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My close-up view of America's other cowboy presidency

INTERNATIONAL

Brian Matthews

I was reading recently about a brilliant young Australian basketballer who was trying to decide whether she should accept an offer of a sports scholarship at the University of Oregon and I wanted to get in touch with her and say, 'Go! Don't hesitate.' I would write to her, I thought, as memories flooded back ...

On 20 January 1981 Ronald Reagan became the 40th President of the United States. He was no political neophyte. Though a native of Illinois, he moved to California in the 1930s and served two successful terms as governor of that state (1967-75).

But before - and even to some extent during - that successful interlude, he was much better known for his previous career in film and television. A B-grade movie actor, he came into his own as an archetypal figure of the old west, the TV host of the long running *Death Valley Days*. By the time he ran for governor, he was truly a westerner - an established Californian, a horseman, a man of action.

Along with this 'mythic western image of rugged independence and self-reliance' went a remarkable political make-over. As a young Illinoisan, Reagan had been straightforwardly a liberal Democrat but following his move to California and his experience of Hollywood's culture and political complexity, he became a hard line conservative, emphatically and vocally anti-communist, the champion of individualism and personal initiative for whom even the tepid 'socialism' of the New Deal was dangerous.

He metamorphosed into an official Republican in the 1960s and his two terms as governor powered his bid for the Republican presidential nomination which, after a couple of failed attempts, he won in 1981. He campaigned for a second term in 1984 with the slogan it was 'Morning in America' and won the largest Electoral College victory in American history.

He was well into enjoying his overwhelmingly approved second term when, unnoticed by the President, his administration or anyone outside the city of Eugene, Oregon, I arrived in the United States.

I had worked abroad several times previously, in England and Europe, but had never been to the US, had not entertained any particular desire to do so and, in any case, hadn't been invited! That changed when, encouraged to apply for a Fulbright Scholar in Residency at the University of Oregon - and following one of the more gruelling interviews I'd encountered in an interview-strewn professional life - I got it!

My new colleagues were a lively, interesting and welcoming group. On my arrival in Eugene, in dreadful weather and near midnight, I was met at the airport by Dr Glen Love from the English department, driven to my accommodation - the home of the University President then on leave - then conducted round the nearest never-closed supermarket so

I could 'stock up' in case the weather worsened.

"To some, Reagan, the B-grade actor and TV host, remained a sort of rogue president who might without warning break out of the constraints of his office."

The next evening I joined staff, their families and some students at their favourite pizza restaurant. It was then, on only my second night, that I encountered without too much surprise another dimension of my visit.

For all his demonstrable popularity, Reagan was a divisive figure. His Hollywood and TV show provenance were regarded with enduring suspicion by some, and many doubted his capacity to deal with the dangerous complexities of Cold War politics. As the weeks passed, I noticed how, among many of my colleagues and in a gradually growing group of friends and acquaintances, there was a real apprehension, a sort of contained nervousness about how things might evolve. To some, though a minority, Reagan - the B-grade actor and TV host - remained a sort of rogue president who might in some way and without warning break out of the constraints of his office.

I was meanwhile enjoying immensely my time at a truly great university among an extraordinary array of colleagues in many disciplines. Of course, I watched the deteriorating international situation with close interest and alarm. My colleagues and friends were deeply distressed by what was developing and when, on 14 April, we woke to the news that US aircraft had bombed Muammar Gaddafi's Libyan headquarters, many of them were in despair.

It's easy to say now but 'twas ever thus and much more evil things have happened to and in and because of America since then. Even in these awful times and despite the *plus ça change* moment of a possibly rogue presidency, I would encourage the young basketballer to go to Oregon because, below the turmoil of hype, anxiety, nonsense and peril that is the contemporary America pictured for us routinely, there persists a day-to-day world in which decency and enlightenment doggedly yet passionately struggle on.



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Unis share blame for profit motive funding model

INTERNATIONAL

Binoy Kampmark

The debate about education in Australia has always been a skewed one between the issue of operating costs and profits on the one hand, and that of noble accessibility on the other.

What tends to be relegated to minor argument is the notion that education is an unqualified good that should be funded by the tax payer, with minimal costs issuing to the student. The beneficial proof is always in the pudding of education.

For various reasons, then, the idea of a 'free' education in Australia has been qualified by the notion of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), which actually serves to wedge the liquid incentive of government and educational institutions on the one hand with the need for students to obtain affordable education on the other.

Even that balance is now under threat, with the pre-budget announcement by Education Minister Simon Birmingham suggesting cuts to university funding and increasing costs to student degrees are in the offing.

In the mania to attain budget surplus, the Turnbull government is effectively slashing its wrists by making education less appealing, let alone accessible. Student fees are projected to rise between \$2000 and \$3600 next year, to a total of 7.5 per cent by 2021. Repayment of HECS debts will commence at the lower threshold of \$42,000 a year.

The Group of Eight (Go8) CEO, Vicki Thomson, was unimpressed, stating in a timely reminder that education remains trapped in a 'distorted' funding model, despite being Australia's third largest service sector export that provides revenue rather than 'budget cost'. So much, it seems, for a prime minister captivated to distraction by notions of research and innovation.

Universities, however, are far from blameless in this distorted funding model. Morrison, for instance, praises and exonerates universities for doing excessive 'budget "lifting"'. The enormous elephant in the room that also jeopardises the Australian education system lies in the squeeze inflicted by the management class, notably pro-consuls who have sprouted at the top of the university hierarchy.

Vice chancellors in Australia are paid well - too well. Much of this suggests the illusion that the VC is analogous to the position of an entrepreneur, which it is distinctly not. As ever, the academy has produced a monster of sorts, straddling the academic and administrative sector without the awareness or skill of private sector adventurism.

"The profit motive should be excised altogether, with education deemed an automatic social and economic good that ultimately rewards rather than restricts."

The result, all too often, is unwarranted graft and largesse, with VCs having no incentive to adjust poor or failed policies. Indeed, the converse is true, with VCs essentially aware that holding fast to the job will guarantee a pay rise, wherever the university lies in the infamous university rankings.

All this is taking place even as the Australian university has become the exemplar of casualised, untenured labour, a point that has also been noted in other countries. While upper management bloats in satisfied aimlessness, lower and middle ranked academics engage in Sisyphean toil at the mercy of college or senate decisions, many which have little to do with pedagogy or research.

In 2012, the *Australian* published a list showing that the number of students, or size of the university, had little to do with the salary package. Steven Schwartz, for instance, netted \$1,185,000 in 2012 at Macquarie University, with 37,000 students, while Ian Goulter of the CSU came in at number 37 with a more modest \$300,000, covering a student body of 37,800.

In 2015, Michael Spence of the University of Sydney had raced to the top of the tree with generous pay rises - up \$220,000 from 2014 to sit at \$1.385 million. Professor Greg Craven of the Australian Catholic University meanwhile saw his salary swell from \$739,000 in 2010 to \$1.355 million in 2015.

None of this even considers the growth and mutations that have taken place at the top of the tertiary tree, with a rampant proliferation of privileged underlings, for instance pro-vice chancellors, who act as overly paid courtiers in an administrative castle.

Their salaries could account for several lecturers on an ongoing basis across departments. While no one should ever begrudge the formal and substantive head of a university a decent package, to use managerial speak, the astronomical costs of funding the bloated hierarchy has become apparent.

Governments are proving less receptive to modern university environments, and while Birmingham and his colleagues may be a touch disingenuous in the way they go about making suggestions about how a university should financially order itself, a balance is needed. Transparency and accountability are far from dirty words in that pursuit.

In its broader sense, the profit motive should be excised altogether, with education deemed an automatic social and economic good that ultimately rewards rather than restricts. With Australia having some of the world's highest rates of taxation, lacking a free education system in its truest sense is a dire state of affairs indeed, proving more punishing than rewarding.



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Cry if you want to as mandatory detention turns 25

AUSTRALIA

Kerry Murphy

Friday 5 May is the 25th birthday of the introduction of mandatory detention in Australia by the Keating government. It is by no means a 'happy birthday'. Rather it is a sombre reminder of how control, power and political vilification can be used for political ends.

Mandatory detention was initially described by the then Labor Minister Gerry Hand as an 'interim' measure. One wonders how long a medium or long term measure would be! The change was introduced into parliament at 4.06pm, and voted through by the evening.

There was a hearing scheduled for two days later in the Federal Court seeking the release of some Cambodian asylum seekers from Port Hedland detention centre into the community. One of the aims of the change of 5 May was to stifle the chances of such a release.

Minister Hand stated: 'I now wish to foreshadow major government amendments to the bill ... The government is conscious of the extraordinary nature of the measures which will be implemented by the amendment aimed at boat people. I believe it is crucial that all persons who come to Australia without prior authorisation not be released into the community.'

'Their release would undermine the government's strategy for determining their refugee status or entry claims. Indeed, I believe it is vital to Australia that this be prevented as far as possible. The government is determined that a clear signal be sent that migration to Australia may not be achieved by simply arriving in this country and expecting to be allowed into the community.'

In the next 25 years, we have seen the policy unsuccessfully challenged in the High Court, which is clearly troubled by it, and found to be arbitrary detention by the UN Committee for Human Rights. Yet it remains in place, and extended to offshore centres in Nauru and Manus Island. It is paid for entirely by the Australian government, yet we are told that responsibility for those detained in those offshore centres is a sovereign issue for the governments there.

Another development during the past quarter-century of mandatory detention has been the increased use of statutory bars to prevent asylum seekers from lodging any application, unless the Minister personally intervenes (literally personally) to permit it.

This statutory bar was first introduced by Minister Ruddock in 2001 with the creation of 'excised offshore places' such as Christmas Island, which meant these territories were 'outside' the migration zone for the purposes of lodging applications. At the time, a question was asked in parliament about whether Tasmania could be 'excised'. The Minister replied that that was not intended.

"All this to prevent 'those who've come across the seas' from sharing in the 'boundless plains' extolled by our national anthem."

Prime Minister Gillard managed to excise the whole country in June 2013 with the definition of 'unauthorised maritime arrival' (UMA) as a person arriving by boat without a visa, who was thereby excluded from lodging any visa application unless the statutory bar was lifted.

There are now more sections in the Migration Act dealing with statutory bars - mainly directed at asylum seekers - than the total number of sections in the whole of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901. More recently, Minister Dutton tried to extend the ban on applications to the lifetime of the asylum seeker, even if they became resettled elsewhere, such as in the US. The bill remains in parliament, presumably waiting for a more malleable Senate.

Another development has been the increased vilification of asylum seekers in the political arena. This too has been a bipartisan effort. Prime Minister Hawke was interviewed in 1990 by Jana Wendt and stated that 'there is obviously a combination of economic refugeeism ... People saying they don't like a particular regime or they don't like their economic circumstances, therefore they're going to pull up stumps, get in a boat and lob in Australia. Well that's not on ... We're not going to allow people just to jump that queue by saying we'll jump into a boat, here we are, bugger the people who've been around the world.'

The 'refugee queue myth' goes back before Hawke, but it persists. Under Ruddock and especially Minister Morrison it morphed into the 'good refugees / bad refugees' dichotomy. 'Good refugees' are those Australia handpicks, excluding those with medical issues. 'Bad refugees' are those who arrive here directly and seek asylum. Not only are they 'queue jumpers', but now there is a connotation of criminality, with the insistence of Morrison and Dutton to refer to 'unauthorised maritime arrivals' as 'illegal maritime arrivals'.

