THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF

AUSTRALIA VOLUME 2 THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

EDITED BY ALISON BASHFORD STUART MACINTYRE

THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF

AUSTRALIA

VOLUME 2 The Commonwealth of Australia

Volume 2 of *The Cambridge History of Australia* covers the period 1901 to the present day. It begins with the first day of the twentieth century, which saw the birth of the Commonwealth of Australia. In Part 1 the fortunes of the new nation-state are traced over time: a narrative of national policies, from the initial endeavours to protect Australian living standards to the dismantling of protection, and from maintenance of the integrity of a white settler society to fashioning a diverse, multicultural one. These chapters relate how Australia responded to external challenges – the two world wars, the Depression of the 1930s, the loss of markets in the 1970s – and adapted to changing expectations.

Part II takes up particular themes for closer attention. It is here that some distinctive features of modern Australia are clarified: its enduring democracy and political stability, engagement with a unique environment, the means whereby Australians maintained prosperity, the treatment and aspirations of its Indigenous inhabitants. The changing patterns of social relations are examined, along with the forms of knowledge, religion, communication and creativity. Chapters on Australia's place in the world examine security, travel, the historical links to Britain and engagement with Asia and the Pacific.

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THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA

VOLUME 2 The Commonwealth of Australia

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Edited by ALISON BASHFORD and STUART MACINTYRE



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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, vic 3207, Australia

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107011557

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First published 2013

Typeset by Newgen Publishing and Data Services Printed in Singapore by Markono Print Media Pte Ltd

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

A Cataloguing-in-Publication entry is available from the catalogue of the National Library of Australia at www.nla.gov.au

> ISBN 978-1-107-01153-3 vol. 1 Hardback ISBN 978-1-107-01154-0 vol. 2 Hardback ISBN 978-1-107-01155-7 set of two vols. Hardback

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Abbreviations

AAL	Australian Aborigines' League
AAPA	Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association
ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission (Corporation from 1983)
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACE	adult and community education
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACM	Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy
ACTU	Australian (until 1947 Australasian) Council of Trade Unions
AGPS	Australian Government Publishing Service
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AIIA	Australian Institute of International Affairs
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ANA	Australian National Airways
ANU	Australian National University
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
ANZAM	Anglo–New Zealand–Australia–Malaya Area
ANZUS	Australian, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty
APA	Aborigines' Progressive Association
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARC	Australian Research Council
ARM	Australian Republican Movement
ARP	Air Raid Precaution
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASIO	Australian Security Intelligence Organisation
ASIS	Australian Secret Intelligence Service
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
AUSFTA	Australia–United States Free Trade Agreement
AWAS	Australian Women's Army Service
AWM	Australian War Memorial
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BHP	Broken Hill Proprietary
BOAC	British Overseas Airways Corporation
CAE	college of advanced education

Abbreviations

CAS	Contomponents Art Society
CDEP	Contemporary Art Society Community Development Employment Program
CEG	Civics Expert Group
CEG	Closer Economic Relations
CLF	Commonwealth Literary Fund
	Council of Australian Governments
COAG CRTS	
CSIR	Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
CSIR	
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DLP	Colonial Sugar Refining Company
EEC	Democratic Labor Party
FCAA	European Economic Community Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement
FCAA FCAATSI	Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait
FCAAISI	Islanders
GATT	
GDP	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
	gross domestic product
GFC GNP	global financial crisis
GNP GST	gross national product
	goods and services tax
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HREOC ICT	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
	information and communications technologies
IMF IPR	International Monetary Fund Institute of Pacific Relations
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
	Multifunction Polis
MFP NAA	National Archives of Australia
NAC	
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal Conference
NATO	National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee
NHMRC	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation National Health and Medical Research Council
NLA	National Library of Australia
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPEC	Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
P&O	Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
PNG	Papua New Guinea
POW	prisoner-of-war
Qld	Queensland
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RSL	Returned and Services League
	and our record congre

Abbreviations

SA	South Australia
SAS	Special Air Service
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SEATO	South East Asia Treaty Organisation
TAA	Trans Australia Airlines
TAFE	technical and further education
Tas.	Tasmania
UAP	United Australia Party
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNSW	University of New South Wales
UQP	University of Queensland Press
UWA	University of Western Australia
VET	vocational education and training
Vic.	Victoria
WA	Western Australia
WAAAF	Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force
WEA	Workers' Educational Association
WRANS	Women's Royal Australian Naval Service

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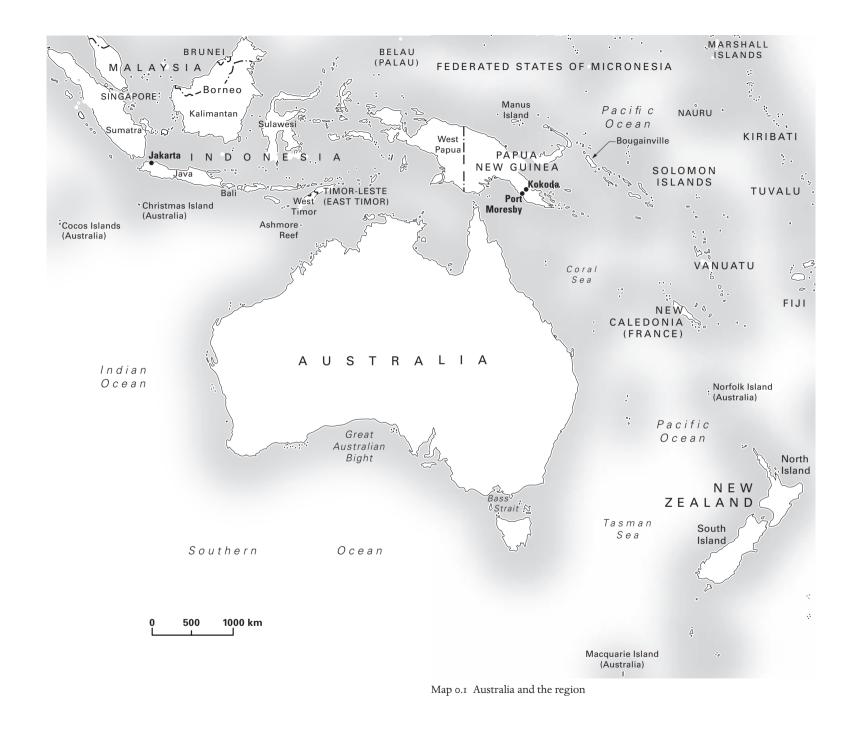
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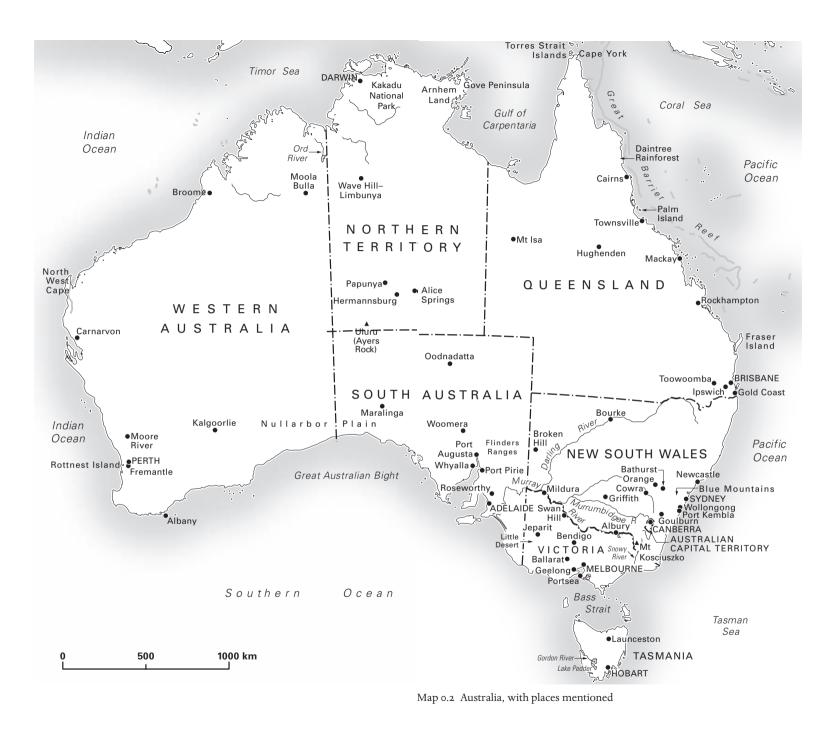
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Preface

The history of Australia is the past of a continent and a Commonwealth, of ancient and modern times, Indigenous people and settlers. The *Cambridge History of Australia* captures the expertise of 67 historians, across generations and fields of knowledge, to present a fresh account of the nation's past. Volume I, *Indigenous and Colonial Australia*, deals with Australia's history to 1901, when the colonies federated. The result of that Federation was the first new nation of the twentieth century. Volume II, *The Commonwealth of Australia*, encompasses Australian history as it has unfolded since 1901.

These volumes succeed a limited number of multi-authored antecedents, which form a telling historical sequence. On one view, the new *Cambridge History of Australia* follows the inter-war *Cambridge History of the British Empire*. Part 1 of Volume VII dealt with Australia, Part 2 with New Zealand. Formally adviser to the three British editors of the eight-volume series, Ernest Scott of the University of Melbourne commissioned chapters from the fledgling Australian historical profession to produce a history that revealed the successful British settlement of Australia and the growth of a country coming to appreciate 'the responsibilities as well as the privileges which nationhood involves'.¹ Published in 1933, the book was used widely for two decades.

It was succeeded in 1955 by a new collaborative history edited by Gordon Greenwood of the University of Queensland, which was sponsored by the committee responsible for celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Australian Commonwealth in 1951. Its title, *Australia: A Social and Political History*, signalled a reorientation away from the *Cambridge History*'s emphasis on exploration, settlement and constitutional development, and towards the growth

I J. Holland Rose, A.P. Newton and E.A. Benians, with Ernest Scott (eds), *The Cambridge History of the British Empire*, vol. VII, part I, *Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 1933), p. 624.

Preface

of a distinctive society. Greenwood assembled younger practitioners in the emergent field of Australian history with the expectation that they could guide the student and provide the 'layman' with 'an intelligent understanding of the development of his own society'.²

Greenwood's history passed through eleven printings before it was superseded in 1974 by *A New History of Australia*, edited by Frank Crowley.³ This, too, was organised in a sequence of periods chosen to 'highlight the significant events and turning points in Australia's development'; it was conceived as a general history, drawing on the substantial body of research produced in the previous decades to integrate social and economic history with government and politics. Both the Greenwood and Crowley volumes spoke to the mood of confidence in the post-war decades of rising prosperity and also to the growing diversity of Australian society.

The Australian volume of the *Cambridge History of the British Empire* was reissued in 1988, with a new introduction by Geoffrey Bolton – published, if not always read, as a period piece. That was the Bicentenary year, 200 years after Governor Arthur Phillip came ashore from his First Fleet at Sydney Cove in 1788. It was not surprising that the once-authoritative Cambridge history attracted little attention during the appearance in this year of shelves of national, nationalist and anti-nationalist history writing. It had emphasised the British origins of a burgeoning nationhood, whereas in 1988 the Australian government wanted to celebrate a far more diverse nation and withheld support from a private re-enactment of the voyage of the First Fleet. The Bicentenary was marked by uncertainty over the place of Indigenous Australians in the national story and heated debate over the legacy of the past. Neither the Greenwood nor the Crowley volume served the new mood of self-questioning.

The direct antecedents to the new *Cambridge History of Australia* were the ambitious collaborative works of 1988. Much of the historical profession was drawn into the preparation of *Australians: A Historical Library*, by far the largest historical project then or since. It consisted of five multi-authored volumes that dealt with slices of Australian history at 50-year intervals: *Australians to 1788, Australians 1838, 1888, 1938* and *Australians after 1938.* It also comprised five reference volumes: an historical atlas, a dictionary, a chronology, a guide to sources and a volume of historical statistics. The 'slicing' methodology adopted for all but the first and last of the five non-reference

3 F.K. Crowley (ed.), A New History of Australia (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1974).

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² Gordon Greenwood (ed.), Australia: A Social and Political History (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1955), p. v.

volumes, in which a cross-section of Australian society in particular years could be considered deeply, was designed to counter the narrative organisation of prior histories and to draw specialist fields of scholarship into an integrated whole.

Australians: A Historical Library employed high production standards and made extensive use of illustrations and graphical devices, as well as paying close attention to accessible prose designed to reach a popular audience. Along with many other Bicentennial publications and an extensive program of commemorative events, it foregrounded the politics of history in a settler colonial nation and stimulated historical debate in public and scholarly forums. Australian public life has been all the better for it. History was brought to the notice of an audience both more inclusive and more engaged than Greenwood's 'laymen', and with an intensity that perhaps would have surprised the post-war generation. Two hundred years of British colonisation was an anniversary simultaneously celebrated, criticised and debated as 50 years of national Federation had not been.

That the past held new significance for the present was evident on the shores of Sydney Harbour, where Indigenous activists and supporters protested 'Australia Day' as 'Invasion Day' on 26 January 1988. It was also evident in the history profession as *Australians: A Historical Library* was countered by four volumes written and edited by dissident historians as *A People's History of Australia.*⁴ That was followed by a further collaborative endeavour of national reassessment, perhaps unique in the genre of national histories anywhere. *Creating a Nation* was written by four leading feminist historians as a new interpretation in which the entire national story was recast with gender to the fore.⁵ The 1988 volumes, the people's history and the feminist history were all responses to a lack of confidence in earlier sequential narratives.

First published in 2013, the *Cambridge History of Australia* has the virtue of not coinciding with any official commemoration. In 1813 Sydney's Blue Mountains were crossed by Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth, a staple of an earlier national history, and in 1913 came the less-remembered naming of the new national capital of Canberra. But perhaps the key anniversary that marks this major venture in Australian collaborative history is its publication 25 years after the Bicentenary. It includes a number of eminent historians

⁴ Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (eds), A People's History of Australia since 1788. 4 vols: *Making a Life; Staining the Wattle; A Most Valuable Acquisition; Constructing a Culture* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1988).

⁵ Patricia Grimshaw, Ann McGrath, Marilyn Lake and Marian Quartly, *Creating a Nation* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1994).

who played a prominent role in the Bicentennial ventures – but it involves more historians who were taught by them. It is thus a national history shaped by a new generation. It carries neither the celebration nor the stark critique of Australian nationalism that characterised the Bicentenary. It incorporates much of the postcolonial, cultural and feminist scholarship that has strongly shaped historical awareness, knowledge and methodology. At the same time, it has been conceived, discussed and written well after the cultural turn in history writing that privileged theory over investigative research, language over experience.

The histories edited by Greenwood and Crowley marked the growth of the Australian history profession and of Australian history as a field of research. Whereas the earlier Cambridge History of the British Empire contained chapters written by economists, lawyers, a geographer and a literary scholar, not all of them working in universities and several based overseas, the post-war histories relied almost entirely on the work being done in local history departments. That self-sufficiency allowed the contributors to delineate more confidently the stages of national development around which they organised their histories, and to highlight in their chapters the growing body of specialised research. Since then, however, the disciplinary boundaries have shifted as scholars working in cognate disciplines have turned to Australian history, historians have drawn on these disciplines in turn, and new fields of knowledge have emerged. While most of the contributors to this Cambridge History of Australia are historians, it includes chapters written by practitioners of archaeology, political science, economic, educational and literary history, environmental, gender and Indigenous studies. Part of its purpose is to bring these different ways of understanding the past into conversation.

The *Cambridge History of Australia* stands apart from previous collaborative works, in part because it is a national history written in global times. It is the work of a generation of historians for whom national history now means a combination of encounters located in time and place and the large-scale patterns that transcend national boundaries. While such a global outlook itself is not new – indeed, it is perhaps more longstanding in Australian history than elsewhere – it is now informed by new ways of exploring the relations between the global and the local. Australia's place in global history is reinterpreted after race, after Empire and after postcolonialism.

Part I of each volume of the *Cambridge History* presents Australia's history in a sequential summary of the important events and changes over stretches of time that range from one to two or three decades. Some decades have received concentrated attention, since they saw major turns or accelerations

Preface

in Australia: the 1850s gold rush; the formative political and social developments of the 1890s; and 1939–49, bringing together Australia's involvement in World War 2 and the great post-war reconstruction, for example.

Part II of each volume cuts a different way. Recognising the limitations of telling a national history through a chronological narrative alone, it 'slices' Australian history, not vertically by time as in *Australians: A Historical Library*, but horizontally by theme. In these chapters contributors assess the whole period covered by that volume in the light of a particular aspect (such as religion), an historical phenomenon (such as environmental transformations), a particular category of analysis (such as gender) or a geographical dimension (for example, Australia and the Asia-Pacific region). It is in these chapters that change over time is most evident.

Such thematic interpretation of the past is one of the lasting effects of a robust critical tradition in Australian historiography. It stems from intellectual exchange with other disciplines, as well as transnational approaches to telling national stories. Australian history has been recast in the light of new comparative histories that locate it not just within the context of the British Empire, but also with respect to North American history, Chinese history and the history of the Pacific and Southeast Asia. In the process, core business in Australian history has been revised.

Authors have been asked to write beyond their own interpretative positions, to present and explain key trends and events, and, where debate has been significant, to explain to the reader the contours and implications of the changing historiography. There is no uniform voice, but there is consistency of scope and scale. None of these chapters are simply essays displaying an author's specialism. They are all more than that, and the list of further reading at the end of each volume directs the reader to the key works in the authors' fields. In addition to the design of each volume as a coherent whole, contributors had the opportunity to consider their own chapters in the light of the others, and to discuss questions of treatment, nomenclature and coverage.

Australian readers will recognise how strongly the past shapes the present, from the commemoration of wars fought on foreign soil to the 'history wars' fought over frontier violence; and from the recuperation of local history to the integration of migrant histories that graft onto Australian life the past of other places. The contributors have not shied from the contested nature of such uses of the past but neither have they allowed their own sympathies to prevail over the obligations of historical scholarship. International readers, untroubled by the fault lines of domestic sensibilities, will appreciate a treatment that attends to the distinctive features of Australian history.

Preface

The preparation of these volumes has been a collaboration enjoyed with many colleagues. Particular thanks go to David Armitage, Richard Broome, Anne Clarke, Ann Curthoys, Graeme Davison, John Hirst, Rebecca Kippen, Cindy McCreery and Tim Rowse. Frank Bongiorno provided invaluable advice as we brought the project to conclusion. For research assistance we are grateful to Hannah Forsyth, Chris Holdridge, Sean Cosgrove and Tiarne Barratt. Three meetings were held with contributors, to develop and refine chapters, in Launceston, Sydney and Adelaide. They were made possible by the generosity of the Harvard Committee on Australian Studies, the universities of Sydney and Melbourne, and the Australian Historical Association.

> Alison Bashford, Sydney Stuart Macintyre, Melbourne

ALISON BASHFORD AND STUART MACINTYRE

The Commonwealth of Australia was inaugurated on the first day of the twentieth century. Devised by elected representatives of the colonies, adopted by popular plebiscites and enacted by the imperial parliament at Westminster, this federal union created a nation-state that enjoyed exclusive possession of an island continent. It practised a system of democratic self-government that was both advanced and durable. The defining characteristics – a constitutional monarchy, a bicameral legislature elected on a common franchise, the executive responsible to the lower house, its activity restricted to federal functions – have resisted alteration. Similar constitutional arrangements persist in the six States, which have withstood repeated calls to redraw their boundaries and revise their functions. Despite the accretion of central government, the Constitution remains as it was on I January 1901, making Australia one of the oldest uninterrupted democracies.

The continuities extend beyond the framework of government. In 1901 there were 3.8 million Australians and they constituted 0.23 per cent of the world's population; by the end of 2012 the Australian population had risen to 22.8 million, still only 0.32 per cent of the global population. Occupying a vast landmass, the new nation used advanced methods to extract minerals and produce raw materials for the world market; mineral and energy exports still underwrite the nation's prosperity. Throughout the century the great majority of people lived not in the interior but along the coast, most of them in the south-east corner of the continent. In 1901 they enjoyed a comparatively high standard of living, with incomes that allowed most to participate in discretionary expenditure; many commentators are once again celebrating the exceptional character of Australian economic affluence and growth in a world still coming to terms with the global financial crisis (GFC) of 2007–08. In 1901 there were already high levels of literacy and advanced systems of communication. The citizens of the new Commonwealth were also

British subjects with an awareness of their place in the world, the imperial links partly easing their anxieties but not satisfying their desires for national affirmation.

Settler colonialism had established vigorous patterns of settlement, growth and prosperity, but the new Commonwealth was formed in adversity and turmoil. A severe Depression in the early 1890s was followed by a prolonged drought that lasted until 1903. With the fall in export income and withdrawal of investment, immigration stopped and did not resume until well into the first decade of the new century. Trade unions confronted employers in violent disputes and the subsequent collapse of the labour market brought widespread destitution. Both the formation of the Labor Party and the demands of feminists for fuller citizenship rights and greater protection of women and families arose out of these tribulations.¹

Chapter I relates how the early Commonwealth parliament devised new national institutions to provide respite from these vicissitudes. It imposed a tariff on imported manufactures to promote local industries, created an Arbitration Court to resolve disputes, encouraged the Court to determine a fair and reasonable wage for male breadwinners, and provided an old-age pension and a maternity benefit. Bowing to race nationalism, it also devised a scheme to prevent the entry of Asians, ended the use of Pacific Island labour in the north, and denied both the vote and welfare benefits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The States meanwhile tightened institutional control over Indigenous people, and introduced a range of health and eugenic measures to nurture and improve the 'quality' of the national population.

The new forms of state activity gave Australia the contemporary reputation of an egalitarian social democracy. More recently, they have been described as marking out a particular way of affording social protection by means of a 'wage-earners' welfare state',² and of imposing a regulatory regime, 'the Australian Settlement', that lasted without significant challenge

I Susan Magarey, Sue Rowley and Susan Sheridan (eds), Debutante Nation: Feminism Contests the 1890s (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993); Helen Irving (ed.), A Woman's Constitution? Gender & History in the Australian Commonwealth (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1996); Marilyn Lake, Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999); Raymond Markey, The Making of the Labor Party in New South Wales, 1880–1900 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1988); Frank Bongiorno, The People's Party: Victorian Labor and the Radical Tradition 1875–1914 (Melbourne University Press, 1996).

² Francis G. Castles, The Working Class and Welfare: Reflections on the Political Development of the Welfare State in Australia and New Zealand, 1890–1980 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985).

into the 1970s and condemned Australia to insular mediocrity – 'a young nation with geriatric arteries'.³

Several contributors contest the idea of a lasting settlement. They interpret the new institutional arrangements as an exercise in nation building, and identify repeated challenges that led to substantial changes in their operation. World War I brought an extension of state activity but its heavy toll – 60,000 deaths in Australia's population of 4.5 million - fractured the national consensus. World War 2 was less divisive and cost fewer lives - 38,000 in a population of 7 million – yet it stimulated much greater change. Under the demands of a total war following Japan's entry into the conflict, the federal government imposed far-reaching controls over every aspect of national life. The planning and administration of the war effort required new forms of expertise, with lasting effects on public policy. The mobilisation of the country changed an excess of labour into a shortage, pointing up the abject failure of the protective arrangements during the Depression of the 1930s and indicating the need for a new kind of economic management that would maintain full employment along with an expanded provision of education and social welfare.4

It is noteworthy that the two wars and the Depression in between created political turmoil but did not alter a two-party alignment that has proved remarkably resilient. The rise of the Labor Party, the first of its kind anywhere to win office, with an electoral majority in 1910, forced the two older parties to combine. The Protectionist and Free Trade parties were voluntary associations of like-minded parliamentarians linked loosely to a limited extra-parliamentary organisation, whereas Labor was a party of a new kind, built on a mass base and with a binding structure. The fusion of the Protectionists and Free Traders into the Liberal Party in 1909 enabled them to compete on equal terms.⁵

Labor split during World War I and the prime minister, William Morris Hughes, took part of its support base across to the other side, which rebadged itself as the Nationalist Party. The wartime disruption of agriculture exacerbated the discontent of farmers with the city-based Nationalists. They responded by forming their own Country Party, but after Hughes was

³ Paul Kelly, The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), p. 13.

⁴ Paul Smyth; Australia Social Policy: The Keynesian Chapter (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1994); Nicholas Brown, Governing Prosperity: Social Change and Social Analysis in Australia in the 1950s (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵ Paul Strangio and Nick Dyrenfurth (eds), Confusion: The Making of the Australian Two-Party System (Melbourne University Press, 2009).

removed from office it entered into a coalition arrangement that was maintained almost unbroken to the present. The Depression brought a similar reconfiguration. Labor, again in office, split under the pressure of austerity measures imposed by the crisis, and Joseph Lyons, its guardian of financial orthodoxy, crossed over to head the new United Australia Party. That party, in turn, fell apart when it was unable to provide effective leadership during World War 2, and was replaced in 1944 by the Liberal Party. Apart from the Country Party's change of name to the National Party in the 1970s, that completed the evolution of Australia's major political parties.

The two-party system was consolidated in the first half of the twentieth century by institutional arrangements expressive of the Australian political culture. Parliamentarians were paid generously from the outset, and the franchise was extended quickly to all white adults. In 1911 they were required to enrol as voters, and in 1924 they were compelled to vote. Preferential voting for the House of Representatives was introduced in 1918, accommodating multiple non-Labor candidatures for the single-member electorates. Labor survived its setbacks, non-Labor was regenerated by its periodic metamorphoses, and both tempered their ideologies to the requirements of an electoral majority.

The self-adjusting nature of this form of politics was cast in doubt by the long period of Liberal–Country Party Coalition government between 1949 and 1972. After the domestic effects of the Cold War brought about another Labor split in 1955, it seemed in danger of becoming a permanent opposition. The Coalition, on the other hand, was so firmly embedded in office that it resisted forces for change. Chapter 5's treatment of this impasse is complemented by other chapters that deal with gender, Indigenous Australia, cultural life and relations with the Asia-Pacific region. The sudden release of these pressures following the retirement of the long-serving prime minister Robert Menzies in 1966, and then the hectic period of government under the Labor prime minister Gough Whitlam from 1972 to 1975, coincided with the downturn of the world economy and the breakdown of both economic protection and Keynesian economic management.

The problems that confronted Australia in the 1970s after 25 years of sustained growth and full employment might be added to the two world wars and the Depression of the 1930s as a fourth crisis stimulating change, but on this occasion the change was contained within the established party system. Chapter 6 is concerned with the extended period of instability following the Menzies era, while Chapter 7 describes the new bipartisan consensus emerging around the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and 1990s

as first the Labor government of Bob Hawke and Paul Keating and then the Liberal–National Party Coalition government of John Howard reshaped Australia's arrangements to meet the new circumstances of globalised economic competition.

