over the next decade.)

The idea that our online activity, which happens to capture so much of our work, social life, personal history and creativity, could be sequestered by the state so that intelligence agencies may retrospectively trawl for evidence, should bring a chill down our spine.

This is not simply about sacrificing privacy for the sake of undefined securities. As noted on the Data Trust blog, 'nothing to hide, nothing to fear' is a myth. It does not account for data corruption, false or falsified analysis and unauthorised access. A minor error can make a victim of any one of us.

Moreover, the surveillance expansion being pursued in the UK, the US and Canada — and now being emulated by Australia — fits with recent patterns in other areas: drone 'signature strikes' that carry no burden of identification of targets; consorting laws that presume criminality by mere proximity.

In some of these cases, the expansion of powers has accompanied dilution of oversight or accountability.

It is not just that the doctrine of pre-emption is overriding many democratic values: privacy, presumption of innocence, and freedom of expression and assembly.

We know that injustice thrives wherever the state exerts power in a way that systematically reduces individuals into anodyne data.

Or worse than data, potential lawbreakers.

We should be concerned that groundwork is being laid for a future surveillance state.

Sin, spin and sex abuse in the church and military

EDITORIAL

Michael Mullins

Church leaders have a responsibility to protect the reputation of the institution of the Church. They are also custodians of a very high moral duty to protect the most vulnerable in their care, including sexual abuse victims.



It is a common criticism that they have previously given priority to looking after the reputation of the institution over the needs of sexual abuse victims, who have suffered further as a result.

On the other side, many critics are not obviously concerned about the rights of the Church's 'good people' and positive values represented by the institution.

It appears they wish to see the needs of victims addressed in isolation.

There is good reason for suggesting the needs of victims are more important than those of the institution, but it is not helpful in the long term to assign priority to one or the other. Because the sexual abuse problem is endemic, the long term common good requires a more wholistic strategy.

Last week the Australian Defence Force (ADF) was subject to similar criticism following the release of the damning DLA Piper report into sexual abuse over many years. Just as Catholic Church leaders were accused of harbouring past abusers by not reporting them to the police, media headlines [highlighted](#) the DLA Piper report's revelations that 'un-prosecuted rapists' remain in 'senior positions in the armed forces'.

This is quite significant because the ADF has always had the capacity to deal with its own through the court martial system, which allow criminal sanction. By comparison, the Church has only been able to inform civil authorities and defrock priest perpetrators.

Retired Major General Jim Molan [commented](#) at *The Drum* on Thursday on the 'not inconsequential' issue of the reputation of the ADF. However he insisted that protecting the reputation of the ADF 'must never hamper justice for victims', who are 'the first priority of action'.

It is pleasing that he puts the needs of victims ahead of the reputation of the ADF. But it is a flawed strategy to consider reputation and the rights of victims as two unrelated challenges that must be addressed separately. Increasingly it appears that we're talking about a problem that is endemic and not confined to a rogue element.

Molan explained that the ADF 'needs to remain the most respected institution in Australia, as it was in a recent survey, to attract people and funds to do its job'.

Separately, he argues, it 'can respond empathetically to each individual abuse case without accepting that this puts a stain on all the ADF and all that it does'.

Contrary to Molan's argument, we believe that it is necessary for the ADF to accept the 'stain' before it responds empathetically. The very act of accepting the stain will demonstrate the ADF's capacity for strength, honesty and justice in the way that it goes about confronting serious internal issues. This is a much more effective way of ensuring its good reputation for the long term than a slick public relations expertise, which is the common quick fix for reputational damage.

A contrite ADF that acts righteously within will always be in a better position to prosecute just wars than an organisation with an apparently good reputation that is founded on hubris or spin.

If Molan's views reflect those of the ADF leadership, the Church is ahead of the ADF, in that the Church has moved in recent years towards accepting that the sexual abuse problem is endemic and not merely the result of the behaviour of rogue priests. A major turning point came when Pope Benedict XVI [told](#) reporters in 2010 that the problem was 'the sin inside the Church'. Implicitly he was saying that acknowledging the institutional Church's sin — or stain — is the precondition for forgiveness and reparative justice for abuse victims.

If — and only if — this attitude filters down to local dioceses, the Church can expect to be able to offer justice to sexual abuse victims, and rebuild its reputation at the same time. A joint lesson for the Church and the ADF.

Ageism in the jobs market

NON-FICTION

Malcolm King

Lets go on a journey together to the online jobs site seek.com.au, wander through the bits and bytes of the virtual employment market and discover how some recruiters and their clients seek to favour youth over experience.

No longer are job advertisements dry copy, written by the paymaster or secretary. Today, recruiters are the fishermen and women of the online world.

How they skewer words, twist syntax and sweeten meaning is an artform. Their baits are numerous: salary, career, fringe benefits, bonus structure, upward progression and let us not forget the clarion call of those who like it 'dynamic', 'young' and 'funky'.

For recruiters, the world is just a spinning ball. Work is a cabaret — *Come to the cabaret.*

Go to seek.com.au. Enter under the location 'Sydney'. Make the classification 'Any Classification' and enter the keywords: 'Dynamic, Young, Funky (or Fun).' Hit the 'seek' button.

You will have before you about 24 job advertisements posted, in the main, by recruitment agencies. We could have got between 300—400 hits if we had searched only for Young and Dynamic. But I like it Funky too!

The jobs displayed all have a high tolerance for those applicants who, by self-assessment, display all three characteristics. Note how most of the jobs are in the area of media sales, fashion and IT, but they can include advertising and web design.

When I worked for DEEWR (the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations) in mature age programs, I would spend a relaxing Friday afternoon (with a cup of tea and public service regulation sultana cake) calling these recruiters.

The first call was to remind them about the Age Discrimination Act of 2004 and how advertisements should focus on the skills, competencies and capabilities of the position rather than the applicant's age.

To a young man and woman (aged between 25—30), they were the nicest, most polite people one could ever hope to talk to. They listened. They took notes. They agreed with everything I said. These were the type of people who could help me realise the full functionality of my iPhone. They knew *stuff*.

So it was with some curiosity that I would call back a week or so later to ask why they had not changed the copy on their online advertisements.

It had to do with money. The client wanted young people. The client wanted 'graduates'. The client wanted attractive young women with sales experience — they didn't want an old fogey like me reading them chapter and verse about THE LAW. Yet it was the recruitment agency who wrote the advertisement.

Occasionally a HR manager would go through the seven stages of grief: shock and denial, pain and guilt, anger and bargaining (a lot of bargaining) ending in acceptance and hope.

I could understand that. It was Friday afternoon. I always gave intractable recruiters ten seconds to think about the brand ramifications to their business and that of the client before I rang the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and Seek. I discussed calmly the potential for some nasty and negative publicity. I had no compunction about 'shopping' them to the law.

Here is why. How important is a job? I'm not talking about a career. Just a job. A job that pays the bills, feeds the kids, pays the rent, puts petrol in the car and keeps the wolf from the door. How important is dignity or self-respect? Everyone deserves that. It doesn't matter if you're 16 or 65.

Young people know this. You're fresh out of school, TAFE or university and you want a job. Any job. But the employer says you've got to have experience. You need employment history — at 17? How can you get work experience when you've been sitting at a desk learning differential equations and the works of Tim Winton for the last five years?

It's time for the recruitment industry to get real. It's time for jobs boards such as SEEK to have a quiet chat with their clients who place advertisements on their boards that are ageist and which may contravene the Age Discrimination Act.

If they don't, it's time for 5.7 million baby boomers to call the recruiters personally. Every day.