The term 'illegal' is only in the Migration Act to refer to the term previously used before 1 September 1992 for 'unlawful non-citizens'. Yet the insistence on referring to asylum seekers as 'illegal' runs through the Department of Immigration and is on the website, despite the fact the term is not correct. Maybe they should undergo English tests themselves to check their ability to pronounce the word 'unlawful' before insisting on English tests for prospective citizens.

The last 25 years have seen significant increases in unreviewable government power, exercised in ways which are not transparent or are subject to limited review. To prevent disclosure of abuses, contractors or short term employees, including medical staff, are made to sign agreements preventing disclosure of information that in other contexts would fall under the category of mandatory reporting, such as alleged abuse of minors. All this to prevent 'those who've come across the seas' from sharing in the 'boundless plains' extolled by our national anthem.

"This is an unhappy birthday indeed. But the abuse of power and political point-scoring

inherent in the regime of mandatory detention can and should be challenged."

A significant development in the last 25 years has been the ongoing attempts to stifle and eliminate judicial review. A major change was the introduction in 2001 of the 'privative clause', which stated there was no judicial review at all. This was read down by the High Court a few years later. More recently, in 2014 we saw the introduction of very limited review for boat arrivals in the Immigration Assessment Authority (IAA). The IAA does not provide full merits review, and has been designed to reduce the chances of legal errors, not by improving the system, but by taking away significant procedural fairness provisions and the right to a hearing on review.

As recently as this week, on 3 May the High Court unanimously held that it is lawful to hold in detention a mother and daughter brought from Nauru for medical treatment. They arrived from Nauru on 1 November 2014 and were detained until 16 December 2016 when they were released into a specified residence, technically still detention, but not in a detention centre. The court noted that the law required they be detained until they could be removed from Australia, regardless of how long that might take.

So this is an unhappy birthday. But the abuse of power and political point-scoring inherent in the regime of mandatory detention can and should be challenged. For as Chief Justice Brennan said in a speech in 1998, 'An important check on possible misuse of executive power - indeed, on the exercise of any power - is publicity. Misuse of power flourishes in the dark; it cannot survive the glare of publicity.'



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Businesses need to get serious about gender diversity

AUSTRALIA

Neve Mahoney

Recently, the Australian Human Rights Commission came under scrutiny after it was reported that government contractors would be required to reach a 40 per cent female workforce quota, with contractors possibly losing out on contracts if they didn't reach the 40/40/20 standard.

Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins sent out a statement clarifying the issue. The recommendation was a target, not a mandatory quota. Rather than disqualifying contractors, it 'recommended that the Commonwealth government should become a model industry in improving the participation of women in the workforce'.

While it seems this was mostly a misunderstanding, it's interesting how drastic a reaction the mere suggestion of a quota received. The *Daily Telegraph* called quotas 'draconian' and Tony Abbot said on 2GB they would be 'politically correct rubbish' and 'anti-men'.

Whether to have targets or quotas is a hard question to answer. Quotas, which are enforceable and mandatory, have been employed by several European countries to great effect. But in Australia companies are encouraged to set themselves targets, which are optional.

Businesses are moving towards targets at a glacial pace, with women in senior executive roles increasing by 2 per cent per annum since 2012. When fewer large companies are run by women than men named John, Peter and David, quotas need to be seriously considered.

Arguments against quotas seem to boil down to that they will cause worthy men to be passed over and create resentment against female workers who are only 'filling quotas'. So targets versus quotas aside, the root of this problem is that people still seem to culturally believe that setting these types of goals is somehow 'reverse sexism'.

On *The Project*, Steve Price repeated the same argument against gender quotas and targets we've all heard before: 'You've got to hire the best person for the job'. This is rooted in patriarchal thinking, as it accepts the status quo as normal rather than acknowledging that in job hiring, meritocracy doesn't always apply. Subconscious bias plays a role in whether a candidate is hired or not.

In a study conducted by Corinne Moss-Racusin in 2012, almost identical resumes for a role of a lab technician were sent out to scientists to assess. The only difference? One had John at the top and the other had Jennifer. Despite having the exact same qualifications, Jennifer was viewed as less competent.

"It's not enough to pay lip service to diversity. Reflecting the values of diversity is just as

important as having a diverse staff."

What's more, the merit argument generally rests on the line of thinking that under-qualified women take jobs from men, which is untrue. More Australian women are graduating with university degrees than men and tend to perform better academically. In Norway, where quotas were introduced in 2008, a 2016 OECD survey showed that 'on average, female board members have higher educational qualifications than their male colleagues'. In France, there was an ASPA [study](#) comparing male to female politicians after parity laws were introduced. The study found that while without the parity laws women wouldn't have overcome the sexist barrier to entry, they were just as good at the job as men.

Despite what some might think, having diversity in the workplace benefits employees and businesses. A Catalyst [study](#) found Fortune 500 companies with more women board directors perform better financially. Being in diverse groups breaks down 'groupthink', making us [smarter](#) and better problem solvers. A minimum of three women on a board seems to be ideal, taking away the stigma of tokenism and ensuring that the burden of voicing the 'diverse' perspective isn't placed on one or two employees.

It's not enough to pay lip service to diversity. Reflecting the values of diversity is just as important as having a diverse staff. Businesses shouldn't accept that women just aren't there when the application pool keeps coming up with the same demographic. They should reach out to other websites, reevaluate interview questions for biases and diversify recruiters. Have flexible working hours and paid maternity leave. Include women in mentorship and professional development opportunities.

Companies need to start getting serious about hiring women and promoting them through the pipeline to higher managerial roles. As long as it is up to businesses to create a diverse workplace, they need to put in the effort. Whether we stick with targets or wind up legislating quotas, men need to acknowledge that the best person for a position will not always look like they do.

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Beyond fake news lies the fog of fake figures

ECONOMICS

David James

The debate over fake news is no doubt amusing to any attentive journalist capable of sifting evidence. Claiming that much of the news is fake is a little like discovering that water is wet.

It has long been the case that the forces arrayed against the media have been overwhelming, and, with journalistic ranks thinning, there is less and less resistance to spin, disinformation and propaganda. George Orwell's vision in *1984* is beginning to look like old news.

It is not just fake news that is the problem. Increasingly, we live in a world of fake figures, especially of the financial type. There is a cliché in management that 'what gets measured gets done'. In public discourse that might be translated to 'what gets measured is considered real'.

A little thought shows this to be nonsense. If someone claimed that the beauty of Mozart is 145.3 per cent greater than Brahms, it would obviously be ridiculous. But it does not mean such beauty does not exist. It just means that it is not accessible to quantitative measurement.

To push this measurement bias, a distinction is often made between 'anecdotal' and 'quantitative' claims. It is true that stories are necessarily partial. But that does not mean that quantitative measures are the solution. Often, they have even greater problems.

One obvious fake figure is gross domestic product, or GDP, which is taken as a measure of national wellbeing. In fact, it is just a measure of transactions. If money changes hands because something disastrous happens then GDP will rise. The recent tsunami in Japan, for example, led to a rise in that country's GDP. Yet it was hardly an indicator of national wellbeing.

GDP is not even a proper measure of production. As the economist Michael Hudson has noted finance, insurance and real estate do not produce anything; they are parasitical. If they are taken out of GDP it shows most developed economies withering. This is not a new insight; Robert F Kennedy pointed out decades ago that GDP measures 'everything except that which is worthwhile'.

Alternative quantitative measures of national wellbeing rarely convince. For example the Peace Index is superficially impressive, but does not withstand much scrutiny. It is based on normalisation of national statistics, which must be considered a gigantic leap of faith given the poor quality of number collection, especially in poorer countries.

"Any quantitative measurement of human activity often ends up being a precise

calculation of nothing at all."

It suffers from the vice of positivism: the belief that something is only real if it can be measured. A related intellectual trap is nominalism: the belief that naming something makes it real. Use a word like 'peace' often enough and eventually it will seem that it has an independent existence. The next step is to make peace into a 'thing' that can be examined in isolation: an intellectual error known as reification.

It is all illusion. Even if one accepts that there is a measure of peaceful and non-peaceful behaviour, it is only behaviour. Peace within a person, and a society, has at least three elements: behaviour, intentions and self-awareness. The first may be roughly measurable, but the second is subjective and unknown and the third is notoriously difficult even to define (especially as people can be aware of any measure you make of them).

The subjective simply cannot be measured objectively, and the subjective is at least as important to peace, especially the intentions of those who control today's weaponry - Donald Trump's and Kim Jong-un's current intentions, which can only be known by themselves, being a case in point.

Quantitative measures, and the lists created from them, make for attractive media fodder by reducing national comparisons to the level of a sporting contest. But any quantitative measurement of human activity often ends up being a precise calculation of nothing at all (at least GDP is a measure of something).

When measurable differences are stark enough, quantitative measures can inform. For example, the fact that America has about 800 foreign bases when Russia and China only have a handful can be considered an indicator of those countries' peaceful intent. That America spends almost as much on its military as the rest of the world combined might also be considered revealing.

But too often quantification is as much a trap as a way of revealing the truth. When it comes to figures, it is well to assume that many, if not most, have at least an element of fakery.



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Hardline on soft drink

CREATIVE

Isabella Fels

In my late 20s when I became seriously unwell and diagnosed with schizophrenia, Coca-Cola was like an ever flowing fountain of happiness for me. How I loved sipping it. I would even quickly down it with my meds. I could feel life getting better and speeding up. Having Coke was magic.

There have been plenty of magic moments with Coke throughout my life. From taking it into uni lecture theatres and finding everything much more interesting, to socialising at parties and at all types of special celebrations. I took to the can and shook it even more vigorously with the onset of my mental illness.

I remember even the psychiatric nurses buying it for me when I wasn't allowed out of the locked ward. Them getting me a drink from the outside world really made my day and finally got me out of my cage. I could really engage with people whenever I had the security of a can of Coke in my hands.

Drinking fizzy drinks has sure made a big difference to my life. Although I've spent a fortune on them I've enjoyed every second of drinking them until I can slurp or burp no more. I will happily drink cans one after another, even if the drink is flat or lukewarm. With each swig I can feel myself becoming much more bubbly and alive. With each zap of sugar that enters my body I feel on a real high.

But lately, with all the publicity surrounding the dangers of drinking fizzy, sugary soft drinks, such as obesity and diabetes, I am trying to cut down on my Coke habit. It is not easy trying to fight an almost lifelong addiction. I try to justify my compulsion to drink sugary soft drinks by believing they taste great. I have to keep telling myself over and over again how bad they are for me.

Sugar loaded drinks are now one of the major culprits, along with quick takeaways and lack of exercise, as to why 28 per cent of Australians are obese, as found in a recent report by the Grattan Institute. Worse things have been associated with soft drinks, too, such as heart disease and metabolic syndrome. The report called for a sugary drink tax.

It is an awful fight between my sense of pleasure and my general health to put a lid on all these drinks and even pour them down the sink. I keep trying to justify to myself why I need them. I don't drink beer, I don't smoke, I have never taken illicit drugs. In many ways I am totally clean. So what's the harm in opening up a friendly fizzy drink every now and then?

"As I feel these drinks swimming in my stomach I keep telling myself about all the intestinal damage they can do."

However I know deep down that these drinks which enter my body are a spreading poison. The more serious and voluminous the literature gets about the harmful effects of soft drinks the more I know I have to beat this habit. This is hard given the great exultation that these drinks give me.

As I feel all these soft drinks swimming in my stomach I keep telling myself about all the intestinal damage they can do. I wouldn't be surprised if there was a growing hole in my stomach as well as holes in all my teeth. I don't want to be frail and toothless before my time. I need to take a long hard look at my disastrous relationship with soft drinks. It's time to call it quits.



Isabella Fels is a Melbourne poet and writer. She has been published in various publications including *Positive Words*, *The Big Issue* and *The Record*.