Both Labor and the Coalition enjoyed long stretches of electoral success, but with a shrinking membership base and declining political participation. Capable of effecting major policy changes and reshaping the operation of government, they were far less successful in altering core institutions. The failure of the campaign for a republic at the end of the century left Australia as a constitutional monarchy, with partisan argument over the symbols, status and even the identity of its head of state suggestive of an exhausted capacity for innovation. Efforts to enlarge citizenship or codify rights have also failed. The federal system endures, despite the continuing fiscal imbalance between the Commonwealth and the States that has duplicated the administration of government services and weakened accountability.

From early in the twentieth century Australia aspired to overcome its reliance on the export of raw materials. Not only were these subject to the uncertainty of demand and vagaries of climate – so starkly demonstrated in the Depression and drought of the 1890s – but they signified a condition of dependence that the new nation aspired to overcome. The protection of local industry would support a larger population, create a bigger domestic market, build expertise and promote self-sufficiency. The protection of living standards would underwrite a prosperous and harmonious Commonwealth. This regime of protection and state assistance brought an expansion of the manufacturing sector over the first half of the century, but in the second half manufacturing peaked and began to decline. That decline accelerated from the 1980s so that Australia's trade is once more dominated by commodity exports. But as the chapter on the economy explains, it is the services sector that has grown throughout the century to its present commanding position.

Australia's economic performance in the early part of the twentieth century was weak. National income stagnated on a population basis for the first three decades, fell during the Depression and only began to increase in the late 1930s. It grew rapidly after World War 2, and most citizens shared the benefits of the long boom that spanned the third quarter of the century. A further period of sustained growth since the beginning of the 1990s has lifted per capita income to nearly six times that in 1901, and broader indicators of wellbeing confirm the improvement. An earlier generation of economic historians explored the search for stable growth and the trade-off between

regulation and competition.⁶ More recent work is concerned with explaining the determinants of growth, and the relative contributions of the increase in the factors of production and improvements in the efficiency of their use.⁷ The importance of land and natural resources, a factor with which Australia is so richly endowed, has implications for a range of subjects taken up in this volume, including the environment, transport and communications, and the civic and economic status of Indigenous Australians.

The improved economic performance after World War 2 brought greater equality of wealth and income. It is less clear that the growth over the past two decades has been shared so widely; indeed, the available measures of inequality suggest a widening gap. Occupations in the service sector are more diverse than those in manufacturing, for they range from lucrative professions to poorly paid process work. The effects of deregulating the labour market and replacing public with private provision are apparent in chapters on social structures, class and education.

While Australia remains a prosperous trading nation, the patterns of trade have changed decisively. In the early twentieth century the country sold commodities to the industrial economies of Europe, and especially Britain. Britain bought wool, wheat, meat and dairy products and sent manufactures, capital, technology and expertise. Similar imports were drawn from the United States as it overtook Britain as the leading industrial power. But the rise of Asia in the closing decades of the century transformed Australia's trading links.

For most of the twentieth century, strategic alliances were linked closely to economic relations. As the chapter on security explains, Australia's global outlook was shaped by its membership of the British Empire, and it asserted regional interests by seeking to influence imperial and later US strategic policy. A chapter on the British connection suggests how the imperial ties frayed rapidly during the 1960s – just as President Nixon signalled a reduction of military involvement in Southeast Asia. Finally, the chapter on Australia's relations with Asia suggests how this withdrawal forced a belated but incomplete engagement with the countries of the region, and attempts to enter and shape regional forums. Australia was also drawn into the affairs of the smaller island nations immediately to its north, such as East Timor, Papua New Guinea and the Solomons, as they wrestled with the consequences of

⁶ N.G. Butlin, A. Barnard and J.J. Pincus, *Government and Capitalism: Public and Private Choice in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1982).

⁷ Ian W. McLean, *Why Australia Prospered: The Shifing Sources of Economic Growth* (Princeton University Press, 2013).

decolonisation. Australia has thus assumed the mantle of a middle power, with the demands and consequences that entails. Still cleaving to the alliance with the United States, it faces the unwelcome prospect of a confrontation between its strategic ally and China, since 2009 its principal trading partner.

An incubus of the early Commonwealth was the aspiration for a white Australia. As the opening chapter of this volume explains, there was no need to pass the *Immigration Restriction Act* in 1901 since the colonies had already adopted measures to prevent Asian immigration. It was legislated partly because migration was now a Commonwealth responsibility, partly to serve political purposes, but mostly as a declaration of national integrity. This need to proclaim the principle of consanguinity became a habit when Australian leaders appeared on the world stage. All of the British settler societies, including the United States, restricted immigration on a racial basis but W.M. Hughes stood out at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 for his obdurate hostility to any concession. Herbert Vere Evatt, a later external affairs minister in a Labor government, defended the domestic jurisdiction over migration policy at the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco in 1945, and Robert Menzies continued to uphold discriminatory policy and practice into the mid-1960s.⁸

The white Australia policy was slowly dismantled during the post-war period but this was a protracted process with no clear marker of its demise. 'It is dead', the minister for immigration insisted in 1973. 'Give me a shovel and I will bury it'.⁹ By this time the policy's repugnance was widely recognised, and a new generation of historians documented its pervasive significance across the long stretch of Australian history. This critique became a standard component of a revisionist account of Australian nationhood that drew attention to ethnic minorities as victims of prejudice and discrimination.¹⁰ More recent work has explored the diverse experiences of Chinese, Pacific Islander, Indian and other settlers, and the ways in which they interacted within local communities.¹¹

- 8 Sean Brawley, The White Peril: Foreign Relations and Asian Immigration to Australasia and North America 1919–78 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1995).
- 9 Quoted in Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2005), p. 1.
- 10 For example, Humphrey McQueen, A New Britannia: An Argument Concerning the Social Origins of Australian Radicalism and Nationalism (Melbourne: Penguin, 1975); Raymond Evans, Kay Saunders and Kathryn Cronin, Exclusion, Exploitation and Extermination: Race Relations in Colonial Queensland (Sydney: Australia and New Zealand Book Company, 1975).
- II Ruth Balint, 'Aboriginal Women and Asian Men: A Maritime History of Color in White Australia', Signs, 37, 3 (2012): 544–54; Regina Ganter with Julia Martínez and Gary Lee, Mixed Relations: Asian–Aboriginal Contact in North Australia (Perth: UWA Press, 2006); John Fitzgerald, Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007); Heather Goodall, 'Shared Hopes, New Worlds: Indians, Australians

White Australia has been reinterpreted not just as a story of exclusion of Asians but also the exclusion of some British people defined as 'undesirable immigrants'. The 'whiteness' of white Australia was, for example, explicitly a matter of public health, of selecting out the unsound of mind and body, as well as selecting in the 'fit'.¹² Building, managing and shaping the population was core business for Commonwealth and State governments, pursued in part through encouragement of natural increase – though fertility rates remained low – and in part through immigration policies and laws. The slogan 'populate or perish' spoke to both. And 'perish' referred not just to a looming economic decline that might accompany low population density, but also to national security. Over several generations, the Commonwealth pursued projects that aimed to create infrastructure and introduce people to the sparsely populated north and west. In this respect, the patterns of nineteenth-century settler colonialism extended well into the twentieth century.

Although migrants trickled in from continental Europe for much of the period, immigration schemes drew exclusively on Britain until after World War 2. There were large intakes in periods of prosperity: a surge on the eve of World War 1 (280,000 between 1909 and 1914) was followed by sustained numbers (320,000) in the 1920s. But departures outnumbered arrivals in the first years of the century and again during the Depression. The government planned for an increased intake after World War 2 but was able to achieve its target of 1 per cent of the population per annum only by looking beyond Britain and accepting migrants from other European countries. Along with displaced persons resettled after the war, a generation of northern and southern Europeans significantly changed Australian culture. It was the end of the Vietnam War that initiated substantial Southeast Asian movement to Australia, with people coming initially as refugees, and the immigration program extended later to East and South Asia. Numbers continued to fluctuate according to the demand for labour, with troughs in the 1970s and early 1990s, but the long-term effect was to increase the proportion of overseas-born Australians to the present level approaching 30 per cent.

For the first quarter-century of the post-war immigration program there was an expectation that newcomers would adapt and conform to

and Indonesians in the Boycott of Dutch Shipping 1945–1949', in Shanti Moorthy and Ashraf Jamal (eds), *Indian Ocean Studies: Cultural, Social, and Political Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 158–96; Julia Martínez, 'Indonesians Challenging White Australia: "Koepangers" in the North Australian Pearl-Shell Industry, 1870s to 1960s', *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 40, 117 (2012): 231–48.

¹² Alison Bashford, Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), chs 5–6.

'the Australian way of life'.¹³ Cultural 'assimilation' – understood by policy makers at the time as progressive – was abandoned in the 1970s in favour of multiculturalism. This term was borrowed from Canada where it was designed primarily to accommodate Québécois demands. Multiculturalism in Australia had a different purpose: the recognition of ethnic diversity and the provision of services to meet the needs of multiple migrant communities. Its supporters regarded multiculturalism as the acceptance of an accomplished fact and expected it to promote harmony, tolerance and inclusiveness. Those expectations were challenged in the 1980s, when there was public controversy over Asian migration, and from 1996, when the new Coalition government led by John Howard abolished several multicultural agencies and eschewed use of the term. These were minor skirmishes, however, in a far-reaching adaptation of policy and practice to the changed composition of the population.

In Indigenous policy, also, there was a shift from an idealised homogeneity to recognition of difference. It was assumed in 1901 that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would either assimilate into white society or die out. Responsibility for their welfare remained with the States, and for much of the first half of the century each State implemented its own policy. Queensland's system remained consistently idiosyncratic, generally abjuring assimilation and maintaining separate government reserves, but Indigenous people's lives everywhere were highly constrained. Assimilation policies with a rationale similar to those designed to turn migrants into 'new Australians' were pursued after World War 2. Formal discrimination was dismantled in the 1960s as the federal franchise was extended to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as they became eligible for Commonwealth welfare benefits and as they achieved wage equality in new industrial awards.

The constitutional referendum of 1967 that empowered the Commonwealth to make special laws for Aboriginal Australians might be taken as a watershed. It allowed the government to provide new forms of support and assistance for Indigenous communities, but disappointed those who expected the Commonwealth to use its new power to override the discriminatory practices of the States. It was at this point that the goal of achieving full citizenship and equal rights gave way to demands for recognition, restitution and self-determination. The ensuing struggle was accompanied by a renaissance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, and a wider awareness and

¹³ Richard White, Inventing Australia: Images and Identity 1688–1980 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981), ch. 10.

appreciation of the Indigenous dimension of Australian history.¹⁴ As the final chapter of this volume explains, this would recast the country's historical consciousness.

The nation's responsibility to Australians of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent had long been confined by the peculiar nature of its foundations as a settler society. In contrast to the earlier European settlement of North America and the subsequent British occupation of New Zealand, it proceeded without negotiation with its Indigenous people and in the absence of treaties recognising their prior occupancy; the implications of this failure have attracted attention in a growing body of comparative histories.¹⁵ New histories that cast doubt on the legal doctrine of terra nullius fed into the finding of the High Court in the 1992 Mabo judgment that native title had not ended with the assertion of British sovereignty.¹⁶ Additional research into the management of Indigenous people during the twentieth century stimulated official inquiries into the enduring effects of past wrongs, such as the 1997 Bringing Them Home report on the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who had been taken from their parents, a practice that continued well into the second half of the twentieth century. As with multiculturalism, there was resistance to these changes, and fierce criticism of the historians who contributed to them for impugning the national honour.¹⁷

These and other reappraisals contributed to efforts to bring about a formal reconciliation. Yet while the Commonwealth parliament adopted a statement of apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008, it was no longer clear how reconciliation was to be secured. The recognition and restoration of land rights were hedged by competing claims for property and resources, while the policies of self-management gave way to government intervention following the 2007 report *Little Children Are Sacred* on the abuse of children in Indigenous communities. Indigenous leaders with links to government and resource industries supported the intervention. In criticising welfare

17 Bain Attwood, Telling the Truth about Aboriginal History (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005).

¹⁴ Henry Reynolds, *The Other Side of the Frontier: An Interpretation of the Aboriginal Response to the Invasion and Settlement of Australia* (Townsville: History Department, James Cook University, 1981).

¹⁵ For example, Peter H. Russell, *Recognising Aboriginal Title: The Mabo Case and Indigenous Resistance to English-Settler Colonialism* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006); Peter Russell, 'Colonization of Indigenous Peoples: The Movement toward New Relationships', in Margaret MacMillan and Francine McKenzie (eds), *Parties Long Estranged: Canada and Australia in the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), pp. 62–95; Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia* 1788–1836 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

¹⁶ Henry Reynolds, The Law of the Land (Melbourne: Penguin, 1987); Tim Rowse, After Mabo: Interpreting Indigenous Traditions (Melbourne University Press, 1993).

dependency, they called for participation in the opportunities of other Australians and the incorporation of 'Indigenous people within a reconciled, indivisible nation'.¹⁸

Just as the imagined racial unity of the nation has given way to a recognition of difference, so Australian society at large has undergone diversification. At the beginning of the century it was marked by spatial patterns, structures and norms that determined circumstances and life chances. The family was buttressed by the privileges accorded to the male breadwinner by the system of wage determination, motherhood by control of sexuality and the elevation of 'maternal citizenship'. Church membership provided opportunities for recreation and socialisation as well as worship, and a wide range of voluntary associations spanned the denominational divisions. These arrangements found expression in the idealised 'Australian way of life', as it was promulgated in the 1950s. Full employment and economic growth had made for high rates of home ownership (70 per cent by 1961) in the new suburbs that extended the principal cities. Church attendance increased, greater leisure and an expanded range of facilities supported community life, improved educational provision opened up new opportunities.

Yet this apparently stable order began to fragment rapidly in the last part of the twentieth century. Domesticity and motherhood no longer satisfied the expectations of all women. The birth rate, which had risen in the 1940s, resumed its downward trend. Marriages occurred later, were more likely to end in divorce and began to lose their ascendancy as the only authorised site for sexual expression and family formation. Women entered the workforce in increasing numbers, while men who lacked trade or professional skills could not count on secure, full-time employment. The working week was no longer confined to 40 hours from Monday to Friday. A decline in religious adherence, along with the spread of shopping and leisure into Sunday, robbed the churches of their place in community life. The car, the mobile phone and the internet broke the confines of the neighbourhood. Rather than seeing these changes as ending community, Chapter 12 suggests that they created new communities of interest. Greater prosperity allowed greater choice to its beneficiaries, but widened the gulf between rich and poor.

Such late-twentieth-century changes were not unique to Australia, but they built on a propensity for innovation and renewal that is identified in a number of chapters. There was a rapid uptake of new technologies in transport and communications, which had particular significance in a large

¹⁸ Noel Pearson, Up from the Mission: Selected Writings (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2009), p. 5.

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island continent, as well as a keen interest in scientific knowledge that could reshape the natural environment, and a corresponding sensitivity to the consequences of doing so. Australia's cultural and media history reveals a similarly eager acceptance of radio, cinema and television, as well as a recurrent tension between the claims of national culture and the power of international influences.

In the early years of the last century Australians took pride in the institutions they devised to build a prosperous and progressive new nation. In the opening years of the present century there were renewed claims for the Australian way, even 'the Australian miracle'.¹⁹ The country's success in weathering the difficulties besetting advanced economies after the financial crisis of 2007–08 was attributed to the major reforms it made in the 1980s and 1990s. This Australian way was a mix of neoliberal economic policies, prudent regulation and social welfare measures, and it was seen to have secured continuous expansion with low inflation, strong employment and a cohesive, resilient society. The emphasis here was on the political leaders who overcame resistance to change, leaders with competing convictions but a shared patriotism.²⁰

This, the most recent claim to Australian exceptionalism, appeals to the political class – the highly educated, prosperous, networked and mobile insiders who are its champions and beneficiaries. The final chapters in Part I qualify their claims for the gains that have been won, and suggest that the celebrants pay insufficient attention to the problems of political disengagement and constriction of public debate. Other chapters explore the consequences of these problems. If the pattern of change and continuity suggested by this volume of the *Cambridge History of Australia* holds true, it indicates that no settlement is final.

¹⁹ George Megalogenis, The Australian Moment: How We Were Made For These Times (Melbourne: Viking, 2012).

²⁰ Paul Kelly, *The March of Patriots: The Struggle for Modern Australia* (Melbourne University Press, 2009).

PART I

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Nation building, 1901–14

Ι

JOHN HIRST

Since there was no urgency over the formation of the Australian Federation, the timing of its inauguration could be planned well beforehand. The premiers of the six colonies agreed on the date of I January 1901. The opening of a new century seemed fitting for the launching of a new nation that appeared destined, given all its advantages, to be in the van of progress. Australia possessed a whole continent with no frontiers other than the sea, and its people were of one stock (British) with no entrenched enmities or social division, who enjoyed the highest living standards in the world. The Indigenous population, devastated by the European invasion, was assumed to be dying out.

The actual circumstances of the new nation were dire. The effects of the bank collapses and Depression of the early 1890s had not disappeared when they were followed by a severe drought that ran from 1895 to 1903. It is now known as the Federation Drought. Though Australia was a highly urbanised society, it was heavily reliant on its rural industry. Small-scale wheat farming was becoming more widespread, but the nation's staple was still wool growing, which the drought devastated. Sheep numbers fell from 100 million to 50 million. Only Western Australia escaped depression, a result of the discovery of gold at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. Melbourne, which had become the largest city in the country as the result of the gold rushes of the 1850s, was hit hardest by the Depression. Tens of thousands of its people migrated to the west. Sydney, the founding city of the nation, overtook Melbourne in population in the 1890s and kept its pre-eminence.

Australia was losing population through emigration when the Commonwealth was created. Migration from the United Kingdom had virtually ceased and did not resume until 1906, when the States recommenced the subsidy schemes that were necessary to attract migrants to such a remote destination. Though not envisaged by the constitution makers, the federal government involved itself in the organising and promotion of migration. The creation of the Commonwealth focused attention on the need to justify its claim to the whole continent, most of it only sparsely settled, and with a total population of only 4 million. Immigration peaked at 90,000 in 1912, the largest intake until 1949, but Australia was not able to match the attractive-ness of United States and Canada, which were growing much more rapidly.¹

Founding a polity

Though high hopes were held for the Commonwealth, the straitened times meant that not too much money was to be spent on it, at least until the breaking of the drought. To save money on salaries, the new federal parliament was small - 36 members in the Senate and 75 in the House of Representatives - fewer than in the parliaments of the two leading colonies of New South Wales and Victoria. Until the Commonwealth built its own capital, the new parliament used the Victorian parliament house in Melbourne, the most opulent in the country, which gave the new parliamentarians plenty of room to move. They were so determined to be frugal that they came close to postponing the creation of the federal High Court, which would have left Commonwealth law to be interpreted by the courts of the States or the Privy Council. It required all the rhetorical powers of Alfred Deakin, the first Commonwealth attorney-general, and his threat of resignation before the parliament agreed in 1903 to the creation of the High Court. Even then, it reduced the number of judges from five to three and denied them a pension.

At the time of Federation there were ten ministers in the Victorian Cabinet in charge of departments. The Commonwealth began with seven departments. Of these only two had a substantial number of employees: the customs and the post offices that had been taken over from the colonies. The other departments were External Affairs (held by the prime minister, Edmund Barton), Attorney-General, Home Affairs, Treasury, and Defence. That Defence is in this list might surprise: it had few employees because the colonial forces that it inherited had tiny numbers of full-time soldiers and otherwise relied on volunteers and militias.

New South Wales and Victoria had rather belatedly followed Britain and removed political patronage from appointments and management of the public service. Independent commissioners were put in charge, who used examinations to control entrance and made merit as well as seniority the test for

I Eric Richards, Destination Australia: Migration to Australia since 1901 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008), ch. 2.

promotion. A scheme of this sort was drawn up for the new Commonwealth service providing, as in the two colonies, for three commissioners. Cabinet reduced the three commissioners to one commissioner to be assisted by travelling inspectors (at lower salaries). Even so the plan was criticised as extravagant in parliament, which reduced the salaries of the commissioner and inspectors.²

The administrators and clerks of the Commonwealth public service occupied rented premises in Melbourne. They were to remain in that city for an extended time because of the protracted process of choosing a site for and constructing the nation's capital. The Constitution had determined that it was to be in New South Wales, but at least 100 miles (160 kilometres) from Sydney. In 1913 the governor-general laid the foundation stone of the commencement column at Canberra, which turned out to be more stone than foundation, for the column was never built. In the same year in Melbourne, Commonwealth departments moved into the first office building owned and constructed by the Commonwealth, so clear was it that Canberra was to be long delayed.

The Constitution had allocated a limited number of powers to the Commonwealth and left the rest to the States. Sometimes the constitution makers spoke of the new federal parliament and government as having very little to do, but they could not help giving this limited government very ample funds. On I January 1901 the Commonwealth began collecting customs duties, which had been a chief revenue source for most of the States. The formation of a customs union was the clearest economic benefit of Federation, but it created the difficulty of giving to the Commonwealth more revenue than it was presumed to need and depriving the States of revenue that they certainly required. It was on the services provided by the States that the people more immediately relied: roads, railways, ports, schools and police.

How the States were to receive back from the Commonwealth the income surplus to its needs was the most complex problem the constitution makers had faced. Finally it was decided that for ten years at least three-quarters of the income collected by the customs should be returned to the States. But after the ten years were up, the States would have to depend on the Commonwealth's largesse, a mismatch between responsibilities and income that has continued.

The creation of an Australian customs union had long been proposed before it was embodied in the plan of Federation. The difficulty of achieving

² Gerald E. Caiden, *Career Service* (Melbourne University Press, 1965).

it had been that the two leading colonies were committed to contrary trade policies, Victoria for protection and New South Wales for free trade. Henry Parkes, premier of New South Wales, proposed in 1889 that this difficulty should be set aside: the federation should be created first and the new Commonwealth parliament should then settle the trade policy of the nation, a visionary initiative that amply justifies his title of 'the father of Federation'. Federation having been achieved on this basis, the issue of the first election was determined: would Australia trade openly with the world or protect its industries? The issue was somewhat muddied because the Commonwealth needed to collect a substantial revenue in customs so it could be handed back to the States. This obligation explains why free-trade New South Wales, which relied on customs revenue hardly at all, was suspicious of Federation and why the free port of Sydney had failed to vote in favour of the constitution at both federal referendums.

By the time of Federation the four smaller colonies had followed Victoria and adopted protection, at lower rates and with less ideological zeal; the chief prompt had been the need to raise revenue. New South Wales in the 1890s under the premiership of George Reid had moved closer to complete free trade because Reid introduced direct taxation on land and income so that he could scorn even a revenue tariff. In 1899 Reid lost government in New South Wales because the Labor Party, which held the balance of power, transferred its support to the Protectionist Party led by William Lyne.

These changes in New South Wales created a problem for the first Australian governor-general, Lord Hopetoun, who had to choose a prime minister before the federal parliament had been constituted. The inauguration of the Commonwealth was to occur in Sydney and it was commonly assumed that the first prime minster had to come from the founding colony of the nation. There were three claimants to the honour: Edmund Barton, a moderate protectionist who had led the federal movement outside parliament in New South Wales and had been leader of the Constitutional Convention of 1897-98; George Reid, who had organised the 1897-98 Constitutional Convention and as premier had with consummate skill carried New South Wales into the union; and William Lyne, the incumbent premier, who was much less distinguished than the other two and had urged a no vote at both federal referendums. Hopetoun chose Lyne on the basis that he was the premier of the oldest colony. Lyne was unable to get the leading protectionists in the other colonies to join him, so he returned the commission and recommended that the Protectionist Barton be sent for. Hopetoun's choice of Lyne has commonly been described as a blunder,

but the governor-general followed what he defended as the 'constitutional course' of allowing the premier of the senior colony to be prime minister or advise him on who should be. He thus avoided giving vice-regal blessing to a Free Trader (Reid) or a Protectionist (Barton) when trade policy was to be the issue at the forthcoming election.³

The unlikely chance of a Protectionist being premier of New South Wales in December 1900 led to the first Commonwealth ministry being constituted by Protectionists and so their cause had the advantage of incumbency at the first election. Barton assembled a strong ministry, five of its members having been premiers of their colonies. Its two most radical members were Alfred Deakin from Victoria and Charles Kingston, former premier of South Australia. They successfully urged Barton to include in his election platform a commitment to a white Australia in order to gain working-class support and the adherence of the Labor Party should it gain significant representation in the parliament. In New South Wales, where Labor was strongest, it was divided over the tariff; its platform for the federal election gave pride of place to the exclusion of cheap coloured labour under the banner of a white Australia.

Reid led the Free Traders at the election and had the disadvantage of not holding any official position, not even leader of the opposition, and being without a shadow cabinet. Nevertheless, he gave new energy to the free trade cause in the colonies outside New South Wales, all of which were at least nominally protectionist. In these places, especially in Victoria, free trade was associated with wealthy interests in commerce and land and with conservative parliamentarians. But Reid was a committed democrat who had fought successfully with his upper house to secure direct taxation and whose speaking style was markedly demotic. He was looking to garner votes from farmers who were now exporters, miners whose democratic sympathies rather than their interest had led them to support protection, and consumers everywhere. Protectionists thought the new nation must secure and expand its manufacturing sector; Reid offered a wider vision of progress, 'the whole world being open to the whole world'.⁴ He did well at the polls: in the House of Representatives a narrow loss to the Protectionists, 27 seats to 32, and in the Senate a win, 17 seats to 11. The other positions were held by the Labor Party, 15 seats in the Representatives and 8 in the Senate.

³ John Hirst, *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth* (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 274–84.

⁴ Sydney Morning Herald, 30 October 1900; (Melbourne) Argus, 3 November 1900.

Labor's success was the surprise of the 1901 election. As with the debut in New South Wales politics in 1891, Labor immediately held the balance of power in the Commonwealth, whose formation it had opposed as an undemocratic encumbrance. Its chief objection had been to equal representation of the States in the Senate, thinking that Labor would never do well in the small, 'backward' States of Tasmania and Western Australia. But at this first election Labor elected two senators from Western Australia (out of six) and one in Tasmania. In subsequent elections Labor's share of the vote rose spectacularly, and evenly across the country, until in 1910 with the support of 50 per cent of the people it secured a majority in both houses of the parliament.

One basis for Labor's success was the universal franchise for both houses and payment of members. The Constitution was shaped by liberal democrats who wanted to create a democratic Commonwealth and were more determined to do so because they wanted to reduce the hostility to Federation coming from the Labor Party. Labor had only one representative at the Constitutional Convention, but all Labor's supporters would be able to vote on the acceptance of the Constitution. So the 'undemocratic' Senate was to have the same franchise as the lower house, a novelty in the composition of upper houses, and could be dissolved early and brought into a joint sitting with the House of Representatives if it persistently blocked one of its measures. Senators, like the members of the Representatives, were to be paid, which was not universal for members of upper houses in the colonies. Payment of members was crucial to Labor's success since working men could not afford to be parliamentarians without it; and as their parliamentary salary amounted to comparative riches, they were free in parliamentary recess to devote themselves to organisation and recruitment, travelling free on the state-run railways.