Reading, writing, and stifling homeschool regulations

EDUCATION

Kate Moriarty

It's time I owned up. You saw me at the supermarket with my small band of school-age children. 'Pupil free day?' you chirped. I half-nodded and kept moving. At the barbecue, you asked if my kids went to private or state school. 'A small private school,' I murmured, then changed the subject.

The truth is I homeschool. I don't know why I didn't tell you earlier. I love homeschooling. But I also love it when people mistake me for a normal person.

I never meant to homeschool. It just sort of happened. My then eight-year-old daughter was in a situation at school that was causing her constant anxiety. For months, I tried working with her teachers, but things only became much worse.

I decided to homeschool for one year, to give my daughter a chance to recover and to build her confidence. I never expected to fall in love with the lifestyle. Twelve months later, I gave in to my younger son's entreaties and began homeschooling him as well - just for one more year.

Homeschooling has given our family the gifts of time and togetherness. We start our day with breakfast and chores, then traipse out the door for a bike ride. After this, we sit around the table for a few hours, working together or separately. All up, we're usually done with our book work by lunch time.

The afternoon is for cooking, reading, climbing trees, gardening, playing music, knitting, researching topics of interest, and jumping on the trampoline. Later in the day, they might go to scouts, swimming lessons, dinner with grandparents, sports, or an after-school kids club. On Mondays, we meet with other homeschooling families to learn subjects that work well in a group setting, like science, art and dance.

People often ask about assessment. How do I know if my children are up to standard? When I first started, this worried me too. After all, school teachers work hard to keep track of their students' progress. But, of course, school teachers have 30 new children each year. Keeping track of a small group of students with whom you live, and in whom you are intensely interested, is second nature.

There's no need for tests and portfolios. I already know my nine-year-old has a sharp mind for maths and devours books like a maniac, but needs encouragement to express himself in writing. I'm already planning fine-motor activities for my five-year-old, who has plenty to write about, but needs help forming her letters.

"There is no evidence to support claims that homeschooled students are 'at risk'. If the government wanted to stop children from falling through the cracks, they should pour

resources into the mainstream education system where this is actually a problem."

Across Australia, it's estimated that more than 15,000 families homeschool. And that number is steadily growing. Regulations differ greatly between states. In NSW and Queensland, where registration is a complicated process, many homeschoolers opt out. Indeed, it's been estimated that as many as 85 per cent of homeschooling families in Queensland remain unregistered.

In Victoria, the registration process is simple and straightforward. It is not surprising, then, that Victoria has the highest number of registered homeschoolers. But this may soon change. Under the proposed regulations, new homeschoolers would be required to submit a comprehensive full-year's plan. Homeschooling would be prohibited until this plan is approved, with a \$70 fine imposed for each day of unauthorised homeschooling.

These changes are needlessly bureaucratic and aggressively punitive. While a family might set long term goals for their homeschool curriculum, they would be ill-advised to plan the entire year in detail. School teachers are not expected to do this: it does not account for the changing needs of the students. These regulations would only result in an increased workload for conscientious parents, while forcing others underground.

It is worth noting that the Home Education Network (HEN) went to great lengths to determine what regulations would best serve the homeschooling community. HEN, however, was never consulted by the government when drafting this legislation. Indeed, it is unclear whether any homeschoolers were consulted.

And it's unclear what the point of all this red tape is. Studies conducted in the US have shown that government control over homeschooling has no impact on performance. Moreover, homeschoolers have been shown in many studies to consistently outperform their peers. For whatever reason, on the whole, homeschoolers tend to thrive. There is simply no evidence to support claims that homeschooled students are an 'at risk' group. If the government wanted to stop children from falling through the cracks, they should pour resources into the mainstream education system where this is actually a problem.

This is not some 'no child left behind' policy. This is a bid to discourage families from homeschooling. And this anti-homeschool bias is not unique to Victoria. In 2014, the NSW government launched a parliamentary inquiry into homeschooling. Before publication, over 100 paragraphs worth of submissions, containing many reports of school failure and homeschooling success, were curiously omitted.

Homeschooling parents are not afraid of accountability, but we object to a regulation that creates unnecessary work that helps nobody and achieves nothing. We object to a regulation created without consultation. Above all, we object to the insinuation that parents are dangerous and untrustworthy.

These days, my daughter attends secondary school and ran the gamut of exams and interviews to get into the advanced class. She has transformed into a confident, articulate young woman with a strong sense of self and a wicked sense of humour. She very quickly made friends and remains a self-motivated learner.

It's my fourth year of homeschooling. I now have three children in my small private

school. We still take it one year at a time, but, so far, each year is better than the last.

Kate Moriarty is a freelance writer. She writes the 'Home Truths' column at *Australian Catholics* and blogs at [Laptop on the Ironing Board](#).

Cartoon by Chris Johnston

Who was that luckless politician?

CREATIVE

Geoff Page

Selected poems

Who was ... ?

Who was that luckless politician,
federal, I think,

gone now from so many
memories, including mine?

Male, a sort of suited fledgling,
older maybe than he looked,

the guy who feelingly achieved,
while reaching for the aphoristic

wisdom of his people,
the verbal train-wreck we remember

so much better than than the 'issue'

or his features as they pleaded

with the swooping of a lens:

I'm torn between two places and a

hard rock?

Clearly, it's all there on Google

but wouldn't that be cheating?

Ulrich and the Doc

Ulrich Ellis (1904-1981)

Earle Page (1880-1961)

Ulrich and the Doc, my grandpa,
back there in the 1920s,
are not unlike the country then,
always on the move.

Ulrich, twenty-four years younger,
parliamentary secretary
and general factotum,
doesn't stint on admiration
and both are more than happy
working at an empire's edge.

The future's made of enterprise,
power poles, dams and rail.
Scrub is to be cut and cleared
and dairy farms established.
The Great War is an echo
but neither is discouraged
although the Doctor's several months
of surgery on the Somme
must surely leave a shadow.
Ulrich keeps a notebook
(he's been a journalist as well)
absorbing all his boss throws off,
the 'picturesque phrase',
the 'homely illustration'
then types it all up later with
some extras of his own.
The Doctor is, to Ulrich,
a sort of 'Marco Polo',
so often are they on the road.
For both of them the city streets
are seriously 'tram-infested'.
And always they are undeterred
even by those tracks
'the mailman himself refuses to tackle'.
Their trips are packed with hard-work heroes
and heroines, as well.

Mrs Smith, for instance,
up at Taylors Arm,
who stays on when her husband
disappears with no word spoken
one morning from his soldier's block
and raises five young children on her own.
She clears and ploughs and ringbarks,
'carries cream on packhorses
seven miles through scrub';
persuades a sister out from London
to help her with the plough.
Her offspring too will prove to have
'manners that would grace
the best of houses'. Ulrich and the Doc
inside an early Chevrolet
are chugging up the mountain gravel
then out across the blacksoil plains.
Once, they reach the western coast,
courtesy the Trans-Australian,
where Doc, the nation's treasurer,
addresses farmers' meetings,
open-air or weatherboard,
'everyone with ... hats on;
the temperature over 85'.
And thus the Country Party thrives.
'Circumstances,' Ulrich notes,

'rarely allowed me to travel
ahead of the Doctor. Where he went,
there went I - usually a few
paces behind him, and at the trot.'
The legacies of pioneers
become a favoured pit-stop:
Thomas Sutcliffe Mort,
founder of Bodalla and
of frozen beef to Britain;
Lord John Forrest too
who helped to start the railway
they've spent the last three nights on;
the engineer, C.Y. O'Connor,
who famously designed
and oversaw for seven years
the pipeline to Kalgoorlie
then shot himself on horseback
one morning in the surf
('succumbing to the darts of pygmies,'
as Ulrich feelingly records);
Sir Richard Spencer also,
many years before,
governor at Albany,
'practical dreamer' (not unlike
the Doc perhaps) 'without whose type
there'd be no British Empire'.

At Heifer Station on the Clarence
Ulrich meets the Doctor's eldest,
the son who would be killed by lightning
just a few years later,
at that time not quite twenty
and 'lord' of all the Doctor's 'fine estates'
which have no homestead yet.
'Born for the saddle,' Ulrich adds.
admiringly, since he himself
is somewhat undistinguished in the stirrups.

The Picnic Races at Baryulgil
see the Doc's son mount
(and stay aboard) a 'powerful horse ...
of which most ... riders, big and small,
black and white, fought shy.'
Despite my taste for doubt and all
my 'leftwards disposition'
I'm more than half-inclined to think
that somewhere in a gap of weather
Ulrich and the Doc
are out there driving still.

Brown paper covers

Was I nine or was I ten
when I first mustered all my books,
fifteen of them perhaps or twenty,

and covered them with coarse brown paper
we used to get the bread and meat in?
Mostly they were gifts from mum

or kindly relatives at Christmas.
Robinson Crusoe, Treasure Island,
Westward Ho! and Kidnapped plus

some other tales less well recalled.
I lined them up along a shelf
and numbered them in blue-black ink.

This way they would be preserved -
and unified, I'll now concede.
Those covers with their palms and pirate

ships were frivolous, it seemed, back then.
We children were a unit too.
My mother, who'd survived the thirties

and (at a distance) World War II,
was always strong on preservation.

I liked the way they numbered off

like members of a small platoon
and yet, despite my nib and ink,
and then a lifetime of collecting,

none of them is with me now.

Were they, like my well-boiled shirts,
handed to less bookish brothers

who'd idly peel away the covers
admitting air and entropy
while I was at that upland school?

But maybe that's a little harsh.

Retrieved in dreams, my mother (gone
at ninety-two) could answer that

if memories are restored up there.

All I'm left with is the need
to organise, align, preserve;

to unify and find a pattern -
recalling how, at nine or ten,
unaware yet serious,

I'd found a life's intent.

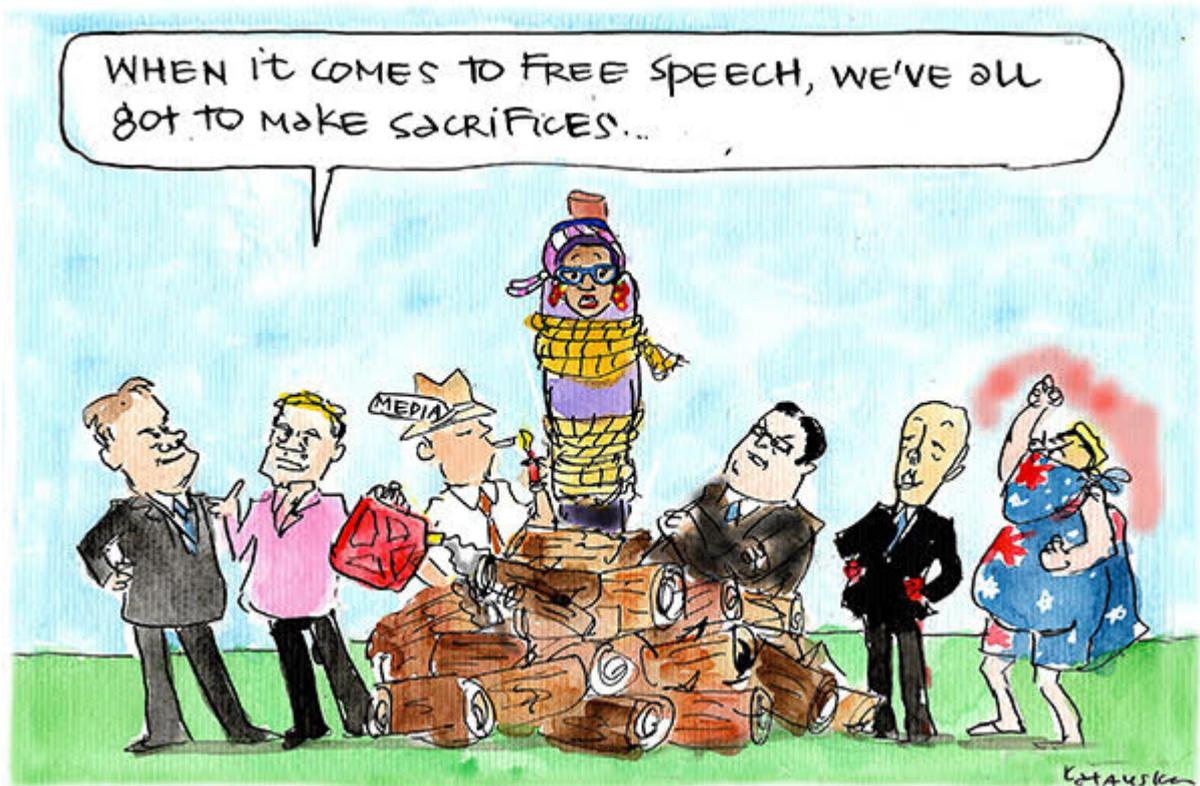


Geoff Page is based in Canberra and has published 22 collections of poetry as well as two novels and five verse novels. His recent books include *Gods and Uncles* and *PLEVNA: A Verse Biography*. He also edited *The Best Australian Poems 2014* and *The Best Australian Poems 2015*.