At the first Commonwealth election the voting qualifications were those of the former colonies except that there was to be no plural voting (some States allowed property holders to vote wherever they held land). This meant manhood suffrage with some residential restrictions, and in South Australia and Western Australia womanhood suffrage as well. The Constitution provided that the Commonwealth could set its own franchise, though it could not take the vote from anyone who held it in the States. Therefore a uniform Commonwealth franchise had to be universal suffrage, which was enacted in 1902, with female suffrage encountering very little opposition. There was no residential qualification: electors had merely to be *living* in the electorate at the time of the poll. However, with this widening of the franchise came a contraction: Aboriginal people were not to vote except those who already had that right in the four south-eastern colonies.

In the 'undemocratic' Senate female suffrage was supported more strongly than in the House, whereas in some States upper houses were still blocking it. So the federal parliament became a democratic pacesetter, putting pressure on the States to fall into line, which they all did by 1909 when female suffrage at last became law in Victoria, the colony in which the movement to achieve it had commenced in the early 1880s. In the Commonwealth (and South Australia) women were eligible to stand for election as well as vote, but female candidates were not successful in this period.

White Australia and arbitration

In the Commonwealth parliament that assembled after the first election Labor gave its support to the Barton government on the basis of its firm commitment to white Australia. Before the parliament proceeded to settle the tariff, which would be a protracted business, the government introduced its Immigration Restriction Bill to cement Labor's support. The government pretended it was responding to some real need on the immigration front. It called for figures on the level of Asian immigration, which revealed that in recent years more Asians had left than arrived.⁵ In truth there was no pressing need for this measure because the colonies had taken action to deter Chinese immigration and Asian immigration generally. Deakin, the ministry's most accomplished orator, claimed an exalted rationale for the measure: that the desire to be 'one people and remain one people without the admixture of other races' had been the most powerful force in the making of the Federation.⁶ This frequently cited claim is quite misleading. Certainly the ideal of a white Australia was well developed, but the desire to control immigration did not operate as a major force for Federation. A scholarly survey of the debates at the constitutional conventions and the appeals made during the referendum campaigns reveals scant concern over this issue.7

Whatever the reason, the defining of the nation by the composition of its people was a fitting opening to the Commonwealth's career. The Labor Party made itself central to the debate on the immigration bill by objecting to the method by which the ministry proposed to exclude non-whites. Joseph

⁵ R. Norris, The Emergent Commonwealth: Australian Federation, Expectations and Fulfilment 1889–1910 (Melbourne University Press, 1975), p. 77.

⁶ M. Clark (ed.), Sources of Australian History (Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 494.

⁷ Norris, The Emergent Commonwealth, ch. 2.

Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, had made it clear that the Queen could not sanction an explicit exclusion of Asians or Africans, some of whom might be her subjects. He had suggested the method of a dictation test pioneered by Natal, which the ministry adopted in its Bill. Labor moved an amendment for a direct exclusion, which, to the surprise of the ministry, Reid and his deputy supported. Reid chided the ministry with being the 'puppets of the Imperial Government' and indeed it did seem to many members pusillanimous for the new nation to be taking direction from Whitehall.⁸ Reid, while premier of New South Wales, had accepted Chamberlain's advice; he was clearly making a play to detach Labor from the ministry. Barton would not budge; he threatened to resign if the amendment were carried and took on the fledgling nationalists: Australia was perfectly free to leave the British Empire, he said, but it was under cover of the British navy that Australia practised its exclusions. As one member noted, a republican Australia would have had to be much more polite to its Asian neighbours.9 A few Free Traders supported the ministry so it and the dictation test survived.

Much more decisive in ensuring a white Australia was the government's decision to phase out the use of Pacific Islanders as indentured labourers on the Queensland cane fields. This was announced by Barton in his policy speech and became the chief issue in the federal election in Queensland. The system had been a matter of contention in Queensland for years. It had been marked down for extinction and then reprieved. Labor in Queensland was fiercely opposed to it but had no influence since a grand coalition of Labor's opponents ruled the colony. The planters had supported Federation since it would open an Australia-wide market for their sugar while hoping that any move against their labour force would be delayed. Barton's immediate move against it outraged them and the Queensland government. But all complaints about the federal government destroying an industry vital to the State were undercut by the results of the federal election in Queensland. Of the fifteen men elected, only two supported the retention of the Pacific Islanders. Labor won the seat in the Representatives that included the sugar plantations; it won three of the six Senate seats, its best result in any state. Queensland politics had been transformed by the creation of the Commonwealth and the decisive move of its first ministry against the State's peculiar institution. It was as if the American South in 1860 had voted for Abraham Lincoln. The last labourers were to be returned to their islands by 1906. The Commonwealth

⁸ Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, vol. 4, p. 5278 (26 September 1901).

⁹ Ibid., pp. 5236, 5264.

placed a duty on imported sugar to protect the industry, and an excise was placed on local production, which would be lifted if the planter used white labour.

The exclusion of cheap coloured labour had at first been a working-class cause, urged by the trade unions and then the Labor Party. The policy widened from the protection of wage levels into a universally supported national ideal, becoming more profound as it grew: a society without an underclass, a society without the mixture of other races, a harmonious society, a society of racial purity, a society fitted to be the most progressive in the world. The white Australia ideal gave special point to a variety of schemes to produce a healthier people – playgrounds, crèches, women's hospitals, baby health centres, bush nurses, national parks - that were undertaken at this time by State governments and voluntary associations. The Commonwealth government pursued the ideal not simply through exclusion of non-whites but in checking the health of those white migrants who were admitted. In the politics of the Commonwealth, the working-class party was the most closely associated with the national ideal and the most alert to any threats to it, real or concocted, which helps to explain its amazing electoral success in the early life of the nation. Labor advertised itself as national and racial before anything else, its first objective being 'the cultivation of an Australian national sentiment based upon the maintenance of racial purity, and the development in Australia of an enlightened and self-reliant community'.¹⁰

Labor was a national party in another sense: it directed its appeal not just to the working class but to clerks, shopkeepers, farmers, small businessmen, all who laboured by hand and brain – to the people, everyone who was not a monopolist or exploiter, or as the Labor cartoonists had it, a fat man in a top hat.¹¹ Such an appeal would have been ineffective in a society rigidly divided by status where clerks and the lower middle class would not associate themselves with a working-class party. In Australia status differentiation was much weaker, which allowed Labor to win seats where there was no solid working-class base. A class party in its name and origins, Labor paradoxically did well in Australia because class mattered less.

The party manoeuvring over the Immigration Restriction Bill was indicative of how politics would play out in the early Commonwealth. The two

¹⁰ Ross McMullin, The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891–1991 (Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 56.

¹¹ This populist approach is highlighted in Nick Dyrenfurth, *Heroes & Villains: The Rise and Fall of the Early Australian Labor Party* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Press, 2011).

bourgeois parties regarded their policy difference as significant enough and Labor as not sufficiently threatening to allow both to angle for Labor support and to support Labor causes either for genuine or tactical reasons. Labor's appeal for the state to improve the workers' lot was not at odds with the outlook of most parliamentarians, who were liberals of an advanced sort; this was true of nearly all of the Protectionists and some of the Free Traders. Reid himself had led a reforming government in New South Wales with Labor support. There were conservatives in Australia who opposed the extension of state activity and the taxation of wealth, but their secure home was the upper houses of the States. Very few found seats in the democratic Commonwealth parliament. Since most of its members were ready to extend the activities of the state, the 'limited' Commonwealth soon disappeared and the 'state experiments' for which the colonies had been noted continued in this new sphere.¹²

Even in so-called machinery measures in the first parliament the state was to protect and advance living standards: only white labour was to be employed by contractors in the carriage of the Commonwealth mails by sea and minimum wages were stipulated in the public service. In the Senate Labor unsuccessfully proposed that equal numbers of men and women should be employed in the clerical branch (where they were to enjoy equal wages), which prompted an old objection – that women should be in the home – and a still unresolved one, that quotas are counter-productive. Labor had no quarrel with the rule that on marriage women were to leave the service.

The longest debate in the first parliament was over the tariff, which in design was only mildly protectionist, Barton's formula being that it was intended to raise revenue without damage to any existing industry. The tariff schedule was contested closely item by item. The Labor members were free of their usual caucus control and the effect of their votes was sometimes to help the government protect industries and sometimes to help the Free Traders protect consumers. Reid made great play of the government taxing bushmen's tents and the mangles used by poor washerwomen. In the Senate the Free Traders and the Labor members favouring free trade constituted a majority. The tariff ended up less protective and less likely to raise revenue than the government planned.

¹² William Pember Reeves, *State Experiments in Australia and New Zealand*, 2 vols (London: Grant Richards, 1902).

Prime Minister Barton retired to the bench of the newly constituted High Court before the second Commonwealth election in 1903. He took with him his Cabinet colleague, Richard O'Connor, also from New South Wales. The first chief justice of the court was Samuel Griffith, formerly chief justice of Queensland, the drafter of the 1891 constitution, which was the basis of the document enacted in 1900. All three of the founding judges interpreted the Constitution in a federalist spirit. Powers given to the Commonwealth and reserved to the States could not be read simply from the document; the sovereignty of the two levels of government had to be preserved so that they did not interfere with each other's operations. Likewise, a power given to the Commonwealth could not be used for a purpose that had been left to the States. The enormous increase in Commonwealth power effected by judicial interpretation came with the departure of all the founding judges by 1920.¹³

Deakin, a much more radical liberal and a more committed protectionist, became prime minister in Barton's place. Deakin was disappointed at the very limited protection achieved in the first tariff but for the moment was happy to call a truce on the tariff war. The second election brought a large increase in Labor representation, so that the three parties were now of equal strength. This was a period of great instability, though the parties were disputing over a matter to which in principle all agreed: the creation of a compulsory system of conciliation and arbitration to settle industrial disputes. This was the most characteristic initiative of the early Commonwealth, a declaration that old-world disputes were not to disrupt the social peace, as they had done in the early 1890s. Under the system employer organisations and trade unions were registered with the Arbitration Court as parties to disputes, real or contrived. These were not to be settled by strikes but by conciliation and arbitration, which would issue in an award for an industry that laid out in close detail its wages and conditions. Deakin's government introduced an arbitration bill in 1904, but Deakin would not accede to Labor demands that it include the railway workers, since they were servants of the State governments. When the House agreed to a Labor amendment to do just that, Deakin resigned and recommended that J.C. Watson, the Labor leader, be sent for, thinking that the party and the polity would benefit from Labor experiencing the responsibilities of office. Watson's ministry governed competently for a few months with Deakin's indulgence. It resigned when the

¹³ Brian Galligan, Politics of the High Court: A Study of the Judicial Branch of Government in Australia (Brisbane: UQP, 1987), chs 1–2.

House would not accept Labor's requirements that arbitration awards oblige employers to prefer workers who belonged to unions. A coalition of Free Traders and Protectionists then formed a government under George Reid. Deakin did not take office under it. He could never work with Reid, partly because of his distaste for this fat man's rollicking plebeian style and more because he had decided Reid was unprincipled on account of his wavering over federation in the 1890s. Reid's government passed the arbitration bill, including the railway workers, though the High Court later ruled their inclusion was unconstitutional. With the return of prosperity after 1904, union membership grew rapidly until it reached remarkably high levels. How far this reflected unusual commitment from workers or encouragement by the state remains a moot point.¹⁴ When Labor controlled both the House of Representatives and the Senate in 1910, stronger requirements to prefer unionists as workers were enacted.

Anti-socialism

While the three parties played musical chairs around the ministerial benches, moves were afoot outside parliament that would reduce the three parties to two. At its 1905 federal conference Labor drew up an Objective to head its platform, which was previously merely a shopping list of policies. The Queensland and Victorian branches wanted the objective to be the collective ownership or nationalisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange. This was thought too radical and was modified to the nationalisation of monopolies and the extension of the activities of the state, which was preceded by the commitment to a nation of racial purity. The modified objective still represented a strong commitment to socialism; those who wanted to deal first with monopolies were not lukewarm socialists, for they believed that competitive capitalism was ineluctably evolving into monopoly capitalism, which could be controlled for the common good only by state ownership. This was the position of Labor's two leading ideologues and propagandists: William Holman, who became premier of New South Wales in 1913 and William Morris ('Billy') Hughes, prime minister from 1915.

In response to these developments Reid launched a barnstorming anti-socialist crusade. This has been represented as a conservative scare campaign by a leader who knew that the free trade cause was lost.¹⁵ On

¹⁴ Peter Sheldon and Louise Thornthwaite, 'The State, Labour and the Writing of Australian Labour History', *Labour History*, 100 (2011): 83–104.

¹⁵ McMullin, The Light on the Hill, p. 56.

every point this is misleading. Reid did not have to create the fear of Labor; he capitalised on a mobilisation already begun in the form of organisations of employers, established farmers, and middle-class women, all concerned at Labor's growing strength, together with political groupings that went under names like Liberal and Reform Association, the People's Reform League, and Citizens' League. Some of these were inspired by conservatives and included conservatives, but to succeed they could not call themselves conservative or adopt a conservative program. It was a conceit of the Labor Party, followed too much by historians, that all the opponents of socialism were conservatives. Socialism was in fact opposed on liberal principles, which was the ground Reid took in a set-piece debate on socialism in 1906 with Labor's William Holman. Twigged as being only negative, on the second night of the debate Reid opened with a statement on the proper role for the state: it was to preserve liberty, improve opportunities of the people, chiefly through education, and generally undertake 'every necessary and good thing which the people cannot do for themselves or which smoothes the path of private enterprise'.¹⁶ This was an advanced liberal position.

Holman attempted to limit the debate to the current Labor platform, though he admitted that his own position was that in time everything would have to be nationalised. Reid took this to be Labor's real aim and summarised his objections in this way:

That the socialistic state converted a condition of liberty and free choice, such as prevailed in Australia today, into the condition of perpetual official authority and subjection...That the socialistic state instead of leaving the energies of mankind free to rise to the highest levels, cast them in an official mould, a blunder worse than a crime.⁷⁷

The ample role Reid endorsed for the state matched Australian practice. Labor spokesmen responded to the campaign against socialism by telling Australians they were already living in it. The Labor socialists clearly wanted much more public ownership than already existed, but state-run enterprises were not threatening in themselves in Australia or necessarily thought of as inefficient. Holman and Reid spent a long time in their debate disputing the record of state-run businesses here and overseas.

Labor's firmer attachment to socialism threatened the credibility of its cross-class appeal. In the short term, however, Labor's new radicalism

¹⁶ Sydney Morning Herald, 4 April 1906.17 Ibid.

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increased rather than threatened its appeal because the radical addition it made to its platform in 1905 was the taxation of large land holdings with the aim of breaking them up for more productive purposes. This was particularly attractive to small farmers and positioned Labor as making a valuable contribution to the cause, supported by all sides, of reviving immigration and further developing the resources of the country.

Reid may have hoped that his anti-socialist crusade would effect a major re-alignment in political allegiance, namely the end of Catholic hostility to himself and free trade. By the strange alchemy of a two-party system, Catholics in New South Wales, where sectarian feeling was strongest, were attached to protectionism. Parkes, who for most of the colonial period led the free trade cause, was a strong Protestant and responsible for removing public support from church schools. This made Catholics more favourable to protectionism, but scarcely at all on economic grounds. Once the tariff ceased to be an issue in State politics the choice was between the Free Traders, now the Anti-Socialist Party, and the Labor Party. On class grounds the Labor party was attractive to Catholics but their Cardinal, Patrick Moran, had issued strong warnings against socialism. He now wilfully ignored Labor's new commitment to socialism and said that the party was concerned only 'to redress wrongs and to alleviate the miseries of the labouring poor'. He criticised Reid's campaign directly and declared that Labor was a perfectly proper body for Catholics to support. It seems that he expected moderates would remain in charge of the party, which would be better guaranteed if more Catholics voted for it and represented it in parliament.¹⁸ So instead of the Catholic hierarchy sponsoring a Catholic Centre party, it sent the faithful to frustrate and undermine the secularists and socialists in the Labor Party.

Protection and new protection

Deakin was highly suspicious of Reid's anti-socialist campaign on many grounds, chiefly the likely effects of its success: if Reid persuaded everyone outside Labor's ranks, Protectionists and Free Traders, to combine against socialism then the tariff would disappear as an issue. The tariff would remain as settled in 1902, not truly protectionist. Indeed Reid boasted of his success in amending it in a free-trade direction. So anti-socialism was not

¹⁸ Patrick Ford, Cardinal Moran and the ALP (Melbourne University Press, 1966), pp. 273, 283.

an indication that free trade was a lost cause; if successful, it would kill off protectionism. $^{\mbox{\tiny 19}}$

Deakin himself was a target of Reid's campaign for being willing to accept Labor support. Deakin had a highly ambivalent attitude to Labor. He did not like the control of the Labor organisation over its parliamentarians and their obligation to vote as caucus directed. Yet he could support most of their immediate goals and wished that Labor would separate these from its more visionary commitments, which only gave a handle to Reid and all other Anti-Socialists. He took to lecturing the Labor Party; he wanted it to be less disciplined, less visionary and less equivocal on the tariff – all the qualities that made it successful.

Deakin's own position was increasingly precarious. His Protectionist following was being reduced to its Victorian heartland, not a party so much as members desperate to defend their seats against the Labor organisation that insisted on running candidates against them. Deakin seemed strangely impassive: he made no efforts to create an Australia-wide electoral organisation; all the new electoral power was behind Reid. His followers were deserting him, seeking closer relations either with Reid or Labor. He was, as always, contemplating leaving politics for he thought his true mission lay elsewhere as contemplative scholar or preacher. His distance from politics actually made him an effective operator; he took pleasure in being unfathomable and springing surprises. He had one trick left. The coalition government under Reid had been formed with his blessing, although, as we have seen, he ostentatiously declined to take office under it. The basis of the coalition was that neither Free Traders nor Protectionists would raise the tariff issue. In June 1905 Deakin found a pretext for proclaiming that Reid was breaking or about to break that undertaking. Deakin now had what he had not possessed previously: an undertaking of firm, continuous support from Watson, the Labor leader. Put into office by Deakin's contriving, Watson had learned how little he could accomplish without a majority. He was also afraid that Reid's campaign against Labor might lead to a strong anti-Labor coalition, especially if Deakin were to leave politics. He was a protectionist and the support he offered Deakin included support for protection. So Deakin rallied all Protectionists back into the fold and with the support of Labor upset Reid's coalition government (including its Protectionist ministers, to whom he gave no warning) and entered into a highly productive ministry. It survived the

¹⁹ How the causes of anti-socialism and free trade ranked in Reid's own mind has not been settled by his biographer, W.G. McMinn, *George Reid* (Melbourne University Press, 1989).

next election in 1906 when Labor made further gains and Deakin's party was reduced to the smallest in the House - 17 members in a House of 75 - and yet from this position he governed for another two years.

The Labor Party was won over to protection because in Deakin's hands it was to be 'new protection', a system that gave tariff protection only to employers who provided fair and reasonable wages to their employees. The discipline of the caucus came to Deakin's aid, constraining former Labor free traders to vote for the first protective tariff, which was carried in 1908. Deakin had grown up in Victoria with an alliance of workers and manufacturers in support of protection. He had managed to keep an alliance between Liberal and Labor alive just long enough to impose Victoria's economic policy on the Commonwealth.

The first mechanism tried to ensure that fair and reasonable wages were paid was the imposition of an excise on local production equal to the protective duty, with the excise being lifted when the proper wages were paid. The Arbitration Court was to determine the acceptable wage level, which it did in the Harvester judgment of 1907, concerning the protection of agricultural machinery. The judge, H.B. Higgins, decided that fair and reasonable wages must meet 'the normal needs of an average employee regarded as a human being in a civilised country', and further be sufficient to maintain a man, his wife and three children. Since women usually controlled household budgets, wives of trade unionists gave evidence on the pattern of their expenditure so that Higgins could settle on a minimum wage.²⁰

The High Court ruled this attempt at new protection invalid on the ground that the Commonwealth could not use its power over excise to control wages, over which it had no power, and so stymied all other plans to control wages by indirect means. However, in time this mattered little because in all subsequent awards Higgins adopted the living-wage standard. Labor became firmly attached to the system of the state ensuring that a man should be able to look after his wife and family, and showed no interest in a contributory system of social insurance. Its formula for social welfare was that governments should provide work if unemployment struck and men in work should be adequately paid, a preference now known as the 'wage earners' welfare state'.²¹ It did work as intended, but at the cost of denying adequate provision to households headed by women who, by the Court's own rulings, got much

²⁰ John Lack and Charles Fahey, 'The Industrialist, the Trade Unionist and the Judge: The Harvester Judgement of 1907 Revisited', *Victorian Historical Journal*, 79, 1 (2008): 3–18.

²¹ Francis G. Castles, The Working Class and Welfare: Reflections on the Political Development of the Welfare State in Australia and New Zealand, 1890–1980 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985).

less than the male wage. The economic cost of the system was that inefficient industries had to be given more and more protection to enable them to pay the state-determined wage rates, a nexus not broken until the 1980s, the lasting legacy of Deakin's outsmarting of George Reid.

Wage earners needed some welfare - when they could no longer earn wages. Deakin's government introduced an old age and invalid pension in 1908, paid for out of general revenue. All parties supported it and the delay in activating the one social welfare power that the Constitution had given to the Commonwealth was the necessity to accumulate the funds to pay for it. The payment of the pension was made subject to a means test on income and property, which was to become the Australian way in welfare provision, as was the exclusion of the family home from the property test, since home ownership was widespread among the working class.22 The government had proposed to exclude non-whites from the pension but the Chinese settled in the country and their children had their defenders in the parliament, so 'Asiatics' born in Australia were made eligible. George Reid spoke strongly on the basis of 'our common humanity' against racial discrimination in the payment of pensions and would have allowed Aboriginal people to receive them.23 Responsibility for Indigenous welfare, however, was a matter that had stayed with the States.

A national defence

After the protective tariff, Deakin's great achievement was to draw up the blueprint for the new nation's defence. Australia's safety rested on the British fleet and from 1887 the colonies had paid subsidies to assist in its maintenance. Barton had great difficulty in persuading the new federal parliament to renew the subsidy in 1903. Australia could not defend itself unaided but it seemed demeaning for the nation to buy its defence and do nothing for itself. With the rise of Japan, announced so clearly by its defeat of Russia in 1905, Australians were motivated by fear as well as pride to encourage the creation of their own naval force. It could at least provide destroyers and torpedo boats for the defence of Australia's coasts and shipping. The Admiralty was opposed to local navies and to locals having control of them; fully seized by the doctrines of the blue-water school, it insisted that Australia's safety rested on the ability of the British navy to defeat whatever enemy threatened

²² Graeme Davison, *The Rise and Fall of Marvellous Melbourne* (Melbourne University Press, 1978), pp. 184–5.

²³ Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, vol. 46, p. 11929 (3 June 1908).

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Australia and that contest might occur far from Australian waters. Power had to be concentrated to this end. But what if the Royal Navy was too occupied elsewhere – say, with the Germans in the North Sea – or delayed in coming to Australia's defence? Then surely a local force would be of some service. After a long battle with the Admiralty, Deakin gained its reluctant agreement to an Australian flotilla, the Admiralty now suggesting it be composed of the new submarines, which were not yet ocean-going. It would be subject to local control, with the Admiralty having to rely on assurances that in time of war the Australian ships would be transferred to its command.²⁴

While these negotiations were still in train, Deakin invited the 'Great White Fleet' of the United States to visit Australia on its round-the-world voyage. Formally the invitation had to go through the Colonial Office in London since Australia was still bound in foreign policy to the Empire, but informally Deakin had dealt directly with the Americans and had his invitation accepted. The Colonial Office sent a formal invitation, highly annoyed at being pre-empted by this gesture of independence. The visit in August 1908 was a great success and turned into a demonstration of white solidarity in the Pacific by the two new-world nations.²⁵ The Colonial Office thought this was Deakin showing that he had another string to his bow, but his motives were more complex than that. He wanted to encourage enthusiasm for an Australian navy, which would be expensive, and to strengthen the Empire by moderating the anti-British prejudice of the Americans. Deakin's battles with the Colonial Office were not because he was anti-British: he wanted Britain to take a more generous and inclusive approach to empire. Deakin was the supreme exemplar of the mixed loyalties of Australians whom he described as 'independent Australian Britons'.²⁶

To create an effective army Deakin proposed that all young men should undergo compulsory training. Conscription for home defence was a departure from British practice, which showed how strong was the fear of Japan and the doubt that the Royal Navy in all cases could defend Australia against invasion (which was always the form that Japanese hostility was presumed to take). Deakin was held hostage to the Admiralty's views on an Australian navy in part because he wanted its discipline and training to meet British

²⁴ Neville Meaney, A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy, 1901–23. Volume 1, The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901–1914 (Sydney University Press, 1976), chs 5, 6.

²⁵ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries* and the Question of Racial Equality (Melbourne University Press, 2008), ch. 8.

²⁶ Alfred Deakin, Federated Australia: Selections from Letters to the Morning Post, 1900–1910, ed. J.A. La Nauze (Melbourne University Press, 1968), p. 8.

standards. For the army he wanted something very different from British practice: no 'meretricious display, or glitter of gold lace, or glamour of a separate caste', with capacity to lead the only test for officers. This was to be an army in accord with 'the principles of Australian social life'.²⁷ Labor surprisingly supported compulsory training for the army, given it had the usual left suspicion of militarism, reinforced by the experience of the military being used in the strikes of the 1890s. W.M. Hughes almost single-handedly persuaded Labor out of its stock view, arguing that a citizen army on the Swiss model could not be used by the government against workers or for military adventures.²⁸

Liberals versus socialists

In November 1908, after the passage of the tariff, Labor withdrew its support from Deakin and ruled itself as a minority government. The Labor organisation was opposed to coalitions and to granting of electoral immunity to Deakin's followers. Immunity organised by Labor politicians had sometimes been overridden by local Labor leagues that wanted to run candidates. And why not? Nothing seemed likely to stop the Labor advance. Labor's leader was now the Scotsman Andrew Fisher, a former miner, handsome, not nearly as bright or as eloquent as his deputy, W.M. Hughes, but absolutely honest and straightforward and a willing servant of the party. At the 1905 party conference he had supported a complete socialisation of the economy as Labor's objective.

Negotiations now intensified for an amalgamation of the Free Trade/ Anti-Socialist and Protectionist parties. Deakin had long foreseen that Labor would give no quarter to him and his followers and that he would be forced into an unwelcome alliance with the Free Traders. But doing it was another matter. In policy terms he was still much closer to Labor, but even if he could have swallowed socialism he could never agree to the tribal requirement of voting as caucus directed.²⁹ He announced a condition for amalgamation with the Free Traders that he half-hoped would not be met – that his policy of protection and new protection must be accepted. But it was accepted with some minor fudging and Reid having been persuaded by his followers to

²⁷ Meaney, The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901–1914, p. 154.

²⁸ J.B. Hirst, 'Australian Defence and Conscription: A Re-assessment, Part 1', Australian Historical Studies, 25, 101 (1993): 608–27.

²⁹ Judith Brett, Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 20–7.

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retire, no major obstacle stood in the way of the fusion, as it was known. The organisation of the new grouping outside parliament called itself the Liberal Party, a name both Free Traders and Protectionists had used while denying its legitimacy to the other. By British standards, as Reid pointed out, he was the true liberal and not the heretical Protectionists.³⁰

Deakin led the fusion in parliament. It turned out the minority Labor government and governed for ten months before the election of 1910, which Deakin was confident of winning. The parties of the fusion had collected 60 per cent of the vote at the previous election, so it was not unreasonable to assume that Labor would be reduced to a perpetual minority. But this overlooked the disorientation of the fusion for the followers of its two amalgamating parties and Labor's huge pulling power. Labor increased its vote by an amazing 14 per cent and took control of both Houses.

The significance of the fusion has been much debated.31 In reviewing these interpretations the political scientist Peter Loveday is critical of the view that political formations simply represent some other underlying reality.32 Hence he is not sympathetic to the claim that the distillation of politics into Labor and anti-Labor reflected a polarisation of classes in society at large. There were certainly appeals to class in the language of politics, but this may have been generating class allegiance as much as reflecting it. Following his insistence that the political system be treated as a dynamic in itself, it can be suggested that three parties reducing to two was in part an effect of the Commonwealth running a first-past-the-post voting system in single-member electorates. In 1906 Deakin made a half-hearted attempt to introduce a preferential voting system in order to stop Reid benefitting from the contest between Labor and his Protectionists.³³ Under preferential voting, Deakin's party, though with the smallest and shrinking support, may have won seats on the second preferences of both Free Trade and Labor rather than being squeezed out of existence by them.³⁴ Preferential voting was introduced in 1918, which enabled two non-Labor parties, Nationalist

- 31 Most recently in ibid.
- 32 P. Loveday, 'Emergence: Realignment and Consolidation', in P. Loveday, A.W. Martin and R.S. Parker (eds), *The Emergence of the Australian Party System* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1977), pp. 453–87.
- 33 Deakin to Watson, 28 May 1906, Watson Papers, NLA MS 451/1/6; Watson to Deakin, 30 May 1906, Deakin Papers, NLA MS 1540/15/536.
- 34 Geoffrey Sawer, Australian Federal Politics and Law 1901–1929 (Melbourne University Press, 1956), p. 62.

³⁰ Paul Strangio and Nick Dyrenfurth (eds), *Confusion: The Making of the Australian Two-Party System* (Melbourne University Press, 2009), p. 61.

and Country, to compete against each other in elections, without giving Labor an advantage, and then govern in coalition.

What pushed the two non-Labor parties together was Labor's relentless rise. It is very difficult to interpret that rise as being wholly the consequence of a widening or deepening of working-class consciousness. Labor represented Catholics and small farmers as well as workers. Australia as a whole was only thinly industrialised and, most tellingly, Labor did best in the least industrialised States. Labor's vote in 1910 was highest (55 per cent for the Senate) in Tasmania, a society of farms, orchards and modest towns, with one remote mining settlement, and whose population of workers has been reckoned as only 23 per cent of the whole.³⁵

It is true that henceforth employers supported and financed the Liberal Party and trade unions the Labor Party. But this division hid the cross-class collaboration involved in the protection of manufacturing industry and wage-fixing by the arbitration system, measures that were supported by both major parties. Both also supported white Australia and the British connection as Australia's guarantee in defence. These policies have been given the name 'the Australian Settlement' by Paul Kelly in a book that traces their dismantlement in the 1980s.³⁶

The Labor government that took office in 1910 was very much a national as well as a workers' government. Fisher, the prime minister, boasted that Labor was *the* national party and he took pride in beginning the national undertakings long proposed: the commencement of Canberra, the railway across the Nullarbor to Western Australia, the taking over from South Australia of the Northern Territory where the Commonwealth was to test whether it could people the north with Europeans and end the shame of whites being outnumbered by Chinese and Indigenous people. Fisher took a personal interest in the symbols of nationhood, adding wattle to the coat of arms and putting a kangaroo rather than the King's head on the stamps.³⁷ Most marked was the government's commitment to defence: it instituted the compulsory military training and the building of a navy that Deakin had proposed. The navy was after all to be ocean-going, the Admiralty having decided to offload its responsibility for a Pacific fleet to the three Dominions of Australia, New Zealand and Canada. Defence expenditure doubled in Labor's first year of

³⁵ R.P. Davis, 'Tasmania', in D.J. Murphy (ed.), *Labor in Politics: The State Labor Parties in Australia* 1880–1920 (Brisbane: UQP, 1975), p. 395.

³⁶ Paul Kelly, The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992).

³⁷ Gavin Souter, Lion and Kangaroo: The Initiation of Australia (Sydney: Collins, 1976).

office and continued to grow.³⁸ The likely enemy was Japan, so their racial ideals and fears – the defence of white Australia – impelled the socialists to this uncharacteristic commitment.

The measures passed that were distinctive to the Labor platform were the inauguration of a Commonwealth Bank, which was to compete with rather than control the private banks, and the imposition of the tax on large landed estates. Not on the platform, and perhaps introduced to attract the female vote, was a payment to mothers on the birth of a child that controversially took no account of the marital status of the mother. Labor women and feminists welcomed the measure and strongly defended its availability to all mothers. Stressing women's nation-building work as mothers was a powerful weapon for feminists, though it locked women into a traditional role and made further advances against male privilege difficult.³⁹

The government's commitment to socialism lay in its plan to amend the Constitution to allow for the nationalisation of monopolies. The High Court had given a very narrow scope to the Commonwealth power over corporations and trade and commerce among the States. The government proposed a more than ample correction by giving the Commonwealth power to *control* all corporations and over trade and commerce *within the states*. These proposals represented an enormous increase in Commonwealth power at the expense of the States, with Deakin claiming that they would overshadow three-quarters of what the states undertook.⁴⁰ It was in defence of States' rights and against rule from Canberra (a bogey before it was built) that the Liberals chiefly based their opposition to the government's proposals rather than questioning the new power over monopolies. All parties had accepted that monopolies were a threat to the common good; the Liberals wanted to regulate or prohibit them, Labor to own them.

The government highlighted the significance of its proposals by holding the referendum vote apart from a general election, on 16 April 1911. If they were carried it would have two years before the next election in which to start acquiring monopolies, a process that was to begin simply by parliament declaring without enquiry that a commercial entity was a monopoly. Hughes, who had shaped the proposals and was their most effective advocate, declared that there were 33 trusts or combines operating in Australia.⁴¹ The campaign

³⁸ Meaney, The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901–1914, p. 277.

³⁹ Marilyn Lake, 'State Socialism for Australian Mothers: Andrew Fisher's Radical Maternalism in Its International and Local Contexts', *Labour History*, 102 (2012): 55–70.

⁴⁰ Sydney Morning Herald, 9 March 1911.

⁴¹ Sydney Morning Herald, 17 March 1911.

was intense for much was at stake: for Labor the chance to implement its socialist program; for the Liberals the defence of the States and of free enterprise. The members of the new Liberal Party had a cause that united them all.

The proposals were lost with only 40 per cent of the votes in favour and only one state, Western Australia, recording a majority (a majority overall and a majority of States in favour are necessary for success). The Liberals were delighted; at last the Labor advance had been halted. But Hughes was not deterred and announced immediately that similar proposals would be put at the next election due in 1913. On that occasion they came very close to success: 49 per cent in favour and majorities in three States. But Labor narrowly lost the election and the Liberals under Joseph Cook took office with a one-seat majority in the House and without control of the Senate.

There was no doubt of the determination of the Fisher government to enact the Labor program but within the trade unions a new group of militants was impatient at the slow progress of Labor governments in overturning capitalism. They also had little faith in the Arbitration Court and the wages boards of the states, and were very willing to resort to strike action - to the embarrassment of the Labor Party. The unions had been founders of the Labor Party but in the 1890s defeats in strikes and the Depression had much reduced their membership. Some unions simply disappeared. This left the politicians in charge of the party; now the militants wanted to claim it back for the working class. The politicians had successfully sought the support of small farmers, but in the eyes of the militants these were the class enemy, employers of labour and markedly ungenerous ones. They proceeded to organise the agricultural workers, assisted by Fisher's government having extended the coverage of the Arbitration Court to include them. This led to the presentation of a rural workers' log of claims defining hours of works and wages, which caused an outcry in farming districts. The log was chiefly responsible for Labor losing seven rural seats at the 1913 election and hence the election overall. The militants were to do more severe damage to a Labor government engaged in war.

The Cook Liberal government held its precarious position for a year, unable to pass legislation, and went to the people again in July 1914. Fisher promised that if elected Labor would again try to secure power to nationalise monopolies. As a sign of Labor's success with its policy, Cook promised constitutional amendments sufficient to repress monopolies. In the middle of the campaign World War 1 broke out. Both parties immediately pledged the utmost support for Britain. Interest in the election evaporated. Cook and his lame-duck ministers turned into statesmen as they abandoned campaigning for the organisation of Australia's war effort. Hughes, realising Labor's disadvantage, tried first to persuade the government to postpone the election. When that failed he wrote a new election manifesto for Fisher to sign, which claimed that Labor alone had created the nation's defence forces (overlooking Deakin's planning) and hence was the best party to take Australia to war.⁴² Hughes was heedless of Labor's having had a very different war in mind when it spent heavily on defence. A few Labor candidates and more militants in the unions were appalled at the campaign Labor now ran under Hughes' direction. But the Australian people gave the Labor Party the highest vote it has ever attained. So the socialist party turned bellicose and marshalled the Australian people for a European war, in which it was to be a major casualty. It would live on, but as a party merely, not as a crusade in sight of its goal. Since the Constitution had blocked Labor's plans for socialism, its hostility to the Constitution revived and deepened.

42 Sydney Morning Herald, 24 August 1914.

The Great War and its aftermath, 1914–22 STEPHEN GARTON AND PETER STANLEY

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On 31 July 1914, four days before Britain entered World War I, Andrew Fisher, son of a Scottish coalminer and sober, autodidact leader of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), sensing the profound shift to come in the tide of world affairs, pledged Australia's support for Britain's war effort down to 'the last man and the last shilling'.¹ Such sentiments echoed around the British Empire, particularly in its Dominions. The widely read Prairie novelist C.W. Gordon, for example, proclaimed that Canada would commit 'her last man and her last dollar'.² Britain, however, did not need to consult Dominion governments before declaring war on Germany: it was assumed that Britain's declaration spoke for all the Dominions. Yet at the peace conference in 1919, Britain's settler Dominions – Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa – insisted on signing the Treaty of Versailles in their own right, demanding their own conditions and in some instances becoming minor imperial powers themselves.³

The Canadian historian J.M.S. Careless has termed this new sense of hard-won independence 'dominion nationalism'.⁴ Before the war the Dominions had commonly seen themselves as settlements of Britons overseas; with the exception of Afrikaners and Québécois, they were tied self-consciously by a 'crimson thread of kinship' to their homeland.⁵ The experience of the Great War convinced many in the Dominions that

I See National Archives of Australia, 'Australia's Prime Ministers' http://primeministers/fisher/in-office.aspx#section6, accessed 29 August 2011.

² Quoted in J.H. Thompson, *The Harvests of War: The Prairie West 1914–18* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978), p. 32.

³ German New Guinea became a mandated territory of Australia and German Samoa came under New Zealand control on a similar basis. Nauru was a mandated territory under joint trusteeship of Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

⁴ J.M.S. Careless, Canada: A Story of Challenge (Cambridge University Press, 1953), pp. 339-46.

⁵ See Douglas Cole, ""The Crimson Thread of Kinship": Ethnic Ideas in Australia, 1870–1914', *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, 14, 56 (1971): 511–25.

they were different in temperament, dialect and culture from the British. Moreover, they thought the bravery of Dominion soldiers and the enormous losses they bore attested to independent nations that had earned the right to strut the world stage on their own terms. They might have remained part of the Empire but by war's end they were no longer settlements within an Empire but nations agreeing to be part of it.

The new status was born in the most terrible of circumstances. Of the 324,000 men who served overseas, 60,000 died there, while 150,000 returned wounded, ill or psychologically scarred, a casualty rate of nearly two-thirds, higher than that of any other Allied force. The fledgling Federation was now proclaimed a nation, although few acknowledged the social and emotional scars of such a founding.⁶ Australia shared the experience of other Dominions and came out of the war with a greater sense of national independence, bolstered by a 'myth of war experience'.⁷ But Australia's myth was unlike any other of the Great War and became the frame for its national imagining. Both at home and abroad, the war transformed the framework of Australian politics, society and culture with enduring consequences. It began with the enthusiasm of enlistment, found meaning on Gallipoli and ended with veterans finding a country different from the one they had left, transformed again by their return.

Australia at the front line

The war became widely known as the Great War, and was so named before it began. Repeatedly in the decade before war in Europe actually broke out in the northern summer of 1914, Australian newspapers referred to 'the next Great War' or 'the coming Great War', a usage also found overseas. Newspaper editorials and articles alluded to the prospect of a coming conflict – bigger than the war in South Africa or the Russo-Japanese War. Many Australians had expected to face a great 'race' war in the Pacific between Japan and 'white' nations but when European war was declared, it came as no surprise. And when it came, not only did European forces fight in Africa,

⁶ See, for example, Noel McLachlan, Waiting for the Revolution: A History of Australian Nationalism (Melbourne: Penguin, 1989), pp. 197–8. For a feminist reinterpretation critiquing the masculinist ideologies underpinning this founding, see Marilyn Lake, 'Mission Impossible: How Men Gave Birth to the Australian Nation – Nationalism, Gender and Other Seminal Acts', Gender & History, 4, 3 (1992): 305–22.

⁷ George L. Mosse, Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars (Oxford University Press, 1990).

Asia and the Pacific, Dominion armies travelled to the Middle East and Europe as well.

Australia, indeed, had been preparing for just such an eventuality. Its citizen military forces (including youths under compulsory training) and the Commonwealth's new navy anticipated such a threat. While the volunteer army might not have been planned in detail in the years before 1914 (as some nationalist historians have claimed), the discussions and negotiations before, during and after British imperial conferences, and the common organisation and mobilisation plans, meant the transition to war was relatively easy.⁸ Both popular and official expectation made the commitment of Australian military and naval forces to the Empire a foregone conclusion.

Australian newspapers reported the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the subsequent European diplomatic crisis. Telegrams from the Colonial Office kept the Commonwealth government informed of the British government's responses, though it did not consult the Dominions before declaring war on imperial Germany following its breach of Belgian neutrality. While Australia offered its navy to the Admiralty before either Britain or Australia actually joined the war, proclamations in the State capitals formally alerted Australians to the declaration on 5 August. The name of the military force raised for overseas service, the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), expressed the nation's dual loyalty.

While there was no doubt of Australia's commitment to the Empire's war, and the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) immediately passed under Admiralty control, the form of Australia's contribution had yet to be decided. Militia reservists were mobilised and an Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force was dispatched to seize German New Guinea, which fell virtually bloodlessly by 20 September. The value to the Empire of Australia's small but modern fleet became apparent at the war's outset, though one of its two submarines was lost off Rabaul. From 10 August voluntary recruiting opened for the AIF, and the quota of 20,000 men was filled swiftly. The first volunteers included large proportions of men with military experience (in the Militia, the imperial forces or in the South African war) and a high proportion – perhaps a third – were relatively recent British migrants. The

⁸ See John Mordike, An Army for a Nation: A History of Australian Military Developments, 1880–1914 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992) and We Should Do This Thing Quietly: Japan and the Great Deception in Australian Defence Policy 1911–1914 (Canberra: Aerospace Centre, 2002). Craig Wilcox has contested Mordike's views in 'Relinquishing the Past: John Mordike's An Army for a Nation', Australian Journal of Politics and History, 40, 1 (1994): 52–65.

first units – an infantry division and a light horse brigade – were organised territorially by State, but the AIF helped to surmount the pre-war identification of State over nation by bringing men from different States together. The first contingents trained in camps near the State capitals and embarked in a smooth operation disrupted only by the presence of German raiders. The 'first convoy' of 40 ships, including fourteen New Zealand transports, assembled in King George's Sound, Albany, steaming out on 1 November 1914.

Australia's new warships helped defeat the threat posed by German raiders, when one of the convoy's escorts, HMAS *Sydney*, destroyed the German cruiser *Emden* off the Cocos Islands on 19 November. RAN vessels, operating under the Admiralty's control throughout the war, took their place in British squadrons and fleets, mostly serving far from Australia, in American, Asian and African waters, and in strength in the North Sea and the Adriatic.

Though initially bound for Britain, the convoy disembarked in Egypt. Winter camps in Britain were unavailable or unsuitable, and Ottoman Turkey's entry into the war on 29 October made Empire troops useful to protect the strategically vital Suez Canal. In Egypt the AIF was able to continue its training, despite the distractions of Cairo, where its men gained a deserved reputation for disorder. Many acted towards 'natives' in accordance with the notions of white racial superiority suffusing contemporary Australian society.⁹

By early 1915 British strategy in the eastern Mediterranean led to the incorporation of the AIF into an Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (abbreviated to ANZAC, which soon became a word in its own right) under the British General, Sir William Birdwood. It formed a major part of Sir Ian Hamilton's Mediterranean Expeditionary Force, assembled to land in European Turkey, open the Dardanelles to British and French battleships and intimidate the Ottoman government in Constantinople into capitulation. Though bold and probably feasible, the plan foundered. The naval attack on 18 March failed by simple mischance, while the invasion, launched on 25 April, failed through poor planning and inept execution. The invasion force landed at two widely separated places and an unexpectedly energetic Ottoman reaction defeated indecisive British and Australian commanders. The landings, around a bay soon called Anzac Cove, cost about 5,000 Australian casualties.¹⁰

⁹ Suzanne Brugger, Australians and Egypt, 1914–1919 (Melbourne University Press, 1980); Peter Stanley, Bad Characters: Sex, Crime, Mutiny, Murder and the Australian Imperial Force (Sydney: Murdoch Books, 2010), pp. 28–37.

¹⁰ Peter D. Williams, *The Battle of Anzac Ridge 25 April 1915* (Sydney: Australian Military History Publications, 2006), pp. 138–40.

Along with New Zealand, British and Indian troops, the invaders remained trapped in two footholds on the Gallipoli peninsula. Initial reports, especially by the celebrated British journalist Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, represented the landings as a triumph of colonial manhood, stimulating a further burst of volunteering.

Reports by Australia's official correspondent, Charles Bean, likewise blended reportage and propaganda, building an impression of the qualities displayed by the troops. Bean's words endured as the basis of the influential 'Anzac legend', which defined how Australian and New Zealand men ought to respond to the challenges of war. At the time Australians lauded their troops' part in the battle: 'Here Australia Became a Nation', a caption to a photograph of Gallipoli in 1915 read.^{III}

After ineffectual attempts to break out of the beachhead, Birdwood's force prepared for a major offensive, though the advancing summer sapped the invaders' health. Exposed to Turkish shellfire, they suffered severely from dysentery. In August the invaders tried to break the stalemate. The complex plan entailed an attack from the Anzac area over the rugged Chunuk Bair range. It resulted in major loss of life, while medical services were again inadequate, causing further suffering. The offensive's failure prolonged the stalemate.

In September press leaks precipitated a crisis in the campaign. Ashmead-Bartlett now denounced command failure, and the 'Gallipoli letter' from the Australian journalist Keith Murdoch setting out these criticisms reached the British prime minister, Herbert Asquith. General Hamilton was replaced by Sir Charles Monro, who, on Kitchener's instructions, planned a withdrawal; it was the only element of the entire campaign to succeed. Anzac Cove was evacuated on 19–20 December 1915, the British Helles front on 8 January 1916. The defenders, seemingly oblivious to the reduction in the opposing force, allowed them to go. Propaganda represented the humiliating, if bloodless, evacuation as a triumph of Anzac ingenuity rather than efficient military staff work. The acclaimed invention of a 'drip rifle' by a Victorian lance corporal, firing a round after the trenches had been abandoned, was in fact irrelevant to the evacuation's success. Nonetheless, the combination of 'nationhood, brotherhood and sacrifice', as Bill Gammage wrote, proved to be a powerful and enduring mix in creating an enduring Anzac legend.¹²

¹¹ Annotated postcard photograph of 'The firing line, Shrapnel Gully', Gallipoli, Australian War Memorial (AWM) H00195A.

¹² Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War* [1974] (Melbourne: Penguin, 1990), pp. 97–127.

With the exception of the large Militia force mobilised to defend Australia itself from the possibility of attack from Japan, the source of Australian apprehension for over a decade even though it was an ally, Australia's military forces served the Empire overseas. The fledgling air corps served in Mesopotamia in 1915 and from 1917 over the Western Front and the Middle East. Australian nurses served in India and with British forces in the Mediterranean, Britain and on the Western Front. Later in the war a small number of specialists served in Mesopotamia and the trans-Caucasus, part of 'Dunsterforce', which sought to advance British imperial interests in the vacuum left by the dissolution of the Ottoman empire.

The great bulk of the AIF joined the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) on the Western Front. In 1916 four infantry divisions were dispatched to France, later joined by another, the 3rd, formed in Australia and commanded by Major General John Monash. These contributed about a twelfth of the BEF's fighting strength (though a much smaller proportion of its total number, because a much higher proportion of Australia's troops were front-line soldiers). This fostered what historian Eric Andrews called the 'Anzac illusion': the idea that Australia made a disproportionately strong contribution, especially on the Western Front. The illusion has been strengthened by the widespread but misleading belief that the AIF suffered heavier casualties than any other force, and by the mistaken view that it was the only all-volunteer force in the war.¹³

The four AIF infantry divisions were committed to the major Anglo-French offensive of 1916, the battle of the Somme. As a diversionary operation, and with a British division, the 5th Australian Division attacked German trenches on Aubers Ridge, near Fromelles on 19 July. Preparations for the ill-conceived attack failed to fool the Germans, and the attackers suffered heavy losses, virtually crippling the division for the rest of the year. The defeat undermined Australian troops' confidence in British command. On the Somme, the three other Australian divisions were successively committed to attacks around Pozières and nearby Mouquet Farm against determined German resistance

¹³ E.M. Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-Australian Relations during World War I* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 4. As Australia had the existing Militia and imperial forces the AIF was not entirely volunteer but it was the only major force not bolstered by conscription (the small force from South Africa also had no conscripts). Australia did suffer the highest casualty rate of any Allied force, although in terms of proportion of the total male population it suffered far less than the United Kingdom. Moreover, British forces took on most of the behind the lines work, while the AIF was largely front-line soldiers. It is this fact that explains the higher casualty rate among the Anzacs.

based on massive artillery fire. Over 23,000 Australians were killed or wounded in seven weeks of attacks, which gradually measured progress in yards for the loss of hundreds of men in every attack. Australian commanders accepted the plans of British senior officers and, as they were novices to the more intensive fighting of the Western Front, made mistakes accordingly. Charles Bean, who had followed the infantry to France, described Pozières Ridge as a site 'more densely sown with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth'.¹⁴

Returning to the desolate Somme battlefield to hold the line in the coldest winter for decades, the AIF suffered disillusionment and severe weather. Australian troops soon demonstrated differences from British and other Dominion forces. Though notably competent, they also displayed poorer discipline: Australian rates of absence, crime generally and imprisonment outstripped their counterparts, until by 1918 Australian rates of absence were several times greater than comparable forces. Despite the urging of British and Australian senior officers, Prime Minister William Morris Hughes refused to allow the 120 Australians sentenced to death for a variety of military offences, including desertion, to be executed. It is unlikely that the AIF's immunity to this sanction actually impeded its fighting ability.¹⁵

The spring of 1917 brought renewed optimism as the Germans, also bruised by the Somme battle, withdrew to the heavily fortified Hindenburg Line. Australian divisions pursuing the withdrawing Germans attacked the new German line at Bullecourt. These ill-considered experiments with the new tanks resulted in a bloody repulse, the loss of 1,900 men as prisoners and the further erosion of Australian confidence in British command. A second battle in May brought Australian losses at Bullecourt to 10,000 casualties without gain.

Along with the rest of the BEF, the AIF learned lessons from the Somme. Commanders introduced and tested new weapons, tactics and methods. A successful attack at Messines in June, involving John Monash's 3rd Division, caused further optimism. Monash's division, which had hitherto fought separately from the other Australian divisions, helped to show that advances more economical in casualties were possible. Australian commanders at battalion, brigade and divisional level learned swiftly in the hard school of the trenches. The feeling grew in the AIF that its senior commanders should be Australians, and by the war's end all but one of its seven divisional commanders were. But 1917 saw no breakthrough. In the autumn all five Australian divisions

¹⁴ C.E.W. Bean, Anzac to Amiens: A Shorter History of the Australian Fighting Services in the First World War, 5th edn (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1968), p. 264.

¹⁵ Stanley, Bad Characters, pp. 172-6, 185-92.

were committed to the great offensive launched around Ypres. Initial attacks succeeded, at heavy cost, but later attacks literally bogged down after unseasonably heavy rain. The ordeal of Ypres made 1917 the year of heaviest losses of the war for Australia, with nearly 22,000 dead.

In the Middle East the Australian light horse brigades formed a major part of the mounted troops of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force, as the Anzac Mounted Corps, under Lieutenant General Harry Chauvel. In 1916 they learned to campaign in the desert of Sinai and spent most of 1917 fighting three battles around Gaza to break through the Ottoman defences on the border of Egypt and Palestine. At Beersheba on 31 October 1917 a light horse mounted charge (a tactic contrary to their equipment, training and doctrine) helped to win the third battle of Gaza. By Christmas Jerusalem had fallen but the Palestine front had again solidified.

Early in 1918 the Germans, fearing the arrival of the United States into the war and able to redeploy troops formerly facing the Russians, launched a series of offensives on the Western Front. Employing vigorous new tactics, the spring offensives pushed British and French troops back, especially on the Somme front, but did not break through. Australian troops were rushed from Belgium to the Somme to help hold the line. Late in 1917 Australian pressure resulted in the five AIF infantry divisions becoming united as the Australian Corps, the largest in the BEF. First commanded by Birdwood, early in 1918 the command went to John Monash, the citizen soldier who had proved himself as a divisional commander after a shaky start on Gallipoli. A cabal of journalists and artists, including Charles Bean and Will Dyson, opposed the appointment, affronted by Monash's Jewish ancestry and 'pushy' character. Though not the military genius portrayed in popular history (accounts rooted in Monash's own estimate of his abilities), he was a highly competent commander.