What the Anzacs fought for

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas



Fiona Katauskas' work has also appeared in ABC's *The Drum*, *New Matilda*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Financial Review* and Scribe's Best Australian political cartoon anthologies.

Identity on the line in the fallout over Anzac free speech

MEDIA

Rohan Salmond

It feels like no public holiday is complete without its subsequent media scandal. Anzac Day is particularly fraught, considering the sensitivities around the day.

This year the scandal revolves around a Facebook post by Yassmin Abdel-Magied (pictured), a commentator and host of ABC program *Australia Wide*. It read: 'LEST. WE. FORGET. (Manus, Nauru, Syria, Palestine ...)'

Even though the post was quickly withdrawn and an apology issued, the backlash has lasted more than four days. It was enough to warrant a front page story on *The Daily Telegraph*, a call for Abdel-Magied's dismissal by the deputy prime minister and public repudiations by half a dozen government front benchers and several other politicians, including Pauline Hanson.

It's ironic that the very politicians and commentators who constantly rail against political correctness are now apoplectic about a woman being politically incorrect. Free speech warriors like George Christensen are, seemingly without irony, calling for her to be silenced.

The terrifying fury of the reaction is enough to make anybody shy away from anything but total patriotic observance of the day. Anything less, such as Abdel-Magied's post, is seen as 'deeply reprehensible' showing 'no love for Australia whatsoever'.

Yassmin Abdel-Magied was free to make that Facebook post on Anzac Day, and politicians and columnists are free to express their displeasure. She apologised and withdrew the post. Nobody was arrested, charged or even sued, and so far nobody has lost their job or their platform to speak in future. That's what free speech is.

Setting aside the fact that Manus and Nauru are not wholly separate issues from Australian military activity - many of those held in these facilities are from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria - I'm willing to accept Mitch Fifield's assertion that 'Anzac Day is reserved as an occasion to honour the service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform'.

At its core, Abdel-Magied's post was lamenting violence done to innocent people in many parts of the world. The execution was inelegant, but given that Anzac Day is partially about the horror of violence and war, it's a sentiment not entirely incompatible with the day.

"The campaign to remove Abdel-Magied from the national broadcaster and question her Australianness is a move to control what an Australian looks and sounds like."

Does talking about harm done to others on a day designed to make us remember these things really constitute 'making political mileage' thereby 'demeaning our war heroes'? It's up for debate, but it doesn't seem like those denouncing Abdel-Magied want any discussion at all.

It's a problem because the criticism directed at Abdel-Magied isn't just at her speech, it targets her very identity as an Australian citizen. The *Telegraph* article dwells on Abdel-Magied's Muslim faith at length, and the front page depicts her throwing what could be interpreted as a 'gang sign' drawing special attention to it with the headline 'TWO FINGER SALUTE' (incidentally, she is showing three fingers). It doesn't matter that she was the 2015 Queensland Young Australian of the Year or has been sent overseas by the government to promote our country. To the *Daily Telegraph* she is distinctly 'un-Australian' and so is ABC for continuing to employ her.

It's not that criticising Abdel-Magied's post is inappropriate, it's that the pushback is so overwhelming it dampens the freedom of other people like her to explore what Anzac Day means in a public forum. Who would attempt to critique our Anzac observance now if it means having their identity called into question?

This is significant because this year the government took the opportunity to leverage (dare I say, 'make political mileage from') Anzac Day to announce a new 'values test' as part of the citizenship requirements. So, naturally we ask, what are Australian values?

The campaign to remove Abdel-Magied from the national broadcaster and question her Australianness is a move to control what an Australian looks and sounds like. It co-opts the discussion about shared values by narrowing what is possible. It shrinks the Australian national soul if we are dictated to by the government, or by Pauline Hanson, or by the *Daily Telegraph* about what is Australian and what isn't.

At this point, Yassmin Abdel-Magied's initial post is irrelevant - the reaction is completely out of proportion to what happened. It's become a proxy for what kind of person is allowed to participate in the discourse about Anzac Day and Australian values. There is concern among social conservatives that they are being pushed out of public discourse on the basis of their politics, religion and identity. If we take their concerns seriously, then their outrage over one Facebook post by a young Muslim woman of colour appears even more farcical.

Abdel-Magied represents a young, politically engaged generation of Australians who don't look and sound like the older media and political establishment which is now denouncing her. If she is excluded because she is 'un-Australian', then Australia is running the risk of becoming an exclusive club indeed.

Rohan Salmond is a freelance journalist. He tweets at @RJSalmond and is the producer of Godbeat, a podcast about religion journalism.

Changi war remembrance asks how we keep peace today

AUSTRALIA

Francine Crimmins

We chug along a freshly surfaced freeway; metres of sharp barbed wire fences crowd the roadside. The sun today feels like it's cutting through my skin and it's terribly hot - like someone is boiling water and I can't find a window to open.

Luckily for me, this air-conditioned bus offers a temporary sanctuary from the tropical temperatures outside. It's hard to believe these are the same temperatures experienced by inmates over 70 years ago on this site.

Changi prison today is only used for its original purpose; a home to those who have been charged for breaking the Singaporean law.

This is a country which still practices capital punishment and where caning is still court ordered for over 30 offences. Peace and order, like in any country, is an ongoing process by citizens and government. Changi memorial today reminds visitors that peace time is not a gift, but something we must be aware of if we want to avoid wars.

It's been 75 years since the Japanese invasion of Singapore and the opening of the Changi internment camp on these grounds now shared by the modern prison. Singapore today is a wealthy, clean and ordered city with steady growth and low crime rates. It's hard to believe less than a century ago it was still a colony of Great Britain, a past shared by many developing countries today.

Changi was named after a tree of the same name which means 'The Time Tree'. Legend has it that the tree, which was 76 metres tall, was put onto maps from 1888 and became a prominent landmark because of its height. During WWII the tree was cut down to stop the Japanese from being able to use it as a vantage point, but the tree falling may have been an omen to the falling of Singapore itself.

Folklore aside, the connection between Changi and time rings true to the lasting memory of the community which was formed between its walls during the three and a half years of occupation. The museum stands in memory to the thousands who suffered here and the lives they built while interned. It is their will to live, not their suffering, which is recreated through the countless wartime artworks and outdoor chapel which resembles the original one inmates worshiped in.

In the entrance, the artwork of Australian Ray Parkin is printed onto a white wall in dark black ink. In *Two Malarias and a Cholera* (pictured) Parkin depicts two POWs suffering malaria helping a sicker man with Cholera as they constructed a railway. It stands as a reminder of there being no good in war and at the same time, good things happening despite the evil in war.

"It was a place where, despite the time in history, differences had to be put aside for a

common goal - to stay alive and in good spirit."

Of the inmates processed through Changi, over 62,000 were sent to work on the Thai-Burmese railway. Many suffered hunger, physical abuse and tropical diseases. Parkin's own war experiences are mirrored in his artworks now scattered around the memorial in Singapore. They don't leave an impression of hatred towards the Japanese despite the pain of the men in the images. Instead there's a tone of personal spirit being more important than harbouring the same hatred towards enemies.

The experiences in Changi were not just Australian, but also Indian, Dutch, American, English, New Zealander and Singaporean. While the imprisonment of armed forces was unjust and painful, over 3000 civilian men shared the same fate including 400 women and 66 children. It was a place where, despite the time in history, differences had to be put aside for a common goal - to stay alive and in good spirit.

'It is very important that we do not take peace for granted - that we do not assume that there will always be harmony; that there will be no more war; that there's no need to defend ourselves.' These words mark a wreath adorned with delicate white flowers. They were spoken by George Yeo, the Singaporean Minister for Trade and Industry 2001.

It is not often that we consider peace as something we must constantly work for. Often it is portrayed as something which can be achieved by generations gone by and then passed down to us. Changi reminds us 75 years on, we shouldn't become complacent in our memory of war because it might cause us to lose sight of how we keep peace today.

Francine Crimmins is studying a double degree of Journalism and Creative Intelligence & Innovation at the University of Technology Sydney. She is on twitter as @frankiecrimmins. Francine is the recipient of *Eureka Street's* Margaret Dooley Fellowship for Young Writers.

Why we will never give up flying

ENVIRONMENT

Greg Foyster

I haven't flown for six years. I didn't feel a pressing need to travel, but most of all I didn't want to make such an enormous contribution to climate change. A return flight from Melbourne to London pumps about 1.8 tonnes of carbon pollution into the atmosphere, wiping out other efforts to reduce emissions at home.

For a roving freelance journalist, it was a principled but ridiculous stance. I once spent two days on buses between Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney just to conduct a few face-to-face interviews. My most impractical assignment was researching the Queensland sugar industry - two days on a train, then a taxi into the cane fields around Bundaberg.

But now here I am on a Jetstar flight to Sydney for a climate change conference. As the plane takes off, I squirm with a sense of hypocrisy: I've broken my vow for the same reason I made it.

Returning to something after a long absence brings fresh insight, so I spend the entire trip pondering why we fly, and why it's so hard to give up. The answers are less obvious than they first appear.

There's the convenience, of course. We slingshot ourselves from one place to another in order to get there more quickly.

But even that's more complicated than it seems. Once everyone has access to the same conveniences, they congeal into cultural norms. You're expected to fly at a moment's notice for work or a family crisis, and refusing to do so can leave you unemployed or ostracised. This social and cultural pressure is rarely acknowledged.

Watching paddocks pass underneath as the plane crosses northern Victoria, I can think of another compelling reason we fly. The status. Flying makes us feel important, as the language we use to talk about it reveals.

Cognitive linguist George Lakoff argues that we think in terms of metaphors. By metaphor he doesn't mean rhetorical flourishes that catch our eye because they are unusual or poetic. He means phrases so familiar we don't notice them.

"One of the reasons sustainability lacks appeal is it's described as a *down* concept. We're asked to *reduce* our emissions or live a *low*-impact lifestyle ... Refusing to fly takes this heresy to its extreme: here is someone literally renouncing the *high-life*."

His book *Metaphors We Live By* mentions the orientational metaphor up-down. We use these concepts with remarkable consistency. For example, happy is *up* and sad is *down*.