Under Monash the Australian Corps took a prominent part in a series of advances, which in the 'Hundred Days' saw the Allies make unprecedented advances. Monash became one of several British and Dominion generals to implement hard-won lessons, using artillery, aircraft, tanks and a more economical use of infantry to advance, if not yet break through. At Amiens in August 1918 the Australian Corps attacked alongside Canadian, British and French formations on a larger scale and even more successfully. Pushed hard by Monash, who was ambitious for the AIF to be seen as making a decisive contribution, the Australian Corps played a leading part in advancing up the Somme valley. This advance culminated at the end of August with the capture of the dominating hill of Mont St Quentin, and a few weeks later by the seizure of parts of the fortified Hindenburg Line. The collapse of enlistment in Australia led Monash to disband a dozen battalions, orders that provoked a spate of protests and mutinies. He handled the protests, a sign of the Australian citizen soldiers' 'industrial' attitude towards military discipline, ineptly, but by then the AIF's part in action had practically ended. In the Middle East the war also reached a climax. After failed raids on Es Salt in Jordan and a gruelling summer in the malarial Jordan valley, the Australian Mounted and Anzac Mounted divisions led the British advance north to Damascus and on to Aleppo. With allied troops on the borders of Anatolia, Turkey sought an armistice on 31 October.

A week later, with its armies in retreat and its navy in mutiny, Germany also sought peace, though virtually no Australians had been in action for a month. While men continued to die of wounds, the killing had ended. Some 60,000 Australian troops had died, while over 150,000 had been wounded, many more than once. Few returning troops would evade psychological harm. Australian troops joined the occupation force in the Rhineland, but the bulk of the AIF was swiftly returned to camps in Britain, awaiting shipping to bring its members home.

Hughes attended the Paris Peace Conference determined that Australia's contribution to and sacrifice in the war should bring recognition and greater security against what he saw as danger from Japan. He argued for Australian as well as imperial representation (famously speaking for 'sixty thousand dead') and pursued Australian interests robustly, if not always prudently. His sardonic attacks on Woodrow Wilson delighted some but his increasingly strident table thumping aggravated the majority of delegates. He alienated the Japanese, who were affronted at his blatant opposition to their equal treatment; Hughes was the most vocal opponent of the racial equality clause proposed by the Japanese for the covenant of the League of Nations. He also succeeded in securing an Australian mandate over the former German colony in New Guinea. Australia's wartime sacrifice had secured it a standing in the eyes of the world, a greater assurance as a nation and a confidence in making its own decisions. No-one, Hughes least of all, expected Australia to break from the imperial framework. Australians remained committed to Empire in terms of both sentiment and pragmatism: having fought for the Empire the country would not abandon it now nor could it afford to, as nations in Asia built military forces to be reckoned with.¹⁶

16 W.J. Hudson, Billy Hughes in Paris: The Birth of Australian Diplomacy (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1978); Carl Bridge, William Hughes, Australia (London: Haus Publications, 2011). The war broke some empires (Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman) and extended others, including those of Britain and Japan. Australian forces contributed to the creation of a new order in the Middle East, one satisfactory to neither Arabs nor Jews. Australian volunteers also served as part of the British and international forces contesting Soviet rule in North Russia.

War on the home front

Australia might have been far from the main theatres of conflict but those remaining at home had to adjust to a society at war. With an election in progress at the outbreak of war, Hughes of the Labor Party proposed setting aside party divisions to ensure that 'the gravest crisis of our history is faced by a united people'.¹⁷ Labor won the election, however, and took office in September 1914 under Andrew Fisher with the fiery, British-born, former union official Hughes as attorney-general. The ebullient patriotism of Hughes dominated parliamentary sittings, while the strain of war preparations took a toll on Fisher's health. In October 1915 Fisher resigned as prime minister, and Hughes replaced him. Hughes' bellicosity was boundless, as was his later championing of the cause of returned soldiers, earning him the sobriquet the 'Little Digger'.¹⁸

In the early months of the war Hughes caught the popular mood. In parliaments, on soapboxes, from pulpits and classrooms patriots trumpeted the nobility of sacrifice and the importance of defending the Empire against 'the Hun'. Almost all Australians greeted news of the war enthusiastically, though socialists deplored it as against the interests of workers and pacifists denounced it on principle. Many Protestant clergymen argued that it represented an opportunity for national salvation; Catholic clergy remained more circumspect.¹⁹ But very few – not even socialists – openly opposed the war in 1914, whatever their private reservations. Instead flag-waving crowds cheered men joining enlistment parades and departing on transports.

Ordinary Australians mobilised in support of the war effort. They joined volunteer and charitable organisations, such as the Red Cross and the Australian Comforts Fund, providing food, clothing, medical supplies, and comforts to soldiers. Women and children stood on street corners seeking

¹⁷ Quoted in Ernest Scott, Australia during the War [1936] (Brisbane: UQP, 1989), p. 24.

¹⁸ L.F. Fitzhardinge, The Little Digger, 1914–52. William Morris Hughes: A Political Biography, Volume 2 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson 1979).

¹⁹ Michael McKernan, The Australian People and the Great War (Sydney: Collins, 1984), p. 23.

donations to war charities and in all Australians gave nearly \pounds_{14} million to patriotic and war relief funds.²⁰ The national purpose and commitment to the war effort is perhaps evident in other social patterns: crime rates, divorce rates and the incidence of mental illness all fell after 1914.

While the government responded to the demands of patriotism, national and imperial, the demands of war soon effaced the liberalism of a democratic plural society. A host of regulations framed under a sweeping *War Precautions Act* (1914) enabled the federal government to implement, as Charles Bean wrote, 'all kinds of precautions never thought of in peace-time'.²¹ The government assumed unprecedented control over economic and social life, with powers to inspect premises, seize documents, censor literature and detain citizens.

The potential threat from enemy aliens loomed large in the minds of patriots. Rumours of enemy spies abounded: strange lights in the Dandenong Ranges in 1915 were widely believed to be signals to German battleships off Melbourne. 'German' place names were replaced – over 70 in South Australia, with only 11 later restored – Steinfeld became Stonefield and Blumberg became Birdwood. Lutheran schools were closed. Internment camps opened in every State but later consolidated in Berrima, Trial Bay, Bourke and especially Liverpool, all in New South Wales. In total, some 7,000 internees were held, mainly German or Austro-Hungarian subjects but also naturalised German Australians and even Australian-born people accused of 'disloyalty'. While only a few of the 30,000 German-born Australians were interned, prejudice was widespread. Several prominent cases of discrimination (such as against the Traralgon postal assistant Rudolph Schmidt, interned as disloyal though a second-generation Australian) led German Australians to behave discreetly for fear of denunciation and discrimination.²²

Official surveillance was not confined to 'Germans'. A growing military intelligence and censorship bureaucracy monitored those suspected of acting or speaking against the war effort. Officials (usually military officers) censored communications of all kinds, including the post and newspapers, often ludicrously. Police and military officers investigated reports of disloyalty, and as the war continued suspicion and administrative action were

²⁰ Melanie Oppenheimer, All Work, No Pay: Australian Civilian Volunteers in War (Walcha: Ohio Publications, 2003); McKernan, The Australian People and the Great War, pp. 70–7.

²¹ Bean, Anzac to Amiens, p. 55.

²² Gerhard Fischer, Enemy Aliens: Internment and the Home Front Experience in Australia, 1914–1920 (Brisbane: UQP, 1989); Scott, Australia during the War, pp. 105–37.

untrammelled by judicial scrutiny. Increasingly, the state acted to suppress political or industrial dissent, notably in the prosecution of those advocating the views of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), twelve of whom were imprisoned in Sydney in 1916 on exaggerated or fabricated charges of arson.²³

As the war ground on, Australians began to realise that victory would not be quick. Frivolity was frowned upon. Civilians sought to acknowledge their commitment to the war effort through their own sacrifice: many sporting clubs increased entrance fees to support patriotic funds. Racing clubs donated a proportion of their takings to support the war effort. Attendances fell and sportsmen enlisted. There were active middle-class campaigns to reduce the number of sporting events, something that antagonised working-class participants and spectators.²⁴ Social reformers capitalised on the wartime mood to press the case for long-sought changes. Reports of drunken escapades by Australian soldiers overseas and at home assisted the cause. In 1916 temperance advocates in several States won referendums for early closing of hotels. Fears that returning soldiers were bringing back venereal disease, thereby threatening the health of wives, girlfriends and future generations – it was estimated that about 50,000 Anzacs returned infected – resulted in compulsory venereal disease notification legislation in 1918.²⁵

War affected most sectors of the economy. Primary production, already reduced by the effects of drought, suffered as shipping needed to transport wool, wheat and meat to British markets became scarce. Hughes established a Commonwealth Shipping Line to evade the constraints and costs of commercial shipping and promoted innovative bulk sales agreements, whereby suppliers could be paid before delivery, to encourage primary and secondary producers to support export to the British market. Industrially, the Broken Hill Proprietary's smelter at Port Pirie became a vital source of lead for the imperial war effort, and 1915 saw the opening of a blast furnace to make steel in Newcastle. As more men enlisted for service, there was near full employment and 6,000 war workers volunteered to travel to Britain to work.

The strain of the war on the home economy was soon evident. To finance the war the Commonwealth borrowed f_{325} million, of which a third was raised in London, a long-term debt that burdened public finances and dampened

²³ Ian Turner, Sydney's Burning (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1967).

²⁴ McKernan, The Australian People and the Great War, pp. 94-115.

²⁵ Judith A. Allen, Sex and Secrets: Crimes Involving Australian Women since 1880 (Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 76.

post-war growth.²⁶ The consequences of shifting economic policy to support the war effort were marked. Farmers, pastoralists, primary producers and manufacturers did well through exports, but this only exacerbated relative scarcity at home, fuelling inflation. Although rationing was never introduced, and many families supplemented earnings with produce from home gardens, by 1916 prices were more than a third higher than they had been in 1914, and government efforts to arrest the rise proved ineffectual. Wages lagged, rising only 12 per cent during the war.²⁷

The fact that some producers were doing well, while wages failed to keep pace with inflation, underpinned the popularity of 'profiteer' as a term of abuse (drawing on traditional labour iconography of capital as the 'fat man'). This term masked deeper conflicts that erupted in the last years of the war. Housewives in Melbourne rioted over the price of food. Trade unionists in industries such as the railways conducted a series of strikes in 1917 that escalated into what some historians have regarded as a general strike, although the extent to which it was a consequence of war or more fundamental disputes about the efforts of employers to institute more intensive work practices has been debated.²⁸

While the effects of the war at home were deeply felt, it did not alter the fundamental structures of the economy. Manufacturing, despite the growth of small arms factories and iron ore smelters, was still limited. Primary production remained paramount. As a consequence there was no widespread conscription of women into manufacturing industries, as in Britain. Instead, Australian women contributed either by working in the longstanding areas of women's work (food processing, textiles, domestic service) or replaced men in some areas such as teaching and banking. More commonly, if they were from the middle and upper strata, they contributed their time and effort to the numerous charitable and philanthropic societies that sprung up to support the war effort. The Great War reinforced traditional gender roles in Australia – men as warriors and women as helpmeets.

Behind the mask of national commitment to the war effort, social tensions intensified. Enlistment remained voluntary, but was accompanied by entreaty, persuasion and urging from strident local notables and committees,

²⁶ Barrie Dyster and David Meredith, Australia in the Global Economy: Continuity and Change, 2nd edn (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 100.

²⁷ Gordon Greenwood, 'Australia at War, 1914–18', in Gordon Greenwood (ed.), Australia: A Social and Political History (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1955), pp. 280–3.

²⁸ Lucy Taksa, "Defence Not Defiance": Social Protest and the NSW General Strike of 1917', *Labour History*, 60 (1991): 16–33.

and many 'volunteers' acted under a form of intimidation. A November 1915 investigation by the Parliamentary War Committee, which demanded of every 'eligible' that he inform it when he would enlist and if not why not, disclosed that over 600,000 'eligibles' had not volunteered. Nine 'snowball' recruiting marches, mainly in New South Wales over the summer of 1915– 16, saw the last expression of enthusiastic voluntarism, attracting just over 1,000 men. From then, recruiters struggled to fill their quotas. Often families decided which son might go and who needed to stay to run farms and other family enterprises, explaining the later high vote against conscription in farming areas.

As the reality of the war set in, rates of voluntary enlistment began to fall: after very high monthly totals of over 35,000 a month in mid-1915, to around 6,000 a month a year later. About half the country's eligible men attempted to enlist, with a large number of 'rejected volunteers' declined, mostly on grounds of fitness.²⁹ With the slaughter on the Western Front the demand for reinforcements became more acute and Britain put pressure on the Labor government to increase the consignment of troops to the front line. Billy Hughes left for Britain in January 1916 to gauge the Empire's needs and reassure Britain's military and political leaders of Australia's commitment to the war. There he was both lionised by imperial opinion makers and manipulated by power brokers. Accepting that the imperial cause needed further Dominion support, and with compulsion underway in Britain, Hughes determined to raise more Australian reinforcements and rashly aimed to dispatch 16,500 men a month, two-and-a-half times the number then volunteering. Although constitutionally able to simply introduce conscription by legislation, Hughes faced trenchant opposition within his own party and decided to gain popular endorsement for it. Hughes rightly represented the Empire's need for troops as dire, but misrepresented Australia's situation. In opening the conscription campaign at the Sydney Town Hall in September 1916, he spoke of 'this great hour, when our country and all we hold dear are in deadly peril'.³⁰ The resulting debates split the Labor Party – or at least exposed divisions that had festered for years - provoking the most acrimonious and enduring political schism in Australian political history.

The nation splintered for and against conscription, with rallies for both the Yes and No campaigns in every major city and many towns. In October

²⁹ Alison Pilger, 'The Other "Lost Generation": Rejected Australian Volunteers, 1914–18',

Journal of the Australian War Memorial, 21 (1992): 11–19.

³⁰ Sydney Morning Herald, 19 September 1916.

1916 the first referendum was narrowly defeated. Hughes was not deterred. He tried to convince the Labor Party to push ahead with a second referendum but the divisions within the party were too great. Hughes quit the government, taking 23 of the 65 Labor members of the Commonwealth parliament with him and joined with non-Labor party members to form a new Nationalist Party government. The May 1917 election confirmed that Labor had lost power and, emboldened by electoral victory, Hughes initiated a second conscription referendum in December 1917. It was again narrowly defeated, a fact that came to bolster the claims for the special character of the Anzacs. Despite this setback the political damage to Labor was considerable. Hughes cemented the conservative pro-conscription majority at the 1919 federal election. Labor did not regain federal office, with the exception of a brief disastrous period during the Depression, until World War 2.

The social and political tensions around the conscription campaigns were bitter and intense. Those who opposed conscription were depicted as traitors and shirkers, those in favour as profiteers and warmongers. Police handling of No demonstrations was sometimes heavy-handed, with plain-clothes police noting the names of prominent agitators and sometimes recording their speeches for prosecution. The 1917 referendum, opening early in November just as thousands of Australian families received visits from clergymen informing them of the deaths in the Ypres offensive, brought even more rancour than in 1916. In general those in favour of conscription were middle-class, Protestant, from English, Scots and Welsh backgrounds and traditionally voted for non-Labor parties. Those who voted against conscription were more often from working-class, Irish Catholic backgrounds, and traditionally voted Labor.

Prominent Catholic clergy, notably Archbishop Daniel Mannix in Melbourne, were conspicuous supporters of the No campaign. The violent suppression of the Easter 1916 rebellion in Dublin by British forces fanned Sinn Fein and Irish sympathies in Australia, adding further fuel to the No campaign. Australian soldiers overseas were not overwhelmingly in favour of conscription either: they too tended to divide on lines of class, background and religion. As Glenn Withers has argued, however, one social group seems to have crossed these traditional political dividing lines in greater proportion than any other – women.³¹ Working-class women set aside their traditional

³¹ Glenn Withers, 'The 1916–1917 Conscription Referenda: A Cliometric Re-appraisal', Historical Studies, 20, 78 (1982): 36–47.

social allegiances to vote Yes in greater numbers than their male brethren, anxious to ensure that their sons and husbands overseas received loyal support. Conscription remained uncongenial to many regardless of age, class, ethnicity, religion or location.

The 1917 result drove a schism between 'loyalists' who supported the war at all costs and those who believed compulsion for overseas service to be unjust or unwise. The political tremors were felt at the State as well as federal level. State Labor parties split everywhere except Queensland over the issue of conscription, condemning Labor to electoral defeat. In 1915 there had been six Labor governments in Australia; by the end of 1916 there was one left. In the inter-war years the failure of Australians to support conscription also became a grievance among many returning men who felt acutely that despite the nationalist bombast they had been let down by those on the home front.

'The War' came to dominate Australian life, as it did in all belligerent countries, though how much it intruded into everyday life can be exaggerated. During its most dramatic months the Melbourne lawyer Frederic Eggleston wrote how 'our life goes on the same...we try to make the war as small a part of ourselves as we possibly can'.³² While anxiety pervaded the families of those serving overseas, its effects were episodic. Post flowed back to Australia in periodic ship-borne 'mails'. While men were wounded or killed every week, large casualty lists appeared only after occasional large battles. For many civilians, the war was a distant event, to be grasped only in heavily censored words or images.

The commissioning and fostering of war artists by the Department of Defence advanced the work of a number of (mainly expatriate) Australian painters such as Arthur Streeton, Will Longstaff and Will Dyson. In Australia, Grace Cossington Smith produced works commenting on war subjects (such as her *Reinforcements*) that were radical in artistic method but conservative in sentiment. In literature C. J. Dennis' *Ginger Mick* brought the idiomatic ballad to perfection. The war stimulated some profound verse of quality (by Zora Cross, Leon Gellert, Christopher Brennan and Vance Palmer) but produced little durable fiction besides William Baylebridge's and Harley Matthews' stories and (after the war) Frederick Manning's *Her Privates We* and Leonard Mann's *Flesh in Armour*. The war's most profound influence on Australian popular culture came through the many expressions of the Anzac

³² Raymond Evans, Loyalty and Disloyalty: Social Conflict on the Queensland Home Front, 1914–18 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), p. 30.

legend, which produced a rich mix of beliefs, ideas, stories and practices that a century on retain a power in Australian life.³³

Return and its discontents

Even before the Anzacs saw combat, they began returning home. On arrival in Egypt Australian military medical authorities found a number of the early volunteers unfit for service, while others had contracted venereal diseases in the first weeks of overseas training. By February 1915 a makeshift hospital transport, the *Kyarra*, had docked in Australia, returning these 'invalids'. This was a persistent problem. During 1917 and 1918, Sir Neville Howse, head of the AIF Medical Services in Britain, expressed concern at the physical condition of many new recruits: deformed hands, missing fingers, flat feet, epilepsy, imbecility and senility were common as recruitment authorities struggled to fill quotas after conscription failed. In all, Howse authorised the return as unfit of 16,000 men before they saw action.³⁴

War created a demand for regular hospital transports to carry the ill and injured home. In those first tragic days after the landing on Gallipoli, Australian and New Zealand forces suffered horrendous casualties. In the first ten days of the campaign, there were 2,000 Australian dead and many more seriously wounded. Those disabled and unfit for further service were sent home, to the care of families or the new repatriation, convalescent and war neurosis hospitals.³⁵ As the war dragged on and the injury toll mounted, the melancholy scenes of anxious families waiting for hospital ships to dock became a common sight.

Nonetheless, in late November 1918 there were nearly 170,000 Australians still serving overseas. They had to be brought home and a shortage of shipping caused delay. Moreover, the clamour from Canadians, South Africans, New Zealanders, Americans and Indians had an equal call on scarce transports. In all it took 176 voyages to bring the Anzacs home, the last ship departing on 23 December 1919.³⁶ The long delay, and Australia's effective quarantine system, meant that the worst effects of the Spanish flu epidemic were avoided. This devastating pandemic killed 30 million people worldwide,

³³ Graham Seal, Inventing ANZAC: The Digger and National Mythology (Brisbane: UQP, 2004).

³⁴ Sir Neville Howse, 'Report from England', no. 38, 28 March 1918, Sir Neville Howse Papers, AWM, 2DRL 1351, item 45.

³⁵ Clem Lloyd and Jacqui Rees, *The Last Shilling: A History of Repatriation in Australia* (Melbourne University Press, 1994), p. 136.

³⁶ McKernan, The Australian People and the Great War, p. 209.

but only 12,000 fatalities were recorded in Australia. While Australian soldiers waited for a berth home, Australian authorities had to manage the process of demobilisation. Priorities for return were set, largely based on the length of overseas service rather than rank, district or marital status, an approach seen by its official historian as a triumph of Australian 'fairness'.³⁷

John Monash was put in charge of demobilisation, devoting his superb organisational skills to the challenge of occupying men anxious to return and chafing at military discipline that now seemed pointless. He established extensive educational and training services, with lectures, lending libraries and theatre productions to fill idle moments. Even so, many demobilisation officials noted the 'lethargy' and 'unsettled frame of mind' of the Anzacs awaiting return. Gambling, fighting and drinking were pervasive, encouraging authorities to enrol men in British universities and technical colleges to alleviate the tension and prevent riots and rampages in military camps.³⁸

The first sight of home was the coast of Western Australia. After docking in Fremantle or Albany, the men were greeted by enthusiastic welcome home parades, repeated at every port of call thereafter. Australians were anxious to express their appreciation of the men who had 'made the immortal name of Anzac'.³⁹ Around the country, in all the major capital cities and later in local towns and villages, parades, choirs, brass bands and speeches symbolised the eager embrace of the Anzacs by those who had stayed home.

The tumult of return faded quickly. Civilian life beckoned. Australia's chronicler of the war, Charles Bean, set the tone for future assessments of demobilisation, declaring that the AIF 'merged quickly and quietly into the general population'.⁴⁰ The discontents of return, however, cannot be ignored. As the first transports docked with returning men, prospects for their successful reintegration were buoyed by a short-term economic boom. These hopes were dashed as the economy slumped by the end of 1920, undermining the effort of many to find work easily, despite employment preference schemes.

Unsettled men often struggled to find their feet in civilian life. Although the Commonwealth government urged employers and all Australians to 'help the man with the medal', returned servicemen found the reality more difficult. Employers, despite the policy of preference for veterans, were reluctant to let longstanding workers go; old friends had moved on, former girlfriends had married, children had grown, relatives had died, families had changed.

³⁷ Scott, Australia during the War, p. 827.

³⁸ See AIF Education Service 1914–18, AWM 20, items 6403, 6437.

^{39 (}Melbourne) Age, 29 November 1918.

⁴⁰ Bean, Anzac to Amiens, p. 529.

After the exhilaration of the welcome, civilian life often seemed mundane. For many returned men, of course, the ordinariness of life was just what they craved. They slipped into civilian routines much as Bean had surmised. For others, the resentments of return festered. In journals and newspapers, such as *The Soldier* or *Smith's Weekly*, the 'girl who wouldn't wait', fat profiteers and lazy shirkers who had refused to serve while Anzacs fought and died, or foreign immigrants threatening Australian values, became familiar images crystallising the frustrations of returned men. They abused shopkeepers and repatriation department officials when crossed. Street and domestic violence escalated. Divorce rates rose.⁴¹

Discontent also took collective form. Soldiers gathered together, pressing their claims for more entitlements or asserting their right to control the streets. After a march by workers carrying red flags and chanting Sinn Fein and Bolshevik slogans through the streets of Brisbane in early 1919, several thousand returned soldiers and loyalists stormed across the Victoria Bridge into South Brisbane's small Russian and working-class community, smashing and looting shops and houses and burning down the Russian community hall. The affray lasted three days, local police turning a blind eye.⁴² This event was far from unique: there were more than ten major 'loyalist' returned soldier riots throughout Australia in the immediate post-war years. They occurred in every capital city except Perth as well as regional centres such as Broken Hill, Townsville and small towns such as Hughenden in Queensland.⁴³ Sometimes riots flared when men were denied employment or forced to wait in line for service in shops. More commonly they were directed at what the returned men saw as manifestations of disloyalty, especially after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 when civil dissent could easily be portrayed as threatening the social order Anzacs had died to defend. Some scholars have seen these loyalist riots as early eruptions of an emerging proto-fascist 'secret army' movement between the wars, although the range, variety and popular nature of many of the riots suggest that the discontents of demobilisation were the most potent factor.44

- 41 Between 1918 and 1921 the number of annual divorces in Australia doubled from the immediate pre-war and war years.
- 42 Raymond Evans, The Red Flag Riots: A Study of Intolerance (Brisbane: UQP, 1988).
- 43 Fiona Skyring, "'Taking matters into their own hands": Riots against Disloyalty, 1918– 1920 in Australia', PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1997.
- 44 Andrew Moore, Michael Cathcart and Humphrey McQueen have argued forcefully that these proto-fascist groups should not be seen as manifestations of returned soldier frustration so much as a class-based movement, a small, middle-class, Empire loyalist response to socialism. See Michael Cathcart, *Defending the National Tuckshop: Australia's Secret Army Intrigue of 1931* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1988), pp. 88–93;

The echo of these discontents can be found in subsequent years in frequent calls for a 'soldiers' parliament', veteran groups arguing that as Anzacs had fought for the country they should be the only ones with the right to stand for election.⁴⁵ Shirkers and profiteers, in this political logic, had forfeited the right to full citizenship. Moreover, the returned soldier ethos that fuelled these riots, and sustained the membership of many returned soldier organisations thereafter, forged an intimate link between the Anzacs and Empire loyalism, reinforcing the crown as an integral element of Australian nationalism.

Hughes played those attachments skilfully in the aftermath of the war. His aggressive pursuit of Australian interests at the peace conference in 1919 was followed at home by a successful tour by the Prince of Wales in 1920. Amendments to the *Crimes Act* and *Immigration Act* increased penalties for disloyalty. At the end of the year Hugh Mahon, an Irish-born Labor member, was expelled from the House of Representatives for a speech attacking the British crown and supporting the Irish nationalists in their fight for independence. The radicalisation of the Labor Party, which adopted a socialist objective at its federal conference in 1921, was cast in a similar light with allegations of Bolshevik influence.⁴⁶

While Hughes had capitalised on his reputation as the 'Little Digger' to win the federal election in December 1919, his position was by no means secure. His bellicosity had taken him out of the Labor Party and into the company of Labor's opponents, yet the new Nationalist Party was unified by little more than its determination to win the war. With peace many of the Nationalists expected a speedy return to normal conditions, and looked with unease on the prime minister's continued attachment to state enterprise. He encouraged the Commonwealth Shipping Line to compete with private shipowners, and entered into new ventures in wireless and oil refining. Rural interests were happy to accept government assistance with marketing, but looked for relief from the costs imposed by the tariff; and in 1920 their parliamentary representatives came together to form a separate Country Party. Meanwhile the unions took advantage of the revival of trade to press for improved wages and conditions. Hughes' response, a royal commission to

Humphrey McQueen, "Shoot the Bolshevik, Hang the Profiteer!" Reconstructing Australian Capitalism 1918–21', in E.L. Wheelwright and Ken Buckley (eds), *Essays in the Political Economy of Australian Capitalism*, vol. 2 (Sydney: ANZ Book Company, 1978), pp. 185–206.

⁴⁵ Stephen Garton, The Cost of War: Australians Return (Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 57-63.

⁴⁶ Fitzhardinge, The Little Digger, ch. 17.

review the basic wage and special tribunals to settle disputes, only increased the unease of his more conservative colleagues.⁴⁷

The export slump that followed the backfilling of inventories in 1920 made it impossible to contain these pressures. Manufacturers sought and obtained increased levels of protection and a Tariff Board to determine future duties, antagonising the Country Party, which announced ahead of the 1922 election that it was not prepared to support a government led by Hughes. There were further challenges to sitting Nationalist members by candidates insistent that Hughes must go. After his party's vote slumped to just 35 per cent at the 1922 election, he made way for the treasurer, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, who formed a coalition with the Country Party. A Cambridge-educated Melbourne businessman, tall and magisterially calm, Bruce made little of his distinguished war service in a British regiment. After the turmoil of his diminutive and strident predecessor, it seemed that peace was finally restored.

Numerous organisations sought to represent returned service personnel. The most successful was the Returned Soldiers' Association, formed in 1916, which later became the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia, and eventually the Returned and Services League (RSL). By the early 1920s the RSL emerged as the dominant organisation, its non-partisan stance, forceful advocacy of repatriation benefits, and extensive network of social clubs ensuring its success. By the mid-1920s almost one in three returned men were members of the RSL, a much higher rate than in other Dominions.⁴⁸

The immediate post-war years betray a vastly different temperament from that of Edwardian Australia. This was a period when, according to Jill Roe, Australia was 'left behind', its confident pre-war optimism and desire for social experiment shattered by the consequences of war and fears of social unrest: Australia became more conservative and inward looking in the post-war world.⁴⁹ While social policy more generally may have languished between the wars, Australia in effect created a second welfare state, introducing an

49 Jill Roe, 'Left Behind?, 1915–39', in Jill Roe (ed.), Social Policy in Australia: Some Perspectives, 1901–1975 (Sydney: Cassell, 1976), pp. 101–12.

⁴⁷ Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia*. Volume 4, 1901–1942: *The Succeeding Age* (Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 182–97.

⁴⁸ See Martin Crotty, 'The Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia, 1916–46', in Martin Crotty and Marina Larsson (eds), Anzac Legacies: Australians and the Aftermath of War (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2010), pp. 166–86; G.L. Kristianson, The Politics of Patriotism: The Pressure Group Activities of the Returned Servicemen's League (Canberra: ANU Press, 1966).

extensive 'repatriation' system of pension, settlement, housing, employment preference, training, education, and medical benefits for returning men and their families and for the dependants of those who did not return. The first Commonwealth *Repatriation Act* was passed in 1917, and a Repatriation Department was established the following year. These government schemes were supplemented by numerous charitable and philanthropic efforts: comforts funds, nursing homes, societies assisting orphans and widows and the like. In embracing the idea of repatriation, Australians expressed an obligation to those who served.

The scale of assistance required for the 150,000 casualties and the families of those who served and died was significant. By the late 1930s, 250,000 Australians were supported with war pensions, 133,000 men had been found jobs by the Repatriation Department's Labour Bureau, 40,000 families had been placed on the land, 21,000 war service homes had been built, 20,000 children had received education assistance, 28,000 servicemen had undergone training courses and over 4,000 artificial limbs had been supplied free of charge. In the late 1930s repatriation benefits constituted nearly one-fifth of all Commonwealth government expenditure.⁵⁰ Even so, the efforts of governments fell short of expectations of the returned servicemen organisations. In 1918 an exasperated prime minister, Hughes, proud of his commitment to returning diggers, snapped in response to incessant criticism of repatriation efforts that he couldn't 'work miracles'. It was a sentiment echoed by successive administrations down the years.⁵¹

Australians agreed, however, that one repatriation scheme was a tragic failure. For politicians and officials, getting men out of the cities and onto the land offered the promise of both healthy employment for 'unsettled' veterans and a means of bolstering Australia's efforts to cultivate and civilise Australia's vast rural areas.⁵² In all 40,000 returned soldiers and their families were settled on often inadequate, poorly watered and badly serviced plots of land through government soldier settlement schemes. Empire settlement schemes also promoted the settlement of British veterans in Australia.⁵³ By 1929 Mr Justice Pike, called upon to investigate the 'causes of failure' of so many soldier settlers, found that nearly half of all settlers had quit the land,

⁵⁰ Figures from Repatriation Department, Annual Reports, 1921-38.

⁵¹ Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates, vol. 82, pp. 275-6 (17 July 1917).

⁵² Report of the Conference of Representatives of the Commonwealth and State Governments...in Respect of the Settlement of Returned Soldiers on the Land, February 1916, *Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers*, 1914–17, vol. 5, pp. 1469–73.

⁵³ Kent Fedorowich, Unfit for Heroes: Reconstruction and Soldier Settlement in the Empire between the Wars (Manchester University Press, 1995).

impoverished and indebted with an accumulated Common wealth government loss of \pounds_{23} million.⁵⁴

Public policy failures cannot mask the fact that the burden of loss and much of the long-term responsibility for caring for ill, disabled and psychologically scarred returned men fell on families.⁵⁵ Mourning is impossible to quantify, although in recent years historians have turned their attention to the ethnography of grief in the inter-war years, reconstructing the experience of families crushed by the loss of husbands and sons or the grinding burden of looking after 'shattered Anzacs'. Many families were blighted by grief; some estimate half of all Australian families knew someone killed in action.⁵⁶ While most suffered in silence, others sought to channel their loss through the creation of networks of mourners, such as the Sailors' and Soldiers' War Widows Association and the Sailors' and Soldiers' Fathers Association. Other organisations, such as Legacy, provided emotional and material assistance for the children of men who had died in the service of their country.⁵⁷

The Anzac legend

The end of the Great War is still commemorated. Remembrance or Armistice Day remains a solemn acknowledgement of the tragic loss of life in the 'war to end all wars', observed throughout the Commonwealth as well as in France, Belgium, the USA, Germany, Italy, Israel, the Netherlands and Poland. But Australia and New Zealand stand alone in commemorating the Great War on a second, and for these two nations, more important occasion – Anzac Day.

Despite this shared commemorative heritage, Anzac Day in Australia and New Zealand differ in emphasis: where for New Zealanders Anzac Day is a

54 'Report of Mr Justice Pike on Losses Due to Soldier Settlement', Commonwealth Parliamentary Papers, 1929, vol. 2, pp. 6–24. See Marilyn Lake, The Limits of Hope: Soldier Settlement in Victoria 1915–38 (Oxford University Press, 1987); J.M. Powell, 'The Debt of Honour: Soldier Settlement in the Dominions 1915–40', Journal of Australian Studies, 15, 8 (1981): 66–7; Ken Fry, 'Soldier Settlement and the Australian Agrarian Myth after the First World War', Labour History, 48 (1985): 29–43. Stephen Garton, while not minimising the tragedy, has stressed the fact that half of all these soldier settlers succeeded and that this is a dimension of soldier settlement largely overlooked by historians; see Garton, The Cost of War, pp. 118–42.

- 55 Garton, The Cost of War; Marina Larsson, Shattered Anzacs: Living with the Scars of War (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009).
- 56 K.S. Inglis, Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 1998), p. 97.
- 57 See the pioneering work of Joy Damousi, *The Labour of Loss: Mourning, Memory and Wartime Bereavement in Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 1999); see also Mark Lyons, *Legacy: The First Fifty Years* (Melbourne: Lothian, 1978).

solemn day of dawn services, wreath laying and small ceremonies at local memorials and churches, in Australia it is a public holiday, sharing many of the solemn commemorative rituals found across the Tasman, but also marked by public marches of returned men, cheered by large crowds acknowledging their sacrifice but also their contribution to the making of the nation. Anzac Day is both a commemoration of loss and a celebration of a moment of national founding when the essential virtues of a distinctive people are seen to have flowered in the most extreme circumstances.

The distinctiveness of the Australian response to the horrors of the Great War is also evident in the proliferation of war memorials. Such memorials are found in many combatant counties and most of these memorials, especially those in the Commonwealth, record the names of the dead. In Australia, however, many of these memorials record the names of all those who served, not just those who died. This is ample testimony to the wide-spread sense that the Great War did not merely represent loss but something more: a national 'becoming' made by all those who served.⁵⁸

Many Australian war memorials were funded and erected by local communities and community organisations. They began to appear from 1916 and represent a popular collective commemorative impulse; it channelled mourning and salved it by finding meaning in Australia's commitment to the Empire. Local communities thus proclaimed that Australia's soldiers had secured its standing as a nation. State and federal governments read the public mood, and in the early 1920s began to erect large public memorials to the Great War. In addition the federal government supported the work of the Imperial War Graves Commission to ensure that those who had died in combat had suitable graves and memorials on overseas battlefields to recognise their sacrifice.⁵⁹ The Commission allowed families to craft inscriptions for the overseas graves of sons and husbands and while many acknowledged the noble sacrifice of those who had served 'King and country', by the early 1920s, when these inscriptions were being composed, others instead expressed feelings that this sacrifice had been in vain; for them the futility of the war overwhelmed any sense of national pride.60

The Australian cultural response to the Great War was unique but was it inevitable? The history of war commemoration suggests that while many

⁵⁸ Inglis, Sacred Places, pp. 123–96.

⁵⁹ See Bart Ziino, A Distant Grief: Australians, War Graves and the Great War (Perth: UWA Press, 2007).

⁶⁰ Colin Bale, 'A Crowd of Witnesses: Australian War Grave Inscriptions on the Western Front of the Great War', PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 2006.

Australians embraced the stories of Anzac bravery and took to heart the idea that these men had realised the full potential of the Australian spirit, others were overwhelmed by loss. In this context governments and spokesmen for returned servicemen set out to make the Anzac legend the centrepiece of national identity: through Anzac Day and public acknowledgement of the importance of Anzac service. Debate has raged around the nature of this legend: was it truthful or invented; grounded in the distinctive characteristics of the male, working-class, bush culture and the experiences of war or propagated by national boosters hoping to maintain enthusiasm for the war effort and ennoble the tragedy?

Drawing on the writings of Charles Bean and other influential witnesses to the conflict as well as soldier diaries and letters, popular writers have perpetuated the idea that the Anzacs embodied Australian values and characteristics derived from the bush: courageous, resilient, laconic, contemptuous of authority, disrespectful of social hierarchy and fiercely loyal to one's mates.⁶¹ Bill Gammage's classic history of ordinary soldiers, while standing aside from the national bombast of some of this popular history, used the diaries and letters of soldiers to provide a more complex picture of their fears, anxieties and hopes.⁶² Other historians have queried the legend: one study showed that the Anzacs, far from being noble bushmen, were more likely to come from the city and to have been born in Britain; another explored the incidence of mutiny, desertion and self-harm to escape the front.⁶³

The resilience of the Anzac legend is evident in its continuing meaning for contemporary Australians. Gallipoli and the Western Front have become popular sites of pilgrimage to celebrate those who served and the national traits they embodied.⁶⁴ Nonetheless, there are darker undercurrents in the Australian experience of the Anzacs. Stories of alienated, withdrawn and silent husbands and fathers, and the incidence of drink, unemployment and family conflict all suggest that for some families the scars of war ran deep and across generations. If Australia became a nation at Gallipoli, the cost of that making was a heavy one.

⁶¹ Patsy Adam-Smith, *The ANZACS* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1978); Les Carlyon, *Gallipoli* (Sydney: Macmillan, 2001).

⁶² Gammage, The Broken Years.

⁶³ L.L. Robson, The First AIF: A Study of Its Recruitment 1914–1918 (Melbourne University Press, 1970); Stanley, Bad Characters.

⁶⁴ Bruce Scates, Return to Gallipoli: Walking the Battlefields of the Great War (Cambridge University Press, 2006).

Search for a solution, 1923–39

3

FRANK BONGIORNO

In 1923 a Gallipoli veteran, not yet 40 years old, replaced a London-born man more than 20 years his senior as prime minister. The change might have been a mark of the times – the Anzacs coming into their own, in a nation their gallant deeds had made. But the new prime minister, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, was not an Anzac. He had been wounded at Gallipoli, but as a captain in a British regiment. And although born in the city after which he was named, the Cambridge-educated Bruce had spent nearly all his adult life in Britain.

Bruce was an Anglo-Australian. He would not have seen his enlistment in a British regiment in preference to the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) as an act of disloyalty or arrogance. Neither would most Australians of his time. In his imperial patriotism Bruce had much in common with most men of the First AIF.¹ Bruce walked with a limp, a result of wartime injuries; this legacy was something else shared with other Australian men of his generation. The war exacted great costs long after 1918. Apart from returned men's suffering, there was the burden endured by wives and children, often amid official neglect.² Many died prematurely, while some found themselves unable to earn a living as their health declined. Others battled on, and did their best to forget the horror. A few, such as Major General H.E. 'Pompey' Elliott, who had wept over Fromelles, killed themselves.

Many of those on the non-Labor side of politics previously willing to work with William Morris ('Billy') Hughes became more hostile to his leadership in the years following the war. The watershed December 1922 election delivered the balance of power to the new Country Party under Dr Earle Page. It would not support Hughes who, despite his abandonment of the Labor

I David Lee, Stanley Melbourne Bruce: Australian Internationalist (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. I–14.

² Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return* (Oxford University Press, 1996); Marina Larsson, *Shattered Anzacs: Living with the Scars of War* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009).

Party in 1916, had retained its taste for high levels of state intervention in the economy. Bruce – Hughes' treasurer and a political novice – was elevated to the prime ministership and oversaw the formation of a coalition between the Nationalists and Country Party.³ Hughes moved to the back bench, where his presence would serve as an uncomfortable reminder of the persistence of wartime social and political divisions. The Little Digger was not a spent force yet.

The making of the new ministry, which became known as the Bruce–Page government, was a political moment of far-reaching importance. A national party system that had only barely settled into a two-party structure at the outbreak of the war had, between 1916 and 1922, shown signs of fragmenting. One emerging fissure was that between non-Labor parties of the city and country, but early 1923 heralded a sometimes uneasy, if resilient, urban– rural coalition. Its foundation was hostility to the Labor Party and the trade union movement.

There was not just a change in national leadership in 1923 but also a subsidence in the economic and social turbulence that accompanied the transition from war to peace. Looking back to this period, some writers have identified a consensus around which mainstream politics was arranged; they give the impression of a national 'settlement' of the early Commonwealth period having endured without significant challenge through to the mid-1970s.⁴ But most Australians between the wars would not have been aware that they were living in a society where much had been 'settled'. The 'solutions' adopted before World War 1 for the problem of nation building were once again often sharply contested. The economic crisis of the late 1920s and early 1930s, and rising international tensions that followed thereafter, exposed the weaknesses of the economy, and the limited ability of Australian institutions and policies to mitigate the effects of international market forces and challenges to British global power.

The meanings of modernity

The post-war era began with a strong emphasis on rural development. British proponents of Empire settlement argued that migration from Britain to the Dominions would enable men who had served their country

³ B.D. Graham, 'The Country Party and the Formation of the Bruce–Page Ministry', *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, 10, 37 (1961): 71–85.

⁴ Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), pp. 1–6.

in war to contribute to imperial self-sufficiency while improving their own circumstances.⁵ Within Australia itself, there had been a persistent belief in the virtues of a rural life.⁶ It was on this basis that Western Australia made an agreement with the British government that led to several thousand assisted British migrants becoming group settlers, communities of farmers working together to clear dense forest and then work small blocks under the guidance of capable supervisors. Soldier settlement schemes similarly envisaged successful rural enterprise emerging out of a combination of state assistance, expert advice and British pluck. A belief in the potential of modern science to overcome the traditional problems of farming in Australia underpinned the exercise, yet such expertise played little part in the selection of land or settlers.⁷ Historians have often regarded soldier settlement as a failure,⁸ but where soldier settlers had good land of sufficient acreage, a satisfactory transport network, and could work hard and live frugally, they might succeed.⁹

Faith in science extended beyond agriculture but farming was a beneficiary of the federal government's founding of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in 1926.¹⁰ As 'a modern man', Bruce believed science the key to economic welfare;¹¹ as the principal in his family's importing firm, he favoured rational economic policy. Tariff protection was necessary to develop manufacturing and increase population, but Bruce believed it could be taken too far. He called for a scientific tariff without clarifying precisely what he meant but, more significantly, he redefined 'protection' to include measures that would help farmers compete internationally. His government introduced export bounties and worked towards more efficient marketing.

- 5 Kent Fedorowich, Unfit for Heroes: Reconstruction and Soldier Settlement in the Empire between the Wars (Manchester University Press, 1995), pp. 1–45.
- 6 Don Aitkin, "Countrymindedness": The Spread of an Idea', Australian Cultural History, 4 (1985): 34–41.
- 7 Murray Johnson, "Promises and Pineapples": Post–First World War Soldier Settlement at Beerburrum, Queensland, 1916–1929', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 51, 4 (2005): 499.
- 8 See, for instance, Marilyn Lake, *The Limits of Hope: Soldier Settlement in Victoria* 1915–38 (Oxford University Press, 1987).
- 9 Jacqueline Templeton, 'Set up to Fail? Soldier Settlers in Victoria', Victorian Historical Journal, 59, 1 (1988): 42–50; Monica Keneley, 'Land of Hope: Soldier Settlement in the Western District of Victoria 1918–1930', Electronic Journal of Australian and New Zealand History (2000) http://www.jcu.edu.au/aff/history/articles/keneley2.htm, accessed 7 November 2012.
- 10 C.B. Schedvin, Shaping Science and Industry: A History of Australia's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, 1926–49 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987).
- 11 Lee, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, p. 29.

Primary industry – Australia's most competitive sector – would protect living standards and compensate for the tariff's inefficiencies.¹²

The 1920s saw the extension of industry protection into 'protection all round', an arrangement that would prevail until the 1980s. It had critics between the wars, such as the economist Edward Shann and the historian Keith Hancock, and is today widely condemned for having created gross inefficiencies and a dependency on the state. These critics ignore the domestic and international circumstances in which the system emerged. 'Protection all round' was an attempt to reconcile the claims of urban and rural enterprise in an era when country Australia's political influence was wielded with unprecedented force through the Country Party. It was also an instrument to foster Australian industrialisation in an age of oligopoly. Even the most nostalgic agrarian could not fail to notice that industrial power had shaped nations' fighting capacity in the recent war. Meanwhile, Britain's industrial decline and the raising of international trade barriers were promoting a more integrated approach to imperial development.

Australian industrialisation, which depended on the metals sector, occurred within dependence on Britain. Capital was moving away from speculation and competition, and towards longer-term accumulation strategies based on cartels, price fixing, mass marketing and advertising, product standardisation and partnership with the state. Increasing scales and new technologies drove down costs.¹³ Two Melbourne-based groups of companies originated in Broken Hill mining: Collins House and Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP) emerged as the giants of Australian industry, but British capital dominated both.¹⁴

The rhetoric of development remained agrarian, however. Bruce famously described his policy as 'Men, Money and Markets'. Australia was to attract emigrants from Britain; the City of London would lend money for development; and Britain provided a market for dominion produce. A growing population would absorb British manufactured goods. Yet for all the talk of Australia's vast open spaces, manufacturing's share of gross domestic

¹² W.H. Richmond, 'S.M. Bruce and Australian Economic Policy 1923–9', Australian Economic History Review, 23, 2 (1983): 238–57.

¹³ I am indebted to Humphrey McQueen for his insights on these developments. See also Grant Fleming, David Merrett and Simon Ville, *The Big End of Town: Big Business and Corporate Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 16, 30, 59–65, 85–93, 130–1.

¹⁴ Peter Cochrane, Industrialization and Dependence: Australia's Road to Economic Development, 1870–1939 (Brisbane: UQP, 1980).

product (GDP) increased during the inter-war years.¹⁵ Meanwhile, economic development and government policy did much to improve life in the cities. Governments, speculators and real estate agents formed a powerful alliance in the cause of suburban development.¹⁶ And as the middle class and better-off working class moved into Californian bungalows in expanding suburbs, the older working-class districts closer to town – especially in Sydney and Melbourne – became more closely associated with images of corrupt aldermen, razor gangs, sly groggers, cocaine traffickers and prostitutes.¹⁷

The mythology of the Jazz Age overstates the pleasures of life for most people, but historians have rightly recognised the era as one in which consumer capitalism flourished. Economic historians have recently seen the emergence of a consumer economy between the wars as the driver of manufacturing's growing share of the economy. The car, for example, was increasingly visible on Australian streets. Yet while the price of motor vehicles was dropping rapidly and hire-purchase schemes were available for acquiring them, car ownership remained well beyond the reach of most Australians. Even the cheapest models, at about £200, would have accounted for over nine months' pay for a man on the basic wage at the end of the 1920s.¹⁸

The development of modern advertising, as well as exposure to the consumer economy through films and magazines, helped convince many Australians that yesterday's luxuries were today's necessities.¹⁹ Thousands of homes were connected to the electricity supply. Hot running water remained a luxury, but wood-chip or gas bath heaters were becoming available. Even so, nearly a quarter of all homes in Melbourne in the early 1940s still had no indoor tap and, in an older working-class suburb such as Collingwood, the proportion increased to almost 60 per cent.²⁰ Saturday was bath night for many – the aroma of a football or racing crowd would not have accorded with today's sensitivities. But advertisers of the 1920s touted the value of

- 15 David Merrett and Simon Ville, 'Tariffs, Subsidies, and Profits: A Re-assessment of Structural Change in Australia 1901–39', *Australian Economic History Review*, 51, 1 (2011): 48.
- 16 Peter Spearritt, Sydney since the Twenties (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1978), ch. 3.
- 17 Larry Writer, Razor: A True Story of Slashers, Gangsters, Prostitutes and Sly Grog (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 2001).
- 18 Merrett and Ville, 'Tariffs, Subsidies, and Profits'; Robert Murray, The Confident Years: Australia in the Twenties (Melbourne: Allen Lane, 1978), pp. 151–3; Humphrey McQueen, Social Sketches of Australia 1888–1975 (Melbourne: Penguin Books, 1978), pp. 98–9.
- 19 Robert Crawford, But Wait, There's More...A History of Australian Advertising, 1900–2000 (Melbourne University Press, 2008), chs 3–5.
- 20 Kate Darian-Smith, On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime: 1939–1945, 2nd edn (Melbourne University Press, 2009), pp. 96–7.

cleanliness, promoting a modern bathroom as essential in any home, soap as a potent weapon in the battle against body odour and tooth powder or paste as a protection against foul breath.²¹ The growing emphasis in advertising on the virtues of female attractiveness stimulated demand for face creams, lipstick and nail polish.²²

Meals tended to be plain and heavy: plenty of meat, potatoes, some 'greens', carrots and white bread, all washed down with tea. While there was little awareness of nutrition, 'green vegetables and fresh fruit were known to be "good for you"'.²³ Branded confectionery and drugs, and convenience foods such as packaged breakfast cereal and processed cheese, were ubiquitous by the 1920s and 1930s. With little regard for their actual nutritional value, advertisers shamelessly promoted many of these products as scientifically 'healthy'.²⁴ Vegemite, a yeast extract usually spread on bread or toast, made its debut in 1923 but initially failed to sell. Its conquest of Australian hearts and palates truly began in the second half of the 1930s, and by the time of World War 2 there were scientists prepared to argue that it, too, was good for you.²⁵

The radio was the ultimate in modern home entertainment. There were nearly 100 Australians to every radio licence in 1925 but five years later it was 20 for each one.²⁶ Radio still had to compete with another modern appliance, the phonograph, as well as older entertainments such as the piano, pianola, piano accordion, harmonica and fiddle. When people gathered they sang and virtually every social circle had someone accomplished in the recital of verse. The patterns of social life remained heavily dependent on religious affiliation. The war had fanned the flames of sectarianism and a mixed marriage could still cause scandal, even the breakdown of family relations. City dance halls and the artists' balls attracted notoriety in the 1920s for encouraging salacious behaviour, but many young people would not have attended anything more adventurous than a country dance or church social.

²¹ Graeme Davison, 'Down the Gurgler: Historical Influences on Australian Domestic Water Consumption', in Patrick Troy (ed.), *Troubled Waters: Confronting the Water Crisis in Australia's Cities* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2008), pp. 37–65.

²² Marilyn Lake, 'Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II', Australian Historical Studies, 24, 95 (1990): 267–84; Merrett and Ville, 'Tariffs, Subsidies, and Profits', p. 60.

²³ Murray, The Confident Years, p. 151.

²⁴ Merrett and Ville, 'Tariffs, Subsidies, and Profits', p. 60.

²⁵ Robert White, 'Vegemite', in Melissa Harper and Richard White (eds), *Symbols of Australia* (Sydney and Canberra: UNSW Press and the National Museum of Australia, 2010), pp. 135–43.

²⁶ Merrett and Ville, 'Tariffs, Subsidies, and Profits', p. 58.

These provided opportunities for the respectable mingling of the sexes and occasional flirtation. $^{\rm 27}$

Attendances at football, cricket and racing between the wars were healthy, suggesting that sport was a welcome diversion for many in hard times. The depth of admiration for the astonishing batting performances of the young Don Bradman in England in 1930 was matched by the explosion of anger when the English cricket team engaged in bodyline tactics – where bowlers aimed the ball at the batsman's body – to bring Bradman and Australia back to earth during the summer of 1932–33. Phar Lap's victory in the 1930 Melbourne Cup similarly entranced the nation, but the racehorse's sudden death in the United States in 1932 fuelled the sense of another antipodean star having been brought down by malign forces beyond local control. Closer to home, South Sydney and Eastern Suburbs dominated the New South Wales Rugby League while in the Victorian Football League, Collingwood's record of four consecutive premierships from 1927 to 1930 has never been equalled. Tennis enjoyed popularity among young men and women while golf was mainly for the better off.