So we say 'that *boosted* my spirits', 'you give me a *lift*', 'he's feeling *low*' or 'his spirits *sank*'.

Virtue is *up* and depravity is *down*: she has *high* standards, he is an *upstanding* citizen, that was a *low* trick, don't be *underhanded*, I wouldn't *stoop* to that.

High status is *up* and low status is *down*: he has a *lofty* position, she'll *rise* to the *top*, he's at the *peak* of his career, I've hit *rock bottom*.

In this framework, flying is metaphor made real. When you're in a plane you're *elevated*, *aloft*, *high above*. Those are literal descriptions of your orientation, but also metaphors of your place in the human hierarchy.

But hang on, doesn't everyone fly these days? It's not a luxury like it was in the 70s.

Yes, it can seem that way if you look at a rich industrialised country such as Australia. But if you look at the whole planet of 7.5 billion people, it's clear that flying is still the preserve of the comparatively wealthy. Globally, high flyers are high status; it's just that many of us would be surprised to find ourselves counted among this elite.

Gazing out the window at the horizon, I can see another less obvious appeal of flying: a sense of perspective. Again, it's both literal and metaphorical. From up here we have a *bird's eye view*, a sense of the *bigger picture*. We're not *bogged down* in the detail. It's a place for *high-level* thinking - and, as Lakoff writes, intellect and rationality are also *up* concepts in our culture.

One of the reasons sustainability lacks appeal is it's described as a *down* concept. We're asked to *reduce* our emissions or live a *low*-impact lifestyle. Intuitively, many people translate this to mean a lower quality of life. This is why the idea of deliberately living with less is so baffling to most people - it sounds like you're choosing poverty, even if that's not what is meant. Refusing to fly takes this heresy to its extreme: here is someone literally renouncing the *high-life*.

There are many rational reasons why, even as climate change bites, we'll keep burning fossil fuels to fly from A to B. Teleconferencing software can never replace the intimacy of a face-to-face meeting. Business people will continue to seal deals in person because it builds trust. Nor can armchair travel or virtual reality surpass the wonder of waking up 24 hours after takeoff in an entirely different culture and climate.

So we'll keep transporting our bodies thousands of kilometres for work or play, and most land or sea travel is too slow to meet the demands of people living in such a fast-paced society.

That leaves planes, and there aren't many good alternatives to carbon-based jet fuel. Growing crops to manufacture biofuels is possible, but it takes up arable land needed for farming. While batteries hold promise, they're still too heavy for the amount of energy they provide - a crucial point when you're trying to get a 400-tonne Boeing 747 off the ground.

But another reason we'll keep flying is emotional and, dare I say it, philosophical. Flying reminds us that we are members of a species clever enough to break the rules governing other land-locked mammals - those lowly creatures so beneath us! - and exist in a higher realm. Aside from the seductive convenience, it's this metaphor of flying that makes it so

hard to resist.



Greg Foyster is a Melbourne writer and the author of the book *Changing Gears*.

The counter-cultural, rehumanising work of volunteers

AUSTRALIA

Fatima Measham

A significant portion of the work that goes on in our economy is voluntary. It features in many contexts, such as parishes, social welfare, tutorial and mentoring, animal welfare, landcare, local sport, and arts and literary activities. Emergency services and surf lifesavers rely on volunteers.

It can be hard to make a case for volunteering at a time when labour exploitation is rife. Framing work as its own reward is how businesses profit from unpaid internships and 'trial periods'. Students, migrants and Indigenous people, who need to establish work experience, are particularly vulnerable when it comes to unpaid work. There are traps, and they deserve serious attention.

This does not mean that volunteer work can never be meaningful. In some ways, it sheds light on the nature of work - its life-giving properties, the ways in which it binds us, and the truth that not all relationships have to be transactional.

According to the most recent [ABS findings](#) (2010), 36 per cent of Australians 18 and over participated in voluntary work, with women slightly more likely to volunteer than men. In the 12 months prior to the survey, 6.1 million people had willingly given unpaid help in the form of time, service or skills through an organisation or group.

The volunteer rate outside capital cities is higher, at 41 per cent to 34. Employed people have higher rates of voluntary work (38 per cent full-time, 44 per cent part-time) than unemployed (20 per cent) or retired (31 per cent). The [median hours](#) spent on voluntary work is 56 hours per year. Research at Flinders University calculated that the [economic value](#) of volunteers could be up to \$290 billion.

Voluntary work involves as much physical and mental labour as paid work. The number of volunteers and hours required, for instance, in ensuring that Vinnies op-shops are positive, dignified and safe for shoppers is always more than is rostered.

The stream of clothes, furniture and kitchenware that get donated have to be constantly assessed, repaired or cleaned, sorted, labelled and priced appropriately. It consumes time and space. Yet it can be moving to witness the intense care that goes into preparing second-hand items so that someone with little cash can walk in the door, buy a nice top and not feel like shit.

Without the complication that can come with wage, volunteers can afford to focus on people. It means that those they encounter are rightfully treated as subjects rather than objects, and with full dimension. There are no KPIs, no 'mutual obligation requirements'. It is rehumanising work.

"The spaces in which volunteers work usually points to the ways in which governments have failed and societies are broken. Soup vans, women's shelters, immigration

detention - we find volunteers there, too."

In the case of Big Brothers Big Sisters, it often provides the only (non-relative) adult in a young person's life who is not involved in a professional capacity. The organisation selects and trains mentors for children aged seven to 17 who are living with several layers of disadvantage.

The aim is to keep kids at school and away from risk behaviours. Many of these relationships become lifelong, well beyond the original need. The growth is mutual. It is impossible to imagine it working if Big Brothers and Big Sisters were paid to be there.

There are many other kinds of volunteer, and just as many reasons to work unpaid, with free consent. People might have time to spare, had parents who volunteered and so are primed to do the same, or feel compelled to give back to the community. Retired volunteers do it to be around people. Students do it for causes and groups that have captured their passion.

Moreover, the spaces in which volunteers work usually points to the ways in which governments have failed and societies are broken. Soup vans, women's shelters, immigration detention - we find volunteers there, too. Volunteering is counter-cultural in some sense; it interferes with the idea that the only type of work worth doing returns dollars.



Fatima Measham is a *Eureka Street* consulting editor. She co-hosts the [ChatterSquare](#) podcast, tweets as [@foomeister](#) and blogs on [Medium](#).

National Volunteer Week runs from 8-14 May.

Youth justice system needs reform not repression

AUSTRALIA

Andrew Hamilton

That children are our future is a cliché. It recognises the respect that children deserve. But the frequency with which the phrase is repeated suggests doubt about whether due respect is given practical effect. Some recent reports and documents confirm that doubt.

They include the submissions made to the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People on the use of isolation in the Victorian youth justice system and its final report, reports and court evidence about the treatment of children in Barwon prison, the preliminary report by the Northern Territory Royal Commission into Child Protection and Youth Detention Systems, and an article surveying research into the extent of physical, verbal and sexual abuse of children in Australia.

We need only to imagine ourselves as a child subject to the practices described in these accounts, to find them scarifying. The recurring images of children lying in the foetal position, a sign of acute traumatic stress, in solitary confinement, hooded or surrounded by guards say it all.

When we set them against the results of research into the biological and psychological development of children sketched in the Commission for Children report, detention, prolonged lockdowns, isolation and a culture of punishment are destructive and counterproductive.

The NT Royal Commission report echoes others in saying that decades of inquiries into the patterns and conditions of incarceration have produced few lasting results. Public concern is drawn to evidence of catastrophic brutality but ignores the underlying and persistent chronic dysfunction.

The custodial treatment of people, however tightly regulated to ensure respect for those detained, inevitably drifts back to a punitive regime. We should then ask why public outrage at cruelty to children is only episodic, and why the compass bearings of detention regimes, however set to the true north of remediation, always swing back to punishment.

Part of the answer may be found in the research estimates of the prevalence of abuse suffered by children. They differ widely, depending on the definition of what constitutes abuse, the composition of the group surveyed and the questions asked. Although the statistics are unreliable, on a conservative estimate they indicate that about one in 20 children have suffered emotional, physical and sexual abuse.

This would mean that only a small minority of the friends and schoolmates of most children would be affected, and that their plight would escape adult attention. Where a higher proportion of young people suffers, as the research indicates in the case of young

females, public concern is manifestly higher.

"The resultant frustration of young people and the effects of a rapid turnover of largely untrained and underpaid staff will inevitably lead to protests and destructive behaviour. That can provoke either reform or repression."

This may suggest that the treatment of children in the justice system does not arouse consistent public concern because, like Indigenous Australians, people who seek protection and Muslim Australians, they are a small minority. Most Australians will not have had much contact with them and so will not imagine them as like their own children. They will accept as justifiable for these different children treatment they would be outraged at if meted to their own.

Only images that represent both these children's vulnerability and the brutality of their treatment will evoke in them empathy and outrage. They will see these other children as like their own. But when confronted with images of violent, uncontrolled behaviour by young people, they will again see them as alien and so properly subject to harsh and punitive treatment. This blinkered vision underlies the cycles of reform and regression to a punitive approach.

It is also inherently likely that detention regimes will become more punitive. In any institution where one group of people is responsible for depriving other people of their liberty the interests of security will predominate over respect for the persons detained. The institutional relationship between the lockers-up and the locked-up colours the interaction between officers in centres of detention and those for whose incarceration they are responsible. The relationship between troubled young people and powerful figures of authority will be inherently conflictual. Detention will then be ultimately, fundamentally unproductive.

The bias to the interests of the institution is also reflected in the priorities reflected in regulations designed to ensure respect for young people. In Victoria many regulations specify how young people in detention may and may not be treated. But another clause allows these requirements to be overridden when the interests of the centre are at stake.

This statement of priorities inevitably mean that the respect due to the children is eroded, and that the regulations which limit the use of solitary confinement, exclusion and lockdown will become token. They will be seen as an exercise in ticking boxes and their intent ignored. The resultant frustration of young people and the effects of a rapid turnover of largely untrained and underpaid staff will inevitably lead to protests and destructive behaviour. That can provoke either reform or repression.

In today's fearful society, unfortunately, repression is all the go, with new jails the kindergartens for forming future criminals. That will lead to another scandal, another inquiry and, we might hope, to another opportunity for reform.

 Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of *Eureka Street*.

Main image from the website of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.

Bad sports and politics

AUSTRALIA

John Warhurst

Recent adverse coverage of sporting organisations has revealed once again what looks remarkably like widespread organisational dysfunction. It is now all too common and you don't need to be an insider to be appalled by what is happening.

Sport is such a major part of Australian life that we should all be interested in what goes on within the multi-million dollar organisations that run it, whether it be the big football codes, cricket, tennis or the various Olympic sports. The stakes are huge and the issues, including self-interest, interstate rivalries and personality conflicts are eerily familiar in public life more generally.

The recent major media stories have been further instalments in the long-running battles within the Australian Olympic Committee. Its long-serving president, John Coates (pictured), is being challenged for his \$760,000 job by Danni Roche, a former Olympian with the Hockeyroos and a member of the Australian Sports Commission.

Coates and John Wylie, head of the Sports Commission, are not on speaking terms other than on those occasions when Coates' language is allegedly abusive.

The most recent story is based on allegations by a former AOC chief executive, Fiona de Jong, of a culture of workplace bullying within the organisation. De Jong, who resigned after the Rio Olympics, charges the AOC media manager, Mike Tancred, who holds a job worth \$320,000, with examples of personal bullying of an appalling type. Others have supported de Jong. Tancred's job is said to rely on support from Coates.

So both their futures will be decided on 6 May when 40 sporting organisations and members of the AOC board vote on the presidency.