Cinema was the most popular commercial entertainment and by the 1920s patrons were increasingly likely to watch American rather than Australian movies.²⁸ Film, illustrated magazines and newspapers, and even the life-like mannequin contributed to a visual culture that some historians believe was influential in reconstituting female selfhood. The 'flapper', a term that before the 1920s had been virtually synonymous with 'prostitute', exuded glamour and sophistication – an effect of her enmeshment in the mass market in leisure, consumer goods and entertainment.²⁹ If she worked, it was as a typist or secretary in an office that became a more sexualised workplace in popular culture and perhaps in reality.³⁰ A new generation of feminists, committed to women's protection, bemoaned these developments. The 'modern girl',

²⁷ Peter Kirkpatrick, The Sea Coast of Bohemia: Literary Life in Sydney's Roaring Twenties (Brisbane: UQP, 1992), ch. 12; Jill Julius Matthews, Dance Hall & Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity (Sydney: Currency Press, 2005), pp. 59–68; Karen Twigg, "The Role of the "Local Dance" in Country Courtship of the 1930s', in But Nothing Interesting Ever Happened to Us: Memories of the Twenties and Thirties in Victoria (Melbourne: Victorian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia, 1986), pp. 17–27.

²⁸ Diane Collins, 'The Movie Octopus', in Peter Spearritt and David Walker (eds), Australian Popular Culture (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), pp. 102–20.

²⁹ Liz Conor, The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004).

³⁰ Catriona Elder, "^aThe Question of the Unmarried": Some Meanings of Being Single in Australia in the 1920s and 1930s', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 8, 18 (1993): 151–73.

however, courted male attention and hinted at female sexual emancipation from neo-Victorian mores. $^{\mbox{\tiny 3I}}$

The 'modern girl' was also white. She might work while young but was ultimately expected to find fulfilment in marriage. Aboriginal women, having limited opportunities for participation in the market as consumers or for matrimony, were enjoined to seek their destiny in hard manual labour. White feminists saw chaste industriousness as the best option for them. While some governments did try to afford Indigenous women greater protection from abuse, they were hampered by the ascendancy of the northern pastoral economy, in which Indigenous women remained critical as workers and sexual partners.³²

Science was applied to Aboriginal affairs, where especially in Western Australia and the Northern Territory administrators advocated the controlled mating of mixed-race women with white working-class men to 'breed out the colour'.³³ Children were taken from their mothers, placed in institutions and trained in 'modern' methods - the girls for domestic employment or wifely duties, the boys as tradesmen. Among the white majority, too, there was a growing stress on the centrality of the housewife and mother to the successful home and nation. She was urged to take advantage of modern household technologies to achieve greater levels of cleanliness and efficiency. Scientific mothercraft applied the cult of efficiency even to bonds between parents and children, supposedly ensuring a well-educated and well-nourished citizenry. Science, through more effective contraception, was held up by some middle-class reformers as offering the opportunity to limit the size of one's family, a particularly attractive prospect in the Depression. But most couples probably continued to rely on traditional methods such as withdrawal, periodic abstinence and abortion. They did so successfully: birth rates dropped to an all-time low in the early 1930s.³⁴

³¹ Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999), pp. 56–7.

³² Catriona Elder, "'It was hard for us to marry Aboriginal": Some Meanings of Singleness for Aboriginal Women in Australia in the 1930s', *Lilith*, 8 (1993): 114–38; Fiona Paisley, *Loving Protection? Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights 1919–1939* (Melbourne University Press, 2000).

³³ Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Melbourne University Press, 2002).

³⁴ Kerreen M. Reiger, The Disenchantment of the Home: Modernizing the Australian Family 1880–1940 (Oxford University Press, 1985); Lisa Featherstone, Let's Talk about Sex: Histories of Sexuality in Australia from Federation to the Pill (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), ch. 6; Frank Bongiorno, The Sex Lives of Australians: A History (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2012), ch. 6.

Some employers also took efficiency to heart and organised their factories along scientific principles through the use of bonus payments and close monitoring of labour time and workflows.³⁵ Large industrial enterprises such as H.V. McKay's Sunshine Harvester factory in Melbourne, the BHP steelworks at Port Kembla in New South Wales, and the General Motors Holden car body works in Adelaide used mass production techniques inspired by US models. Workers sometimes benefitted from increasing continuity of employment but most new jobs were repetitive and low-skilled. Some firms introduced welfare capitalism, providing benefits to encourage staff loyalty and contain discontent.³⁶ Herbert Gepp was a pioneer of this renovated paternalism at Broken Hill before the war, and he later applied it while manager of the Electrolytic Zinc Company at Risdon near Hobart. But welfare capitalism did not succeed in dissolving class loyalty and outside a few examples in larger companies, most schemes were modest.³⁷

After 1923 unemployment was never below 7 per cent: many working-class people would barely have noticed the movement from the 'prosperous' 1920s to the 'hungry' 1930s. The living wage had extended to the majority of male workers by the 1920s but was of little value if you were out of work.³⁸ Meanwhile, unemployment weakened the unions' bargaining position. In the later 1920s, employers defeated workers by recruiting strike breakers from a large pool of the unemployed. In 1925 the government amended the *Immigration Act* in an effort to deport two Seamen's Union officials, Tom Walsh and Jacob Johnson, who had organised strike action. The High Court ruled the government's action unconstitutional but Bruce fought the 1925 federal election successfully on the issue of the communist menace. This was the prototype for the 'red scare' election used to such effect by conservative parties in the 1950s and 1960s.

- 35 Lucy Taksa, "All a Matter of Timing": Managerial Innovation and Workplace Culture in the New South Wales Railways and Tramways prior to 1921', *Australian Historical Studies*, 29, 110 (1998): 1–26.
- 36 Charles Fahey and John Lack, "A Kind of Elysium Where Nobody Has Anything Difficult to Do": H.B. Higgins, H.V. McKay and the Agricultural Implement Makers, 1901–26', *Labour History*, 80 (2001): 99–102; Christopher Wright, "The Formative Years of Management Control at the Newcastle Steelworks, 1913–1924', *Labour History*, 55 (1988): 55–70; Peter Poynton, "The Development of the Assembly Line in Australia', *Arena*, 58 (1981): 64–81; Charlie Fox, *Working Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), ch. 7.
- 37 Charles Fahey and John Lack, "Silent forms of coercion": Welfare Capitalism, State Labour Regulation and Collective Action at the Yarraville Sugar Refinery, 1890–1925', *Labour History*, 101 (2011): 105–22.
- 38 Peter Macarthy, 'The Harvester Judgment: An Historical Assessment', PhD thesis, ANU, 1967, esp. ch. 9.

Making a national disaster

Despite electoral success in 1925, the failure of the government's program of national development was increasingly evident. Labour productivity declined, output stagnated and the public debt increased as Australian governments borrowed more money. Some capital was invested in the bush but most went to urban amenities and infrastructure for manufacturing. The scale of Australian borrowing in London was worrying enough without the decline in Australia's capacity to service its debts as the terms of trade shifted against primary producers.³⁹ Meanwhile, the wharves, coalmines and timber industry became battlegrounds as unions resisted attacks by employers, government and the Commonwealth Arbitration Court on wages and conditions. The federal government, formally relocated to the new capital of Canberra from 1927, was increasingly blatant in its efforts to assist employers against the unions. Its loosening political grip was discernible at the 1928 election, in which the Labor Party managed to regain some electoral ground. Matt Charlton was nonetheless replaced as Labor leader by someone regarded as more vigorous: James Scullin, a Catholic ex-grocer, labour journalist and union organiser.40

Changes in the federal–State balance in the first half of the twentieth century have often been attributed by historians to the impact of the two wars. The years in between have been mainly underestimated. The passage of the *Main Roads Development Act* in 1923, for instance, was a landmark in Commonwealth–State relations because it authorised special purpose grants by the federal to State governments under section 96 of the Constitution.⁴¹ In time, this method of finance would contribute decisively to federal power. The formal establishment of the Loan Council in 1927 also increased the federal government's role in economic management.⁴² It assumed exclusive control of federal and State government borrowing, an innovation that expressed the drive for efficiency and a desire to avoid competition between Australian governments for overseas funds.

While the Loan Council and accompanying constitutional changes in 1928 would strengthen the federal government's hand, much scope remained

³⁹ Barrie Dyster and David Meredith, Australia in the Global Economy: Continuity and Change 2nd edn (Cambridge University Press, 2012), ch. 4.

⁴⁰ Warren Denning, *Caucus Crisis: The Rise & Fall of the Scullin Government* [1937] (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982), pp. 31–4.

⁴¹ Geoffrey Sawer, Australian Federal Politics and Law 1901–1929 (Melbourne University Press, 1956), p. 230.

⁴² Alex Millmow, The Power of Economic Ideas: The Origins of Keynesian Macroeconomic Management in Interwar Australia 1929–39 (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010), p. 39.

for the States in social and economic policy. With their control over land, transport, roads, education and health, the State governments' impact on the lives of most Australians remained considerable. Between 1925 and 1928 the public sector accounted for around half of all capital formation and the proportion was increasing; much of this activity was controlled by State governments or statutory authorities.⁴³ Unsurprisingly in these circumstances, many dominant political personalities of the era were active at that level. The premiers of Queensland, Edward ('Red Ted') Theodore, and of Tasmania, Joseph ('Honest Joe') Lyons, both transferred to federal politics in time to become major actors in Australia's Depression drama. Jack Lang (Labor), known as 'The Big Fella', Tom Bavin (Nationalist) and Bertram Stevens (United Australia Party) ran activist New South Wales governments between the wars. Lang and Stevens, although political opponents, shared a taste for expansionist policies that annoyed federal governments intent on economic orthodoxy. In Victoria there were the farmers 'Ned' Hogan (Labor) and long-serving (1935–43) Albert Dunstan (Country Party) – the latter was known by many nicknames of which 'Albert the Great' was the most complimentary. The Labor trio, William Forgan Smith (Queensland) - called 'Foregone' as a backhanded tribute to his authoritarianism – Philip Collier (Western Australia) and Albert Ogilvie (Tasmania) were also premiers of stature.

By 1929 Bruce was fed up with both the unions and the arbitration system, and in August he introduced the Maritime Industries Bill to resolve the industrial impasse and reverse economic decline. It proposed to transfer the Commonwealth's industrial relations powers to the States, except in the maritime industry. Bruce's ostensible motive was to create a more efficient system that would remove overlapping jurisdiction between State and federal tribunals, which a visiting British Economic Mission to Australia had recently condemned. Australia's untidy industrial relations system offended Bruce's taste for efficiency and social harmony; union resistance to unfavourable Arbitration Court awards offended his respect for law and order, but on this matter his credibility was undermined after his government abandoned the prosecution of a major employer in the coal industry, John Brown, who had thumbed his nose at the Court by locking out his men. When Hughes moved an amendment to the Bill, the government was narrowly defeated. In the ensuing election, Bruce lost his seat as well as office. Labor's Scullin became prime minister.⁴⁴

⁴³ N.G. Butlin, A. Barnard and J.J. Pincus, *Government and Capitalism: Public and Private Choice in Twentieth Century Australia* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), p. 35.

⁴⁴ Dagmar Carboch, The Fall of the Bruce–Page Government (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1958), pp. 119–74.

In one sense, the causes of the Depression in Australia seem self-evident. The world crisis was of such a magnitude that a small export-dependent economy had no prospect of avoiding disaster. Economic historians have debated the relative significance of internal and external factors but the historical consensus remains that the critical influences for Australia were the drying up of external capital and collapse of export prices.⁴⁵

It was not the consensus at the time. Many people blamed the banks – or the 'money power' – for locking up credit.⁴⁶ The Scullin government introduced several practical measures in an effort to alleviate the crisis, which threatened national solvency even as it brought rising unemployment and increasing social distress. The government cut spending on defence and immigration. It also increased tariffs in a desperate effort to reduce imports. Gold exports were prohibited, thereby effectively taking Australia off the gold standard. The government meanwhile sought to boost exports by guaranteeing a minimum price to Australian wheat growers. Partly as a result, there was a bumper crop, helped along by a good season. But a glut on the international market further reduced prices, and government was unable to pay the promised minimum. Many farmers were ruined.

In June 1930 Scullin announced that Sir Otto Niemeyer, an emissary of the Bank of England, would visit Australia to advise the government. Historians have sometimes presented Scullin as having been manipulated into issuing an invitation, but Niemeyer's visit needs to be seen in the context of growing concern on the part of the British Treasury and Bank of England since the late 1920s about the course of Australian economic development. Radicals predictably saw Niemeyer as a representative of the 'money power'. His advice was that Australians were too optimistic about their economy's future, the Australian standard of living was too high, and Australian governments had to balance their budgets. In response, the Commonwealth and State governments signed up to the Melbourne Agreement, which committed them to deep spending cuts.⁴⁷

Staunch advocates of financial responsibility welcomed Niemeyer's counsel but most Australians did not. State governments feigned agreement while

⁴⁵ T.J. Valentine, 'The Causes of the Depression in Australia', *Explorations in Economic History*, 24, 1 (1987): 43–62; Mahinda Siriwardana, 'The Causes of the Depression in Australia in the 1930s: A General Equilibrium Evaluation', *Explorations in Economic History*, 32, 1 (1995): 51–81.

⁴⁶ Peter Love, Labour and the Money Power: Australian Labour Populism 1890–1950 (Melbourne University Press, 1984), chs 5–6.

⁴⁷ Bernard Attard, 'The Bank of England and the Origins of the Niemeyer Mission, 1921– 1930', *Australian Economic History Review*, 32, 1 (1992): 66–83.

doing their best to avoid having to administer Niemeyer's prescription.⁴⁸ Niemeyer's arrogant bearing and bluntness of delivery did nothing to help his cause. The election of Labor's Jack Lang in New South Wales in October 1930 helped destroy the Melbourne Agreement, for he made it clear he had no time for either Niemeyer or British bondholders.

While the government baulked at radical deflation, it became increasingly obvious that federal Labor's commitment to maintaining wage levels and pensions could not be reconciled with its duty of crisis management. In early 1931, largely through the efforts of the Bank of New South Wales and its general manager, Alfred Davidson, the Australian pound was belatedly devalued in an effort further to reduce the flow of imports and make Australian exports more competitive. The Commonwealth Arbitration Court also cut the basic wage by 10 per cent in January 1931. It has been argued that the reduction was not implemented by employers and therefore had no appreciable effect on real wages.⁴⁹ Colin Forster and Peter Sheldon have convincingly rejected this contention. Both, however, emphasise the federal Arbitration Court's lack of jurisdiction over State employees. The 'stickiness' of real wages was also due to the fact that margins - which many workers received on top of the basic wage for their possession of a skill - were not adjusted in line with the falling cost of living as prices declined. The Commonwealth basic wage, by way of contrast, was subject to quarterly adjustments. State industrial tribunals sometimes followed quite an independent course. For the most part, their awards remained more generous to employees, and notably so in New South Wales under Lang.⁵⁰

The operation of Australia's industrial tribunals during the Depression highlights the simplistic character of much modern criticism of the historical role of arbitration. That a 'centralised' system of wage determination produced wage rigidities and unsustainably high wages is an article of faith among these commentators.⁵¹ It is true that the existence of rival State and

⁴⁸ Kosmas Tsokhas, 'Sir Otto Niemeyer, the Bankrupt State and the Federal System', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 30, I (1995): 18–38.

⁴⁹ R.G. Gregory, V. Ho and L. McDermott, 'Sharing the Burden: The Australian Labour Market during the 1930s' in R.G. Gregory and N.G. Butlin (eds), *Recovery from the Depression: Australia and the World Economy in the 1930s* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 217–44.

⁵⁰ Colin Forster, 'Wages and Wage Policy: Australia in the Depression, 1929–34', Australian Economic History Review, 30, I (1990): 23–42; Peter Sheldon, 'State-Level Basic Wages in Australia during the Depression, 1929–35: Institutions and Politics over Markets', Australian Economic History Review, 47, 3 (2007): 249–77.

⁵¹ For example, Kelly, The End of Certainty, pp. 8-9.

federal jurisdictions undermined the attempt to cut wages uniformly. Yet workers who came under federal jurisdiction found the basic wage component of their awards reduced at quarterly intervals for as long as prices dropped, in addition to the 10 per cent cut. Moreover, some State tribunals were guided by federal decisions. Contemporary experts recognised that flexibility of this kind was not to be taken lightly.⁵² Real wages in Australia declined to about the same extent as in the United States, with its freer labour market, and more sharply than in Britain, which lacked a centralised wage system but had relatively strong unions.⁵³

Wage movements only hint at the Depression's social impact. Most estimates of unemployment during the worst year, 1932, lie between a quarter and a third of the workforce.⁵⁴ Historians have long debated the extent of suffering and might be divided, somewhat crudely, into 'optimists' and 'pessimists'. There is a rich literature of regional and local histories, oral testimony, anecdote, memoir and folklore that provides support for the pessimists' case. Yet some people prospered, or were little affected.⁵⁵ Even for the less well-off individuals who remained in employment, the decline in money wages tended to lag behind the drop in prices. Farming families who managed to keep their land could at least feed themselves. On the other hand, many Australians were supporting extended families, as it was to relatives that people often turned in desperate times.⁵⁶

State governments provided unemployment relief – some work for a meagre payment – but there was insufficient to go around. Others received emergency rations called sustenance ('the susso'), while local government and charities assisted those in greatest difficulty. A study of the Victorian unemployed has revealed the success of agitation in bringing about improvements in treatment of the unemployed. The Communist Party, little more than a political sect in the 1920s, acquired a large following among the jobless during the Depression through its 'front' organisation, the Unemployed Workers' Movement. Communists were also conspicuous in anti-eviction

- 52 Allan G.B. Fisher, 'Crisis and Readjustment in Australia', *Journal of Political Economy*, 42, 6 (1934): 760.
- 53 R.G. Gregory, 'An Overview', in Gregory and Butlin (eds), *Recovery from the Depression*, pp. 22–3; Nicholas H. Dimsdale and Nicholas J. Horsewood, 'The Causes of Unemployment in Interwar Australia', *Economic Record*, 78, 243 (2002): 388–405.
- 54 David Potts, *The Myth of the Great Depression* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2006), pp. 10–11; Gregory, 'An Overview', pp. 28–9.
- 55 A.R. Cottle, Life Can Be Oh So Sweet, on the Sunny Side of the Street: A Study of the Rich of Woollahra during the Great Depression, 1928–1934 (London: Minerva, 1998).
- 56 Potts, The Myth of the Great Depression, pp. 90-2, 114.

riots and would exercise a large influence over parts of the union movement in the late $19308.^{57}$

Optimists argue that excessive attention has been given to unrepresentative tales of suffering, thereby providing a misleading impression of the Depression's effects. People sometimes had to adopt plainer diets, but they did not starve. Others moved to more modest accommodation, but eviction was rare. Battlers made do with improvised clothing, but were infrequently cold as a result. Psychological suffering was greater for many – especially those for whom unemployment or its threat was a new experience – than physical suffering. But some people found happiness in making the best of harder times. This was a society under stress, but not disintegrating.⁵⁸ The Depression, moreover, did not produce a reversion 'to a pre-consumerist lifestyle'. Advertisers successfully adapted their message to tough times, even to the extent of emphasising the healthy properties of higher beer consumption.⁵⁹ Beer seems an unlikely contributor but the Depression might have improved health by enforcing greater internal discipline and other behaviour conducive to better outcomes.⁶⁰

The illnesses afflicting the nation's economy were more persistent. There was no cause for optimism here as the drift of government, bank and arbitration policy was deflationary. In early 1931, however, the federal treasurer, Edward Theodore, advocated a program of public works and mild credit expansion, through the issue of 'fiduciary notes' – banknotes printed by government without the backing of gold. Scullin and caucus accepted this plan but it was rejected in the federal Senate, where Labor lacked a majority. The government also needed the cooperation of the Commonwealth Bank. It was independent of the government, being run by a board of conservative businessmen led by its chairman, Sir Robert Gibson. Gibson regarded Theodore's expansionary policies as dangerous and demanded expenditure cuts. Theodore's difficulties were compounded by the accusation that he had engaged in corrupt financial dealings while Queensland premier – the so-called Mungana affair, named after the mine on which the allegations centred. He had stepped aside as treasurer during 1930 while a State government

59 Crawford, But Wait, There's More, pp. 85, 90.

⁵⁷ Charlie Fox, Fighting Back: The Politics of the Unemployed in Victoria in the Great Depression (Melbourne University Press, 2000); Stuart Macintyre, The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998), esp. pp. 190–8, 329–40.

⁵⁸ Potts, The Myth of the Great Depression.

⁶⁰ Barry Smith, 'Australian Public Health during the Depression of the 1930s', Australian Cultural History, 16 (1997–98): 96–106.

enquiry was held. Then, in January 1931, having recently returned from England, Scullin reappointed Theodore as treasurer before he had been cleared of wrongdoing. The right wing of the Labor Party, led by Lyons (acting treasurer while Theodore was defending himself and Scullin was away), was as furious at this reappointment as it was dismayed by the government's departure from the principles of sound finance. Lyons resigned from Cabinet.

Theodore had yet another difficulty: Lang regarded him as a rival and formulated an economic plan that, to some extent, was a device to derail Theodore. The main point of the Lang Plan was for Australia to suspend interest payments to British moneylenders and divert the money to unemployment relief. Critics replied that Lang's proposal amounted to repudiation of Australia's overseas debts.

In mid-1931 the Commonwealth and the State premiers agreed to what became known as the Premiers' Plan. On balance, it was deflationary, especially when considered in conjunction with the recent cut in the basic wage. The plan involved a three-year program of cuts in government expenditure, including pensions, as well as tax increases. But government policy at this time also had inflationary aspects. Deficits were being financed by the sale of treasury bills to the private banks, an expedient that increased the flow of credit. The most adventurous feature of the Premiers' Plan was also a departure from financial orthodoxy and the principle of the 'sanctity of contracts': an interest rate reduction on government loans held by local bondholders. In effect, Australian lenders were being required to make sacrifices, so that British lenders were paid in full. But to have exempted local lenders from cuts being endured by local wage earners and pensioners would have been politically inexpedient at a time when 'equality of sacrifice' was the catchcry.

Lyons was already talking with anti-Labor political figures and businessmen in Melbourne who wanted him to bring down the government. They had been impressed by his recent successful campaign, as acting treasurer, to persuade Australians to subscribe to a domestic loan due for conversion. Lyons' passionate appeal for honest finance was a foretaste of subsequent mobilisations against the Scullin and Lang governments. By May 1931 a new political force – the United Australia Party (UAP) – had been established in place of the Nationalist Party, with Lyons as its parliamentary leader. But for the time being the balance of power in federal parliament was still held by Lang's men in Canberra, who were now operating as a separate group. Late in 1931 they crossed the floor over a seemingly trivial matter and brought down the Labor government. In the subsequent election, the UAP under Lyons won a crushing victory. 61

Judged by the normally peaceful standards in which it conducts its civil affairs, Australia experienced an unusual level of disorder at this time. Lang was still in office in New South Wales after Scullin's fall and his language, legislation and actions frightened many. Right to the end he maintained a radical policy that set his government apart from every other in Australia.⁶² The result was a ferocious mobilisation of those in favour of 'sanity' and 'honest finance'. Various 'loyalist' and 'citizen' organisations were formed during the political and economic crisis of 1930–31, the All for Australia League the most successful. With a social base in the urban middle class and rural Australia, these bodies professed to be above 'class' and 'party' but they did not allow a supposed distaste for politics to prevent them from eventually merging into the new UAP.⁶³

Just as the citizens' movement was gradually subsumed by the parliamentary system, so movements advocating the creation of new States returned to relative quiescence once the supposed 'red' danger had passed. There had been a revival of 'New State' activity in northern New South Wales from the time of World War I but during the Lang government it exploded into a potent anti-Labor force. An even wilder agitation ensued in the Riverina district of southern New South Wales. Yet, as on previous occasions, once Labor was out of office and conservatives again occupied the treasury benches, the need for separation seemed rather less urgent, especially to the Country Party politicians who were usually prominent in whipping up separatist feeling.⁶⁴ In 1933 a majority of electors in Western Australia voted to secede, but the election of an anti-secessionist Labor Party at the election that year as well as economic recovery helped defuse the movement.

Secret armies formed and on a much greater scale than their earlier manifestations. In the United States private police and agencies (such as Pinkertons), federal troops and state militias had all been used to suppress perceived threats to civil order such as strikes. In Britain this activity was

⁶¹ P.R. Hart, 'Lyons: Labor Minister – Leader of the U.A.P.', *Labour History*, 17 (1969): 37–51.

⁶² Geoff Robinson, When the Labor Party Dreams: Class, Politics and Policy in NSW 1930–32 (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008).

⁶³ Judith Brett, Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard (Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch. 5.

⁶⁴ Ulrich Ellis, The Country Party: A Political and Social History of the Party in New South Wales (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1958); A History of the Australian Country Party (Melbourne University Press, 1963).

organised through the Ministry of Transport, but it drew on the labour of volunteers, as had occurred during the 1926 general strike. In Australia the unofficial character of the paramilitary groups formed to deal with civil disorder possibly reflected the greater influence of the working class on the state through a Labor Party capable of winning elections at fairly regular intervals, especially at the State level.⁶⁵ In New South Wales the main body was called the Old Guard; in Victoria, it was the White Army or League of National Security. These organisations were led by wealthy businessmen and directed from city offices but they drew the bulk of their support from the countryside. The New Guard's methods were less subtle. It actively sought publicity, drawing most of its support from Sydney's middle class, often ex-diggers. Organised along military lines, the New Guard's most famous exploit occurred at the opening of the Sydney Harbour Bridge in 1932. On that occasion, before Lang could perform his part in the ceremony, a New Guardsman rode up on a horse and cut the ribbon, prompting his arrest.⁶⁶

Lang eventually clashed with the new UAP federal administration when he defaulted on overseas interest payments. The Lyons government paid the shortfall but moved to recover the money from the State government. Lang was eventually dismissed by the governor, Sir Philip Game, in May 1932 on the grounds that he had issued an unlawful order to a civil servant to avoid surrendering it.

A stumbling recovery

Although Australia did not collapse into chaos, the Depression exposed the need for a renovation of state and economy. That would not occur until the 1940s, for despite the growing influence of the theories of the British economist John Maynard Keynes, the new federal government had little taste for change. Lyons himself believed that he had saved the country from disaster, a view endorsed in a recent biography.⁶⁷ The claim is dubious: Scullin surely had good reason to feel that he had been given insufficient credit for the Premiers'

⁶⁵ John Hirst, Sense & Nonsense in Australian History (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2005), pp. 239–41; Robin Archer, Why Is There No Labor Party in the United States? (Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 117–24.

⁶⁶ Andrew Moore, The Secret Army and the Premier: Conservative Paramilitary Organisations in New South Wales 1930–32 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1989); Michael Cathcart, Defending the National Tuckshop: Australia's Secret Army Intrigue of 1931 (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1988); Keith Amos, The New Guard Movement 1931–1935 (Melbourne University Press, 1976).

⁶⁷ Anne Henderson, Joseph Lyons: The People's Prime Minister (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2011).