At the same time Netball Australia, which runs the national Super Netball competition, is in disarray. Its board has recently terminated its chair, Anne-Marie Corboy, a former senior financial services executive, after less than 12 months in the job.

This was followed by board elections in which the state associations, who control the votes, ousted Kathryn Harby-Williams, a most highly regarded former Australian netball captain. In doing so they disregarded the unanimous views of the players, represented by the Australian Netball Players Association, which, after considering industrial action, staged symbolic protests before their games.

"The battle between Coates and Roche bears all the hallmarks of the worst aspects of the in-fighting and personality politics behind Kevin Rudd versus Julia Gillard or Tony Abbott versus Malcolm Turnbull."

There are many other similar stories in sporting organisations. They could also be drawn from many areas of the corporate, trade union or not for profit sectors. Whether you regard such conflicts as merely business as usual or as a blot on life, they are common. We tut-tut over the crimes and misdemeanours of young players but pass over the more serious shenanigans at board and senior staff levels.

These insights into the organisation of activities of which we are extremely proud give us a measure of Australian society. They also put into context much of what the public doesn't like about political party and parliamentary politics. Factional battles become more important than talent and performance. Bullying goes unpunished within organisations. And so on. The battle between Coates and Roche bears all the hallmarks of the worst aspects of the in-fighting and personality politics behind Kevin Rudd versus Julia Gillard or Tony Abbott versus Malcolm Turnbull.

This context suggests that we should not kid ourselves that there is anything special about the dysfunction found within politics. Small p sporting politics seems very like large P Party and Parliamentary Politics. This should not be surprising as the two worlds overlap.

Organisational politics, as is found in sporting and other community organisations, is the breeding ground for entry into parliamentary politics. It provides the talent pool of ambitious individuals with proven records and public profiles who find their way into politics. Coates, for instance, could easily have ended up as a senior government minister rather than as president of the AOC. He is already a more important figure in Australian public life than all but a handful of Australian political leaders.

Such organisational leaders are also the peers of our politicians. They meet socially and professionally and share their values. They bring these values into parliament rather than learning them after they get there. Their weaknesses are deeply rooted in Australian society.



John Warhurst is an Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the Australian National University.

East Timorese heroes of Australian wars

INTERNATIONAL

Susan Connelly

In the great traditions of Australian war remembrance we remember all those Australian youngsters who died in the World Wars and since. What is often forgotten, however, is the toll on the Timorese people in World War II on behalf of Australians.

Fearful of the southward thrust of the Japanese, the Australian government entered East Timor against the wishes of its Portuguese colonisers - not to protect the Timorese, but to thwart possible attacks on Australia.

A band of intrepid Australian soldiers, never numbering more than 700, successfully held off thousands of Japanese in Timor, but only because they had the support of the local people.

The East Timorese could have handed the Australians over to the enemy, but they didn't. Between 40,000 and 60,000 Timorese died as a result of Japanese reprisals for their friendship to Australians, and because of Allied bombing on Japanese positions.

Fearful, self-protective and oblivious Australia contributed to the demise of those tens of thousands of civilians. Leaflets were dropped all over Timor declaring 'Your friends do not forget you.' Yet this extraordinary historical episode receives little attention in Australia.

Thirty years later, Australian security was again served by the Timorese people. Massacres, starvation, torture, rape and killings were all part of the 24 years of Indonesian annexation, yet the demise of a huge proportion of the Timorese population found little protest from Australia over the quarter century.

Intelligence reports were concealed and statements of witnesses were ignored or belittled as Australian governments doggedly pursued appeasement of Indonesia, until 1999 when political realities and a disgusted Australian population caused the reversal of the policy.

Even now, it is officially stated that the Australian position right through the Indonesian occupation was for Timorese self-determination. It is unknown whether this claim is made with a straight face.

"The Timorese are not asking for handouts, special treatment, nor even remembrance of the history. They are simply asking for a fair deal in accordance with current international law."

Australians in all walks of life, including academics and politicians, would do well to bone up on this history, especially when it comes to the fraught questions over the settlement of a fair and permanent border in the Timor Sea between Timor-Leste and Australia, and

Timor's desire to secure management of oil and gas resources in the Timor Sea.

The Timorese are not asking for handouts, special treatment, nor even remembrance of the history. They are simply asking for a fair deal in accordance with current international law.

The NSW Timor Sea Justice Forum has made available a [petition](#) asking that the border be finalised as soon as possible. It will be available as an online petition on the parliamentary website in June, but this version is useful in the meantime for those who wish to print it and invite family, friends, neighbours and strangers to sign.

Ordinary Australians rose to the occasion for the Timorese in 1999. It is time to rise again.

Susan Connelly is a Sister of St Joseph, the Catholic Religious Congregation founded by St Mary MacKillop. After years teaching scripture in Catholic schools and in state schools, she spent 17 years with the Mary MacKillop Institute of East Timorese Studies.

Pictured: Australian commando in East Timor

Easter illuminates Anzac Day rhetoric

RELIGION

Michael McVeigh

The transition from Easter to Anzac Day in Australia can be a strange one, particularly when the two celebrations come in the space of two weeks as they do this year.

At Easter, we move from the terrible desolation of Good Friday to the joy of Easter Sunday. It's the foundation story for the Christian faith, and speaks of the arrival of new life and hope for the world.

Anzac Day forces Christians to confront a different reality - that this new hope has yet to be fully realised. Looking back to the major wars of the 20th century that Australia was involved in, knowing they were waged by Christians against each other, as well as those of other faiths and no faith, we can see that the world is still far from that which Christ envisaged.

Dawn services across Australia mark Anzac Day, helping us remember the terrible cost of war and renew our determination to be peacemakers. The commemorations will help us remember those who have lost their lives in war, whose efforts helped shape our country's history. But in our reflections on Anzac Day, it's worth also looking at what the day might say in the light of the Easter story.

A great deal of the rhetoric on Anzac Day is about sacrifice. But often those sacrifices are described in political or social terms - of soldiers giving their lives for the freedom and security of their families back home. At their heart, they're stories of sacrifice in order to bring peace to others - which have echoes in the Easter story.

But the Easter story has other ways to look at sacrifice, too, ones that cause us to look at Anzac Day differently.

Christians, including early Christian writers like Paul, often talk about the death and resurrection of Christ in terms of the death of the old self, and the birth of a new self that is much closer to God. One of the lessons of Easter then is that to fully live, we must be willing to sacrifice all that we are to God; and if we are unwilling to make that sacrifice, we can never be born into a new life.

We don't often think of war as this type of struggle - the sacrifice of ones self, in order to give birth to new life. But it's a helpful way to explore the issues that are faced in a time of war.

"The stories we share on Anzac Day look back at how our forebears confronted their brokenness, their own inner darkness, some succumbing to it, others transcending it."

'This great evil, where's it come from?' the narrator asks during Terence Malick's 1998 war epic *The Thin Red Line*. 'How'd it steal into the world? What seed, what root did it grow from? Who's doing this? Who's killing us, robbing us of life and light, mocking us with the sight of what we might've known? Does our ruin benefit the earth? Does it help the grass to grow, the sun to shine? Is this darkness in you, too? Have you passed through this night?'

Anzac Day can show us how war forces people to confront the darkness in themselves, and in those around them who have succumbed to it. The stories we share on Anzac Day look back at how our forebears confronted their brokenness, their own inner darkness, some succumbing to it, others transcending it.

Most of us will hopefully never know what it's like to confront the terrible realities of war, and the choices that are forced on people in those times. But Anzac Day takes us into those places, bringing us stories of those who were there, and giving us an insight into the realities that they faced.

When we reflect on Anzac Day, we might ask ourselves what we do to confront the darkness in ourselves and in our world. How do we respond where there seems so little evidence of goodness? How do we make sacrifices as Christ did at Easter, in the hope of bringing new life and new hope to ourselves and our world?



Michael McVeigh is the editor of *Australian Catholics* magazine and senior editor at Jesuit Communications.

Pictured: Jim Caviezel as Witt in Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line*

Citizenship changes make a new enemy of the migrant

INTERNATIONAL

Catherine Marshall

If I were applying for Australian citizenship today I would fail the test, since I don't subscribe to Australian values - at least those espoused by Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull (the inhumane treatment of refugees, the refusal to legalise gay marriage, the deviousness of dog whistle politics).

Our discord on what constitutes Australian values is irrelevant, of course, since I am the sort of migrant Turnbull would approve of: white, English-speaking, hard-working, law-abiding, adaptable and of Christian heritage.

But if we forget for a moment my skin colour, mother tongue and religious heritage, we are left with the attributes that the vast majority of migrants, by their very nature, possess: a willingness to work hard, to abide by their adopted country's laws and to adapt to their new circumstances.

It's these very characteristics that have helped to build Australia - a nation of migrants - into the powerhouse it is today. And it's those attributes we don't necessarily share - race, ethnicity, culture, language and religion - that have transmuted Australia from a country colonised by whites into a multicultural melange.

Australia has long had a successful migration program, and the country's economic success is proof of this. So when Turnbull calls a press conference to impart the news that 'membership of the Australian family is a privilege and should be afforded to those who support our values, respect our laws and want to work hard by integrating and contributing to an even better Australia', he is making a redundant point. The vast majority of migrants and new citizens already do this.

Moreover, his newly announced citizenship test is not going to improve the calibre of migrants, for Australia already ensures its migrant intake is largely well-educated, skilled and experienced. Nor is it going to weed out those with nefarious tendencies - after all, who would admit in a citizenship test that they don't hold Australian values dear?

Of course the real purpose of this policy change is to reassure right wing voters that the government has the power to refuse citizenship to people feared by them: Muslims, refugees, Sudanese gang members.

But there's another sinister message implicit in this statement: migrants will be held to higher standards than Australian-born citizens. They must be skilled and fluent in English and willing to work on school P&Cs and other volunteer positions to prove their commitment to their new country.

"If migrants must submit to a citizenship test designed to 'contribute still further to our social cohesion', they should expect in turn that their prime minister and his immigration

minister demonstrate their own contribution to this ideal."

They must maintain flawless police records and so should their children. They will be barred from practising their profession in metropolitan areas if their profession - such as medicine - is overrepresented there, but will be encouraged to fill roles in remote areas where Australians refuse to practice. Moreover, they should not take jobs away from Australians.

Turnbull wants to have his cake and eat it, to cherry-pick migrants and then dictate to them special terms of citizenship that are not applicable to regular Australians. But if migrants are good enough to help build the Australian economy - and to do low-paid dirty work like cleaning offices and toilets and slaughtering animals in abattoirs - then they are good enough to receive the same benefits, rights, respect and autonomy as Australian-born citizens.

Moreover, if migrants must submit to a citizenship test designed to 'contribute still further to our social cohesion', they should expect in turn that their prime minister and his immigration minister demonstrate their own contribution to this ideal.

Instead, these leaders do the very opposite, creating social tension and unease by perpetuating the 'us-and-them' mythology and so playing right into Pauline Hanson's bigoted hands. Turnbull, ever disingenuous, conjures Australia as a crime-free, sexism-free, racism-free, egalitarian, religiously tolerant paradise at risk from migrants. Dutton is more strident, demanding that migrants 'abide by the law and if you're not going to abide by the law, or you're not going to work if you've got a capacity to work, if you're going to spend your time on welfare, or your kids are involved in Apex gangs in Victoria, for instance, then really we need to question whether that person is the best possible citizen'.

These words are an insult not just to the people singled out by Turnbull and Dutton (welfare recipients, parents of gang members who are apparently responsible for their children's offences) and those targeted implicitly by them (Muslims), but to all migrants, who are rigorously assessed in the first place for residency and citizenship. We must pay large sums of money to have our applications and qualifications assessed, provide police clearance certificates proving we are not criminals, undertake English proficiency exams, subject ourselves to tests for diseases such as HIV and tuberculosis and our children to scrutiny for potential developmental problems, uproot our families and start over in a foreign country that is not always as accommodating as it believes itself to be.

If, after undergoing all this in order to make a better life for ourselves and our children, we do by some slim chance commit a crime, then we shall be dealt with in precisely the same manner as regular Australian citizens: before the courts. Until then, let us be wary of politicians sowing seeds of discord and fear by making a new enemy of the migrant.



Catherine Marshall is a Sydney-based journalist and travel writer. Originally from South Africa, she has lived in Australia for 15 years and has been a citizen since 2005.

The language of exploitation in the online labour market

ECONOMICS

Daniel Nicholson

When you are in the business of exploiting people, and you want to get away with it, language matters. This is what a recently leaked document from Deliveroo teaches us.

The list, given to managers at the app-based food delivery company, provides a number of 'dos' and 'don'ts' that guide supervisors when talking to Deliveroo's workers, and can be read as a kind of exploitation manual. The document is geared to emphasising that the people who deliver food for Deliveroo are and should remain independent contractors, not employees: do say 'On boarding'; don't say 'Hiring'.

The difference matters. Employees are afforded a number of entitlements that independent contractors are not: the minimum wage, superannuation, overtime allowances and others. Of course, correctly classifying workers is not a new issue, but the online gig-economy, its employment arrangements, and the language used to disguise them, are putting a glossy facade on old models of worker exploitation.

Essentially, Deliveroo is trying to make sham contracting - when a business deliberately disguises an employment relationship as an independent contracting arrangement in order to avoid paying employee entitlements - sound like an 'innovation'.

The leaked document showed that Deliveroo maintains a level of control over its workers' performance standards, availability and work patterns normally associated with an employment relationship, but gave managers instructions on how to avoid using language that would reflect this fact.

I am not the first to point out the issues of worker categorisation in online labour markets. In 2016, a Unions NSW report into the employment practices of gig-economy company AirTasker categorised the online labour market as 'unregulated Taylorism within a Dickensian marketplace where workers compete for bite-sized fragments of labour'.

But the Deliveroo document demonstrated the importance of language in underpinning these new models of exploitation. For the most part, these developments are euphemistically reported as 'disruptions' or 'innovations'. Once this linguistic smokescreen is cleared, however, the reality of the app-based services economy is remarkably straightforward: a handful of 'tech bros' in Silicon Valley are getting rich on the back of millions of contingent workers around the world who are denied basic employment entitlements.

Sociologist Wolfgang Streeck has examined a number of these terms - 'innovation', 'disruption' and 'resilience' amongst others - in the context of the continuous mutation and evolution of capitalism.

"It reflects a philosophy of economic Darwinism: the strong will survive, and the weak

will drive them around and deliver their food, for less than the minimum wage."

He points out that innovation has a decidedly mixed history. In the case of the 'innovative' and often elaborate employment arrangements of online labour markets, the term can be seen simply as a set of new technologies designed to bypass employment regulations and worker protections. Uber, Deliveroo, AirTasker and others have come up with innovative ways of not paying workers what they would otherwise be entitled to or taking any responsibility for their broader wellbeing. In this and other contexts, 'innovation' is hard to differentiate from 'rule-bending' or simple 'rule-breaking'. Infamously, it was the 'innovative' financial products conceived of and created by bankers on Wall Street and elsewhere that brought the global financial system, and the global economy, to the brink in 2007-08.

'Disruption' has not always been a good thing either. Streeck notes that historically, the word has been used to denote an 'unanticipated, destructive and even violent discontinuity - with disaster for those affected by it'. In other words, we have not envied those whose lives or incomes have been subjected to a disruption. But the word has evolved in the language of the new capitalists to denote a kind of benign, Schumpeterian creative destruction. 'Innovative disruption', that destroys jobs, communities and ways of life is celebrated as 'creative', 'entrepreneurial' and exciting. It reflects a philosophy of economic Darwinism: the strong will survive, and the weak will drive them around and deliver their food, for less than the minimum wage.

This brings us to 'resilience', a term in vogue with both Silicon Valley and neoliberal management schools. Resilience is the enabling virtue that supposedly allows everyday people - workers and citizens - to survive (and 'thrive'!) in the exciting new world of perpetual innovation and disruption. The term has migrated from bacteriology and engineering to be applied to the human beings who are subjected to the technological and social changes wrought on them by gig-economy capitalism. Streeck points out that 'resilience' is not 'resistance' or a refusal to accept or comply. Instead, it is adaptive adjustment, either voluntary or forced. The more that resilience is developed at the individual level, the less collective solutions are required at a societal level.

This phenomenon is not limited to the terms discussed above. While 'sham contracting' becomes an 'innovation', longer working hours, job losses and insecure work become 'productivity', 'efficiency' and 'portfolio employment'. The Deliveroo leak proves that once the lingo of these 'innovations' is stripped away, old methods of exploitation are revealed.

Daniel Nicholson is an industrial relations researcher at The University of Melbourne and a director at the progressive think tank The John Cain Foundation. He is a member of the Australian Labor Party and the National Tertiary Education Union. He has also published in *Overland* and the *Conversation*.

Poems for Anzac Day

CREATIVE

Jena Woodhouse and Ian C. Smith

Selected poems

Robyn

Getting off the bus at Woden,
I fell into conversation
with another passenger called Robyn,
who then waited with me
for the bus to Manuka, to see
me off, the way friends will,
or people who are closer: family, kin.

I told her I had visited
the War Memorial.
She said she'd never known
her father, who'd been killed
in action, somewhere. No,
she couldn't tell me where,
she'd been only three. She'd not
been out to view his name,
embossed in metal on the wall.
Her health was poor, she wasn't sure
she'd manage all the walking.
But growing up, she'd missed the father
she had no remembrance of.
She'd always felt the lack of him -
an ache time could not ease

- Jena Woodhouse

Damask Roses, Syria

It's happening again, in Syria -
a century since people of Armenia
perished in their tens of thousands there,
torched alive in caves, or put to death
by thirst and hunger, where their exile
ended in the desert at Deir-ez-Zor.

Now, the forces of annihilation
once again cohere, as if this were
a valve in history's cardiac arrhythmia
that faltered and unleashed
a haemorrhage of horror, trauma,
fear. The damask roses bloom
unharvested in devastated fields.

Their perfume cannot mask the stench
that permeates the air, the atmosphere
of dread, of mute despair. But when
the juggernaut of war is redeployed
elsewhere, the fragrant fields will come
into their own, if there are hands to care

- Jena Woodhouse

Not VCs, VD

They huddle sorry-arsed on the platform sharing Turf cigarettes,
faces above khaki greatcoats, demeanour, of older men,
any ideals of medals not what they imagined,
inventing tales, their ultimate destination vague,
a vanishing point joked about but yearned for.
They watched back yards passing by, recalled games,
kitbags in the rack, windows streaked, their gaze opaque,
no risk now of being blown up, yet their world askew.

Crown land, an exclusion zone, rude architecture,
kangaroos and copperheads patrolling the bluish bush,
army doctors' blunt indifference unmitigated by nurses,
women soon to be only memories of mixed emotions;
porridge and penicillin, a muddle of menial tasks,
a caste quarantined from locals who believe propaganda;
troop movement, training exercises, returning heroes,
who remain ignorant of anything to do with this lot.

Look, there I am long after the war was over, a boy searching
for his lost dog he will never see again, walking
away from the murmur of his family's regret, almost
stepping on a coiled snake under the cover of trees,
calling, whistling for things to be as they were.
He reaches the old army reserve where a breeze stirs,
nudges his cigarette smoke, a flap of cardboard on a shed,
sunlight on a soiled window as if trapped there long before.

- Ian C. Smith



Poems by Jena Woodhouse have twice been shortlisted for the Montreal International Poetry Prize (2013, 2015). She is the author/compiler/translator of seven published books in various genres. In May 2016 she was writer-in-residence at Booranga Writers Centre, Wagga Wagga NSW.

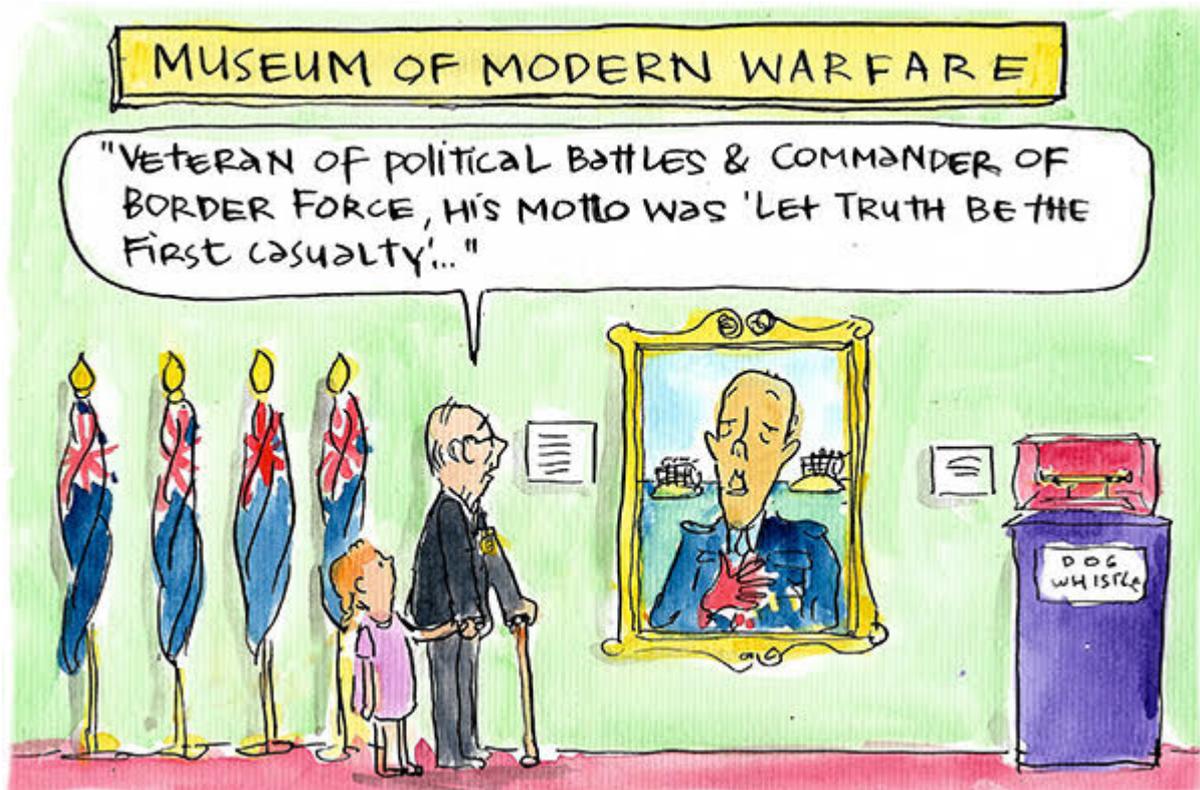


Ian C. Smith lives in the Gippsland Lakes region of Victoria. His work has appeared in *Australian Book Review*, *Australian Poetry Journal*, *foam:e*, *Rabbit Journal*, *The Weekend Australian* and *Westerly*. His seventh book is *wonder sadness madness joy*.

Soldier of misfortune

CARTOON

Fiona Katauskas



Fiona Katauskas' work has also appeared in ABC's *The Drum*, *New Matilda*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age*, *The Australian*, *The Financial Review* and Scribe's Best Australian political cartoon anthologies.

Take care not to co-opt soldiers' and civilians' deaths

AUSTRALIA

Andrew Hamilton

At Anzac Day it is common to set the deaths of the soldiers at Gallipoli into the context of a larger cause. Early war memorials declared their deaths to be for God, King and Country. Later comment frames them teleologically as shaping a template of national identity and of the national character.

This year we celebrate Anzac Day in a sea of citizen deaths from terrorism and military actions. Killings in first world nations are also often set within a broader context such as democracy, national security, freedom or the Western way of life.

This framing within a broader context is initially attractive. It appears to give meaning and value to lives that ended randomly, and consolation to the people who love, grieve for and honour them. Those who die are revered as victims or martyrs for a cause; perpetrators can be hated as monsters or representatives of an alien ideology.

Deeper reflection, however, suggests that to attribute meaning and value to people through their relationship to a cause does not enhance but diminishes their humanity. It implies that human beings are given value only in relationship to some larger idea or institution.

They are not seen as precious in themselves, regardless of how ordinary was their life and random the circumstances of their death. Their title to being remembered is as a cipher for democracy or another abstraction, not as persons set in their unique everyday relationships and commitments. This view weakens the value of the cause they are made to stand for by obliterating the differences between people in their relationship to it.

The example of the early Christians who were killed brings out these differences. The death of some was tightly identified with their faith: they were offered the opportunity to live if they renounced their faith but refused to do so. Others refused to escape from danger and were summarily killed as Christians. Others had no option but to remain and were killed in a general massacre of nominal Christians, non-Christian and anti-Christians.

Of these, we might say that members of the first and second group died for their faith, but to co-opt the others would be disrespectful. It would implicitly deny that each person who died is equally valuable, and should be remembered and respected regardless of their relationship to Christian faith.

Similar differences exist between the soldiers who died at Gallipoli and between the civilians killed in terrorist attacks. Many soldiers would have seen themselves as fighting for God, King and Country. Others fought for their mates or by accident. Few civilians would have died for democracy if offered an escape. But the life of each soldier and each civilian was equally valuable and the death of each equally to be mourned regardless of

the quality of their commitment.

"It is important to celebrate the courage and generosity of people who put their lives at risk in supporting a greater cause. But we should not ask ourselves what we'd be prepared to die for, but what we're prepared to live for."

To turn people into ciphers for or against a cause is unfair and misleading. It is right to grieve for the dead, to remember their lives, to grieve for the corruption of the spirit that led someone to see them as expendable for a cause, and to reflect on the motives that lie beneath the desire to identify them with a cause. It is also important to celebrate the courage and generosity of people who put their lives at risk in supporting a cause greater than themselves. Anzac Day reminds us that many soldiers have gone to war with that spirit.

Their example invites us to reflect on our own lives. But we should not ask ourselves what we would be prepared to die for, but what we are prepared to live for. That question leads us away from imagining final and decisive choices for or against some large value such as God, freedom or democracy. It urges us to consider the ordinary actions and passivity and the ordinary words and silences that shape our lives and reflect the quality of our relationships, our constancy and our love.

To live for democracy, for example, would mean developing habits of listening, consulting, appreciating difference, showing respect, forgiving, understanding - all the habits that sustain a public life built around the common good. Not as spectacular as dying for democracy, certainly, but perhaps just as difficult. It means paying as you go and not putting off the reckoning to the never never.



Andrew Hamilton is consulting editor of *Eureka Street*.

Pictured: Anzac Day Dawn Service at Kings Park, Western Australia

The relevance of remembrance in the 21st century

INTERNATIONAL

Kate Mani

The day after news of the Brexit referendum breaks I'm rambling through the fields of Flanders with a Belgian historian and three English brothers.

We've started our Western Front battlefield tour in Ypres, a small, south-western Flanders town which looms large in the post World War I psyche. Between 1914 and 1918, five battles decimated the Ypres area, scarring countryside, destroying the medieval town and killing 600,000 people.

My tour has travelled south, past gentle hills dotted with cemeteries, to Hill 60. This cratered, pock-marked landscape bears the scars of tunnelling warfare and the 1917 Battle of Messines.

Miners of the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company lost their lives here when 19 mines were detonated under German trench-lines on 7 June 1917. They are among the many Commonwealth victims the town will remember on Anzac Day, under the Menin Gate memorial to the missing, where 6191 Australian names are etched into the marble.

My English tour companions are here on a family battlefield pilgrimage and there's much I want to ask them: why does the story of an unknown relative mean so much to them today? What is their contemporary connection to Wipers, as the British in their humour dubbed the French-spelt Ypres and Flemish-spelt Ieper? Yet curiosity gets the better of me and I bring up the 'B' word.

'The politicians just weren't listening to us,' a gruff voice responds to my casual inquiry about Britain's EU exit. 'The immigrants, they're not our creed, you know?'

The theme of Europe's current refugee influx is close as we walk through manicured cemeteries where red roses flourish beside stark white headstones. October 1914 saw one and a half million Belgians flee their country, seeking refuge in the Netherlands, France and Great Britain. Ypres residents were forced to evacuate when the first German gas attack on the Allied frontline in April 1915 drifted toward them.

Those who returned post-war found a town decimated by shelling. From ghost-like ruins, cobbled streets, houses and civic buildings were eventually reconstructed in their former medieval style.

"If commemoration can be harnessed to promote the dangers of nationalism and to help people become more accepting of the plight of those who are not their 'creed', then it should always be relevant."

Ypres' human collateral damage and displacement of those forced to flee is investigated at Ypres' In Flanders Fields Museum. The museum handbook parallels Belgian's WWI refugee exodus with the plight of refugees today fleeing Syria, Afghanistan and Africa, hoping to dispel mistrust and discrimination shown towards the wave of refugees entering Europe.

It's one way In Flanders Fields Museum is adopting a forward-looking approach to commemoration, pulling World War I's messages and themes out of 1918 and propelling them into the 21st century. At the museum's exit, banners list global wars from 'the War to end all Wars' until today, helping museum director Piet Chielens explain how remembrance must be relevant and educational.

'Our job is important because we can use World War I, those mountains of sorrow that have been created here in Ypres, to say to people that war is not the way to go,' he says. 'You don't need to experience war yourself before you come to a cathartic insight. Understanding World War I helps us understand present-day society better. You become more critical: Does Belgium need to spend nine billion euros on new fighter bombers?'

Another layer of Ypres' progressive approach to commemoration is the City of Ypres Peace Department, which extends Chielens' message through practical programs. Peace Service coordinator Filip Deheegher embodies the commemorative 'now'. 'If you want to commemorate there must be a future perspective as well,' he says.

Initiatives include a triennial local peace prize and Ypres' pioneering involvement in Mayors for Peace, an international organisation working for the abolition of nuclear weapons. At a local level, the primary school Peace Factory program brings big words like 'peace' and 'war' into children's smaller worlds.

'Children make the link between cheating or bullying at school with bigger, universal conflicts,' Deheegher explains. 'In bullying you have the victim, the people who deny it, the person who's responsible and the kids who resist. If you look at world problems you have countries attacking other countries and people within a country standing by and doing nothing.'

Under the vaulted ceiling of the Museum Research Centre, researchers and volunteers are currently working on the Names List project which strives to rectify the issue of inwards looking commemoration. The project breaks down 'us/them' barriers by compiling a database with the names and stories of all WWI victims in Belgium. The Museum is creating a publicly accessible, inclusive list of military and civilian war casualties, regardless of nationality.

'The Names List brings unity rather than division as it shows both sides,' explains coordinator Dries Chaerle. 'We now know the consequences of nationalism, it can cause the same political environment as World War I.'

In Ypres and in Australia, ANZAC Day will inevitably evoke debate about the dangers of patriotic commemoration. There will be rhetoric about how remembrance glorifies and sanitises war. There will be questions about the relevancy of remembrance and its place in a 21st century society. Surely if commemoration can be harnessed to promote the dangers of nationalism and to help people like those three British brothers become more accepting of the plight of those who are not their 'creed', then it should always be relevant.

Kate Mani is a freelance writer with published pieces in *The Age*, *The Australian*, *Mojo News*, *Lot's Wife* and *Viewpoint* literary journal.

Pictured: Graves at Tyne Cot cemetery near Ypres.

It is my duty to remember

AUSTRALIA

Gillian Bouras

It is a truth universally acknowledged that the whole business of forgetting and remembering increases in significance as we age: we struggle to recall what happened yesterday, while early memories remain sharp. I can, for example, remember my first school Anzac Day.

I was four and a half, and my mother had made me a cross of white chrysanthemums. I held my partner's hand as the long crocodile wound toward the town's memorial; then I deposited the cross beneath the list of names I could barely read.

And it was on that day that I saw the words 'Lest We Forget' for the first time: it took me ages to work out what they meant, but eventually I learned that the word *lest* comes to us via Old and Middle English; it is best translated, I think, as *for fear that*.

I recently read a piece called 'George W. Bush and the Forever War' by fiery American journalist William Rivers Pitt. He does not mince words, Pitt, and is enraged by the fact that former President Bush is publicising the book that contains 66 portraits he has painted of men and women maimed during fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan, conflicts for which Bush should bear the lion's share of responsibility.

Pitt has a list of epithets for Bush that is almost as long as the number of portraits, but finishes by calling him 'the man with no shame'. The writer is also highly critical of the TV hosts and journalists who are giving Bush so much time and space.

What really appals Pitt, however, is the ease with which people apparently forget. He points out that the media forget, politicians, in their extreme cynicism, always deliberately forget; we ordinary people also forget. But it can be argued that whoever wants to live must try to forget; forgetting is, at least in part, a defence mechanism.

This was (and still is) a major problem for veterans who were victims of shell shock, now called PTSD; they found it practically impossible to return to so-called normal life, since even if they could forget on a conscious level, their unconscious minds gave them no rest from terrifying nightmares and flashbacks, as many a sleepless wife could testify.

The phrase 'Lest We Forget' entered the culture of remembrance because of Rudyard Kipling, author of the hymn 'Recessional'. Kipling has had a mixed press over the years, being labelled a jingoist and an imperialist. He was certainly a son of Empire, and endured great personal loss when his only son was killed in the 1915 Battle of Loos.

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But Kipling was a complex man whose writing was always nuanced. 'Recessional', which was written to honour Queen Victoria's Jubilee in 1897, in fact sounds a warning: 'Lo, all our pomp of yesterday / Is one with Nineveh and Tyre'. People were upbraided to remember God, the effects of Time, and 'Thine ancient sacrifice / An humble and a contrite heart'.

Every Anzac Day there seem to be arguments about the legitimacy of what has been called the One Day of the Year, and in the past I have taken my turn at rebutting views that express the belief that such days, with their marches and memorial services, are part of a wholly reprehensible glorification of war. I've had a great deal of time to think about the matter, and also have a personal involvement: my grandfather and father were in the Australian Army, and both saw active service, about which periods they hardly ever spoke.

I don't think war is being glorified on Anzac Day. Rather, I think the day is set aside for an acknowledgement of the sacrifice so many young men and women were prepared to make. The thought persists, at least for me, that they enlisted because they believed themselves moved by the spirit of love and devotion to the mysterious concept of Home. We may consider them to have been misguided, but they were products of their time, as we are of ours. I, for one, had two very good chances of never being born, so I consider I am not entitled to forget: it is my duty to remember. At least once a year.



[Gillian Bouras](#) is an expatriate Australian writer who has written several books, stories and articles, many of them dealing with her experiences as an Australian woman in Greece.

Illustration by Chris Johnston