Plan. Moreover, recent research suggests that the Lyons government's failure to act on the advice of professional economists at key moments during the 1930s undermined recovery. With the exception of currency devaluation (which was largely the work of private banks), government policy probably did little either to help or hinder the economic revival.⁶⁸

By the second half of the 1930s there was growing agitation for government to play a more active role in planning social and economic life. The Depression had indicated that markets could not in themselves solve the problem of economic instability - or not, at least, without inflicting an unacceptable level of human suffering along the way. The Royal Commission on Monetary and Banking Systems was influenced by such ideas when it recommended in 1937 that the Commonwealth Bank's future priority should be to reduce fluctuations in the domestic economy. With the exception of the future prime minister Ben Chifley, the commissioners rejected nationalisation of banking, but they argued that the government bank should regulate 'the volume of credit' while also giving due regard to its distribution among various industries. The community's needs, it was suggested, should now receive higher priority in making financial policy.⁶⁹ The enactment of a contributory scheme of national insurance in 1938 was another gesture towards the demand for 'modern' planning and organisation, although the moralistic rhetoric of thrift and self-reliance that accompanied it was old and familiar. The government's continuing conservatism was reflected in the omission of unemployment insurance from its legislation. The effective abandonment of the whole initiative the following year reflected the Lyons government's internal divisions, especially those between the UAP and Country Party; the latter wanted rural industry excluded from the scheme.⁷⁰

The government's caution was also reflected in its reluctance to embrace Keynesian planning, which it did not fully accept until late in 1939, after the outbreak of World War 2.⁷¹ On the domestic front, Lyons' achievement was essentially political; he led a team that remained united long enough to defeat Lang, implement the essentials of the Premiers' Plan, and convince the London money market that it should look more sympathetically

⁶⁸ Gregory and Butlin (eds), *Recovery from the Depression*; C.B. Schedvin, *Australia and the Great Depression: A Study of Economic Development and Policy in the 1920s and 1930s* (Sydney University Press, 1970), p. 372.

⁶⁹ Report of the Royal Commission to Inquire into the Monetary and Banking Systems at Present in Operation in Australia (Canberra: Government Printer, 1937), pp. 202–5, 252.

⁷⁰ John Murphy, A Decent Provision: Australian Welfare Policy, 1870 to 1949 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), pp. 187, 194, 200.

⁷¹ Millmow, The Power of Economic Ideas, ch. 10.

on Australia's claims for financial relief. With his wife, Enid, who was to be elected to parliament in 1943, and their eleven children, he provided for many Australians a homely and reassuring image in an age of bullying, loud-mouthed dictators, at home and abroad.

The governments of the early 1930s, both Labor and non-Labor, assumed that recovery would be led by exports. While the revival of trade did contribute in this way, manufacturing growth, unlike primary industry, absorbed many unemployed and so multiplied demand in other sectors of the economy. The growing success of local manufacturers also assisted Australia's external balances. Currency devaluation presented Australian manufacturers with new opportunities by penalising imports at the same time as wage cuts and higher tariffs helped local industry.⁷² In large part through the efforts of its representative in London, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, Australia also managed to convert its existing overseas loans to lower rates of interest as they matured. The economy benefitted from rising international commodity prices and the modest revival of demand in the British market, assisted by the impressive concessions that assertive Australian negotiators gained on some export commodities at the Ottawa Conference of 1932.⁷³

'A new level of maturity'?

Mass unemployment during the Depression had raised governments' awareness of the capacity of manufacturing to create jobs at the same time as the rise of fascism highlighted the need for rapid industrial development for rearmament and defence. Australia had allowed its defence spending to run down badly during the Depression, although the navy attracted much more money than the other services. All the same, Australian rearmament occurred from 1933 onwards. Lyons was a strong appeaser, of both Japan and Germany, but the prime minister accepted that the quest for peace should be backed by defence preparation. While the main burden of Australian defence policy continued to lie with the much-interrupted construction of a British naval base at Singapore, the government continued a policy of developing local defence-related industry. Moreover, as its faith in Britain's naval capacity

⁷² Schedvin, Australia and the Great Depression, p. 11 and chs 12–15; Geoffrey Spenceley, A Bad Smash: Australia in the Depression of the 1930s (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1990), pp. 29–39.

⁷³ Kosmas Tsokhas, 'Australia and the Ottawa Conference', *Australian Outlook*, 43, 3 (1989): 74–88; Tim Rooth, 'Ottawa and After', in Carl Bridge and Bernard Attard (eds), *Between Empire and Nation: Australia's External Relations from Federation to the Second World War* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2000), pp. 110–29.

declined in the second half of the 1930s, Australian self-reliance in defence loomed increasingly large in planning.⁷⁴

The 1930s are usually understood as an era in which there was a heightened sense of Britishness with the ascendancy of a conservative loyalist politics. Inter-war Australia has been presented as insular, forming a 'quarantined culture' in which Edwardian leftovers such as the literary and artistic Lindsay family had inordinate influence and a cynical use of immigration law and severe censorship of films and books was used to keep a frightening world at bay.75 These efforts were often unsuccessful, however, and imperial loyalty was tempered by the hard realities of declining British power. The rapid development of international communications certainly strengthened connections with Britain: an air mail service between Australia and the United Kingdom began in the 1930s, and Lyons was able to conduct much of his appeasement diplomacy via telephone calls to London. Overseas broadcasts could now be picked up on short-wave radio. Yet declining isolation simultaneously increased Australia's anxiety about threats closer to home, in Asia. In 1936 the government adopted 'trade diversion', a policy of discrimination against Japanese and US exporters in favour of their British counterparts. The manoeuvre aimed to encourage British manufacturers to set up in Australia while giving local primary producers better access to the British market in return for concessions to the United Kingdom on tariffs. It also sought to reduce textile imports from Japan. Far from being a sentimental imperial exercise, trade diversion aimed to increase Australia's economic self-reliance and defence preparedness, but its effect was also to antagonise both Japan and the USA.76

There was a significant Australian engagement by the 1930s with literary and artistic modernism, as well as with communism, socialism, liberal internationalism, vitalism and fascism.⁷⁷ Eugenics, Freudianism and sexology

⁷⁴ A.T. Ross, Armed & Ready: The Industrial Development and Defence of Australia, 1900– 1945 (Sydney: Turton & Armstrong, n.d. [1995]); David S. Bird, J.A. Lyons – The 'Tame Tasmanian': Appeasement and Rearmament in Australia, 1932–39 (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008).

⁷⁵ John F. Williams, *The Quarantined Culture: Australian Reactions to Modernism 1913–1939* (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁷⁶ A.T. Ross, 'Australian Overseas Trade and National Development Policy, 1932–1939: A Story of Colonial Larrikins or Australian Statesmen?', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 36, 2 (1990), pp. 194–5.

⁷⁷ Humphrey McQueen, The Black Swan of Trespass: The Emergence of Modernist Painting in Australia to 1944 (Sydney: Alternative Publishing, 1979); Frank Farrell, International Socialism & Australian Labour: The Left in Australia 1919–1939 (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1981); Leonie Foster, High Hopes: The Men and Motives of the Australian Round Table

(sexual science) all made their mark on elite opinion, while exerting a broader influence through the mass media and popular culture.⁷⁸ The impact of Americanisation was especially evident in film, jazz music, dance, magazines and cheap novels but also in advertising and marketing, mass production, and architecture – Californian-style bungalows, city skyscrapers and opulent picture palaces and dance halls. While local critics reviled the crassness – and sometimes the immorality – of US culture, what was condemned as American was often simply popular, modern and commercial.⁷⁹

In any case, a more confident professional middle class looked to the United States as well as Britain and Europe for the best and latest that had been thought, written and said as a foundation for its claims to expert knowledge and cultural authority. There was also growing interest on the part of elites in closer cultural and economic relations with Asia.⁸⁰ And although the conservative policy elite had only limited faith in collective security through the League of Nations, Stanley Bruce as Australian High Commissioner in London worked with his colleague, Frank McDougall, to promote better nutritional standards internationally, and higher levels of consumption. From Bruce's perspective, these activities reflected a hope that full bellies would make for international peace, and a belief that Australia could no longer secure a prosperous future by trading exclusively within the Empire.⁸¹ By the late 1930s the shifting parameters of global economic and military power demanded greater manoeuvrability of the national government. Periodically during the second half of the 1930s Lyons tried, unsuccessfully, to draw the United States, as well as Japan and other regional powers, into a Pacific pact of non-aggression.

A more national approach to both culture and policy was evident in many fields; the historian R.M. Crawford detected 'a new level of maturity and professional skill in Australian life' in the 1930s.⁸² The Australian Broadcasting Commission, founded in 1932, promoted both an imperial culture – its ethos

⁽Melbourne University Press, 1986); Michael Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives: Vitalism in Bourgeois Social Thought* 1890–1960 (Brisbane: UQP, 1984).

 ⁷⁸ Diana Wyndham, Eugenics in Australia: Striving for National Fitness (London: Galton Institute, 2003); Joy Damousi, Freud in the Antipodes: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005); Bongiorno, The Sex Lives of Australians, ch. 6.
 79 Matthews, Dance Hall & Picture Palace, pp. 4, 11, 47–8, 58–60, 175.

⁸⁰ David Walker, Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850–1939 (Brisbane: UQP,

^{1999),} esp. chs 14–16.

⁸¹ Sean Turnell, 'F.L. McDougall: Éminence Grise of Australian Economic Diplomacy', Australian Economic History Review, 40, 1 (2000): 51–70.

⁸² R.M. Crawford, An Australian Perspective (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1960), p. 68.

and even the accents of presenters were inspired by the British Broadcasting Corporation – as well as an Australian cultural community.⁸³ Similar impulses could be discerned in the development of 'informed' opinion on foreign affairs through organisations such as Round Table, the Institute of Pacific Relations and the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA). Although an 'outgrowth' of the British (later Royal) Institute of International Affairs, the AIIA benefitted in the 1930s from the financial support of American foundations such as the Carnegie and Rockefeller organisations. The interests, travel and research projects of its members included the British Empire but extended well beyond it.⁸⁴ The Australian Council for Educational Research, founded in Melbourne in 1930, also received Carnegie money; its early work included research on correspondence education, primary school arithmetic and reading, and intelligence testing. The social sciences were beginning to make a mark on public culture, and multiplying Australian intellectuals' links with the wider world.⁸⁵ In literature, the Fellowship of Australian Writers, the Jindyworobak movement and individual critics and publicists such as Percy Stephensen and Nettie Palmer argued for a more assertive cultural nationalism. The beginnings of a national approach to Indigenous policy were laid in 1937 at the first inter-State conference of native administrators and protectors. The union movement formed a national organisation in 1927, the Australasian Council of Trade Unions, but the country's largest union, the Australian Workers' Union, held aloof.

The Lyons government won comfortable electoral victories in 1934 and 1937 but even its members found its disorganisation, disunity and lethargy increasingly difficult to bear. Lyons was able to keep the party together by balancing mutually hostile factions, for as a proven election winner and inoffensive outsider he was at least tolerable to them all. The UAP had formed a coalition with the Country Party after the 1934 election, but the government's dependence on this support only served to increase the difficulty of reconciling often conflicting economic interests and goals. The Lyons administration has been characterised accurately as 'an

- 83 K.S. Inglis, This Is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Commission 1932–1983 [1983] (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2006), pp. 22–5.
- 84 J.D. Legge, Australian Outlook: A History of the Australian Institute of International Affairs (Canberra: Allen & Unwin, 1999), pp. 1, 3, 67–78; James Cotton, 'Rockefeller, Carnegie, and the Limits of American Hegemony in the Emergence of Australian International Studies', International Relations of the Asia-Pacific, 12, 1 (2012): 161–92.

85 W.F. Connell, *The Australian Council for Educational Research* 1930–80 (Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1980), pp. 63–74; Stuart Macintyre, *The Poor Relation: A History of Social Sciences in Australia* (Melbourne University Press, 2011), pp. 13–19.

emergency government that outlived the emergency'.⁸⁶ Dissatisfied with the government's direction and frustrated by thwarted ambition, Robert Menzies, the attorney-general, resigned from Cabinet in March 1939. He would become prime minister on Lyons' death the following month, in time to announce Australia's entry into a new world war in September.

This war has often been treated as the key moment in the shift from a period punctuated by crises (1890–1941) to the stable capitalist modernity and conservative ascendancy of the post-war long boom. But the foundations of Australian capitalism's golden years were laid between the wars. By 1939 modernity had come to mean industrial development stimulated by scientific research, as well as tariff protection, Keynesian management and a consumer economy. The years 1923–39 were not so much a revelation of the failure of a national settlement as a period in which key assumptions, policies and institutions came under enormous strain imposed by the worst economic crisis of the century. These institutions and policies showed themselves capable of renovation and adaptation. The people who had made them proved similarly resilient.

⁸⁶ Philip R. Hart, 'J.A. Lyons: A Political Biography', PhD thesis, ANU, 1967, p. 235. See also C.J. Lloyd, 'The Formation and Development of the United Australia Party, 1929–37', PhD thesis, ANU, 1984, esp. p. 298.

World War 2 and post-war reconstruction, 1939–49

4

KATE DARIAN-SMITH

On 3 September 1939 Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced on national radio that it was his 'melancholy duty' to inform the Australian people that they were at war with Germany following its invasion of Poland. The Dominions of Canada and South Africa gave parliamentary consideration before they entered the conflict, in accordance with the Statute of Westminster of 1931, which granted Dominions the power to act independently from Britain. Concerns that the Statute might weaken ties with Britain delayed its ratification by Australia until 1942. Hence Menzies stated that Britain was at war with Germany and 'as a result, Australia is also at war'.¹

The entry into a second world war was greeted with little of the imperialist enthusiasm so evident among Australians in 1914. Twenty-five years later many families still mourned lost sons, brothers and husbands. As Australia emerged from the economic hardship of the Depression and sought to build a firmer manufacturing base, war presaged further years of uncertainty.

If World War 2 was unwelcome, it was not unexpected. Australia had watched the rise of fascism during the 1930s with mounting unease. In 1935 Italy invaded Ethiopia, and in 1936 the Spanish Civil War broke out. The Coalition government of the United Australia Party (UAP) and Country Party led by Joseph Lyons supported the British stance of non-intervention and was anxious that the trade route through the Mediterranean be kept clear. Many Catholics supported Franco's uprising in Spain, while the Communist Party and others on the left advocated the cause of the Republic. As Hitler embarked on further aggression, the government encouraged the British policy of appeasement in Europe and suppressed criticism of Mussolini and Hitler. Lyons supported the British prime minister Neville Chamberlain's Munich Agreement of September 1938, which acquiesced in Germany's

¹ Paul Hasluck, *The Government and the People 1939–1941* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1952), p. 152.

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annexation of the Sudeten territories in Czechoslovakia.² Response to the persecution of Jews in Europe was slow, with immigration quotas raised to just 5,000 a year after the *Kristallnacht* pogrom – 7,000 Jewish refugees had found safety in Australia by the time war commenced.³ The Australian Labor Party (ALP) remained split between isolationists who opposed Australian involvement in foreign conflicts and anti-fascists who supported it.

Despite the clear signs of aggression in Europe and growing alarm at Japan's militarism, Australia was as ill prepared for war as it had been in 1914. The inter-war reduction of its armed services meant that defence strategy in the Asia-Pacific region was tied to the British naval base at Singapore. Plans were made from 1937 to expand munitions production and a fledgling aircraft industry was established, but these belated arrangements for rearmament came too late for substantial production at the outbreak of war.⁴ In 1939 the standing army numbered only 4,000.

World War 2 would transform Australia. Over 1 million Australian men and women served in uniform in a population of a little over 7 million. Despite the high participation rate, casualties were considerably lower than in World War I – just under 34,000 Australians were killed. The number taken into captivity increased eightfold, however: 9,000 Australians were held as prisoners-of-war (POWs) in Europe and 22,000 in the Asia-Pacific region, of whom a third died in captivity. On the domestic front, civilians were drawn into a total war. The conflict also reshaped government through a permanent expansion of the role of the Commonwealth. Politically, there was a swing to the left: the Coalition government was replaced in October 1941 by Labor, which in 1943 won a record parliamentary majority that enabled it to instigate an ambitious program of post-war reconstruction affecting most aspects of national life.

The European war

Menzies announced in September 1939 that a volunteer force would be raised for overseas service and the Militia called up for intensive training.

² Christopher Waters, Australia and Appeasement: Imperial Foreign Policy and the Origins of World War II (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

³ Paul R. Bartrop, *Australia and the Holocaust 1933–45* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1994).

⁴ A.T. Ross, Armed & Ready: The Industrial Development and Defence of Australia 1900–1945 (Sydney: Turton and Armstrong, n.d. [1995]); Eric Andrews, The Australian Centenary History of Defence, Volume V. The Department of Defence (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 93–6.

The legacy of the conscription controversy in World War I meant that Australia would have dual armies, a volunteer force serving overseas and the conscript Militia restricted to defence of Australia and its territories. Despite pressure from Britain and New Zealand's swift offer of an overseas force, Menzies wanted further assurances about the Japanese threat before confirming the departure of Australia's expeditionary force. The 6th Division of the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF) was formed, its numbering and title providing a link with the legendary valour of the Anzacs. Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Blamey, a veteran of World War I, was appointed commander.⁵

Australia also provided naval and air forces for the war in Europe. The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) was placed under the command of the Royal Navy, although Australia retained the right to determine which vessels could leave home waters. More controversial was Menzies' enthusiasm for the Empire Air Training Scheme.⁶ Members of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) undertook initial training at home before advanced training in Canada, and then dispersed throughout the Royal Air Force, where they made an important contribution to Bomber Command. By the end of the war, around 37,000 Australians had participated in the scheme, with at least 6,500 killed in aerial combat over Europe. When war came to the Pacific, an Australian air force could not easily be recalled from Europe for home defence.

Military recruitment was slow initially, especially when compared to the fervour in August 1914. Only 20,000 had volunteered for the AIF at the end of 1939 and with unemployment at 9 per cent at the outbreak of war, there were allegations that a high proportion of these early recruits were 'economic conscripts'.⁷ The low rates of military pay, a long list of reserved occupations and military inactivity in the 'phony war', which lasted from Germany's invasion of Poland in September 1939 until its assault on western Europe in the northern spring of 1940, inhibited enlistment. Following the German conquest of France in June 1940 and Italy's entry into the war, recruitment was so strong that enlistment into the AIF was suspended. By September 1940 a further three divisions had been formed.

⁵ Jeffrey Grey, A Military History of Australia, 3rd edn (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 144–8.

⁶ John McCarthy, A Last Call of Empire: Australian Aircrew, Britain and the Empire Air Training Scheme (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1988).

⁷ Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians: Historical Statistics* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987), p. 152.

In January 1940 the soldiers of the 6th Division embarked for training in the Middle East, with the intention that they then be sent to France. Instead, they fought in Africa with the 7th and 9th Divisions of the AIF, and the RAN and RAAF joined the Allied campaigns that followed Italy's attack on Egypt. Australians were involved in their first major land battle in January 1941, when the 6th Division captured Bardia, moved west through Cyrenaica to attack the major Italian fortress at Tobruk, and pursued the retreating Italian army to Benghazi. In just two months the Allies defeated an Italian army of ten divisions, and over 130,000 Italian soldiers were taken prisoner.⁸ Then, in March 1941, the German *Afrika Korps* landed in North Africa and quickly reclaimed the territory so recently secured by British and Dominion forces. By April the 9th Division, along with a brigade of the 7th Division, was besieged in Tobruk. Until they were relieved in October, the Australians played a key role in the town's defence. They proudly proclaimed themselves the 'Rats of Tobruk' in defiance of derogatory German remarks.

Australia also played a key role in the disastrous defence of Greece after Germany invaded the Balkans. Britain's prime minister, Winston Churchill, was determined to send Australian and New Zealand units to Greece. Menzies, in London at the time and privy to discussions in the British War Cabinet, agreed reluctantly despite concerns about the military risks. Indeed, British planning was well advanced before Blamey, the Australian commander, was even summarily consulted. In April 1941 the Australians and New Zealanders arrived in central Greece, but soon were retreating south in very harsh conditions under German air attack. Evacuated to Crete, the Allies were defeated after a spectacular German paratroop landing on the island. Forty per cent of the Australian forces sent to Greece were killed, wounded or captured. The 7th Division fought alongside Allied troops from June 1941 in the invasion of Syria and Lebanon, French colonies now controlled by the pro-German Vichy government. Damascus was captured and in November 1941 the British launched an offensive in North Africa against the Afrika Korps.9

When Australia's military priority shifted to Southeast Asia following the entry of Japan into the war, the 6th and 7th Divisions, as well as RAN vessels, were despatched to Australia. The 9th Division and around 3,000 RAAF personnel remained in North Africa, where in October 1942 they contributed to the Allied victory against the Germans in the second Battle of El Alamein.

⁸ Gavin Long, To Benghazi (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1952).

⁹ Gavin Long, Greece, Crete and Syria (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1953).

By this time, Australian forces had fought against Italian, German and French troops in North Africa and the Middle East for almost three years. Their involvement was crucial to the eventual Allied victory in the Mediterranean.

For the first two years of the war, the front was distant from Australia. The arrangements adopted in 1939 were set out in the War Book prepared by Frederick Shedden, secretary of the Department of Defence and the architect of Australia's war effort.¹⁰ Regulations issued under the *National Security Act* provided for the implementation of emergency measures, and an inner War Cabinet was formed. War brought a major and irreversible expansion in the federal government, particularly its executive branch. Before the war there were eleven Commonwealth departments, but as many more were created by 1943 along with additional agencies. The pre-war Commonwealth public service was small and enclosed, bound by regulation, precedent and caution. Leaving aside the vast Postmaster-General's Department, it had an establishment of just 13,000. War brought an expanded range of activity, drawing on recruits from universities and business with higher levels of expertise.¹¹

The European war made limited demands on the Australian people. Controls were imposed over trade and foreign exchange, and arrangements were made with Britain for the purchase of the wool clip along with surplus agricultural products and minerals. Capital issues were regulated, price controls used to prevent profiteering and petrol was rationed. Taxation increased to finance the war expenditure, which rose to \pounds_{170} million in the 1940–41 budget, or 11 per cent of the national income, although the national income grew as a result of increased employment.¹²

Powers over enemy aliens were at first exercised lightly: of 20,000 German and Italian nationals who had migrated to Australia before the war, only 2,000 were interned up to the end of 1940.¹³ Similarly, the enforcement of conscription for home defence allowed exemptions for conscientious objectors in the first year of the war. It was not until the fall of France in mid-1940 that the government used the *National Security Act* to ban the Communist Party, which opposed the war after the Soviet Union's non-aggression pact with Germany in August 1939. To strengthen morale, the government appointed the influential newspaper proprietor Keith Murdoch as Director-General of

- 12 S.J. Butlin, War Economy 1939–1942 (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1955), ch. 15.
- 13 Hasluck, The Government and the People 1939–1941, p. 594.

¹⁰ David Horner, Defence Supremo: Sir Frederick Shedden and the Making of Australian Defence Policy (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000).

¹¹ E.R. Walker, *The Australian Economy in War and Reconstruction* (Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 126.

Information in June 1940, but he overreached his ambitions when he required newspapers to publish the Department's copy.

Menzies' leadership of the war effort was hampered by his uncertain hold on office. He had become prime minister following the death of Lyons in April 1939, after breaking with him in the previous month. Lingering resentment against this awkward succession unsettled the Coalition, and when he lost his majority in the election held in September 1940, Menzies relied on the support of two independents. He sought to draw Labor into a national government, but had to settle for the creation of an Advisory War Council consisting of senior members of the government and the Labor Party. While the Council had no formal authority, it facilitated the efforts of John Curtin, the Labor leader, to persuade his party to support the war effort.¹⁴

This politically precarious situation was exacerbated when Menzies visited London between January and May 1941 with the aim of persuading Churchill of the importance of reinforcing Singapore. Critics took advantage of his absence, so that although he returned with a determination to augment the war effort, he was forced to resign at the end of August in favour of the Country Party's Arthur Fadden. The subsequent recriminations estranged the two independent members of parliament, who switched their support to the ALP. On 7 October 1941, Labor was sworn into national government for the first time in a decade.

John Curtin, the leader of the Labor Party, was himself accused of irresolution in the early years of the war. He had opposed conscription in the last one and was initially reluctant that Australia become embroiled in another. With difficulty, he persuaded the Labor Party to support the war effort and cooperated with Menzies, as far as he was able, while refusing all overtures for a national government. An austere and introspective man prone to self-doubt and depression, Curtin was more than once reduced to tears by caucus critics.¹⁵ His task became more difficult in September 1940 with the election to the federal parliament of H.V. Evatt, who resigned from the High Court to enter politics as a Labor member and was impatient for office. The thrusting Evatt courted both the press and the caucus, alternatively calling for a national government and condemning Curtin for failure to challenge

¹⁴ A.W. Martin, *Robert Menzies, A Life. Volume 1, 1894–1943* (Melbourne University Press, 1993), chs 12–13.

¹⁵ Graham Freudenberg, 'Victory to Defeat: 1941–49', in John Faulkner and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *True Believers: The Story of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2001), pp. 76–89; Lloyd Ross, *John Curtin: A Biography* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1977).

Menzies. His ambitions were not satisfied by appointment as Minister for External Affairs and attorney-general in the new Labor ministry, and Curtin would lean on the support of his treasurer, Ben Chifley. A former engine-driver, Chifley was one of only four members of the new government with previous ministerial experience.

War in the Pacific

Labor barely had time to settle into office when Japan attacked the US naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawai'i, on 7 December 1941 and war came to the Pacific. The attack on Pearl Harbor was accompanied by landings in the Philippines, a US dependency, and in the British colonies of Hong Kong and Malaya. On 10 December the battleship HMS *Prince of Wales* and the cruiser HMS *Repulse*, sent by Churchill to protect Singapore, were sunk off the Malay coast and the imperial strategy to protect Australia was dashed. In any case, the Pacific theatre, while absolutely crucial from Australia's perspective, was a secondary concern for Churchill and US president Franklin Roosevelt. In early 1941 they had decided in a secret meeting upon a strategy to 'beat Hitler first' and conduct a holding operation in the Pacific; following the Japanese onslaught, Churchill hastened to Washington to confirm the arrangement.¹⁶

Even as they did so, Curtin issued what was intended as a routine New Year message to the nation, published in the Melbourne *Herald* on 27 December 1941. He stated that war in the Pacific was not 'subordinate' to the fighting in Europe, and that 'without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it quite clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom'. Many Australians who thought of Britain as 'home' were surprised; Churchill was offended and Roosevelt saw the Australian leader as betraying panic.¹⁷

Curtin and Churchill exchanged a flurry of increasingly acrimonious cables in the early weeks of 1942, including the warning – drafted by Evatt – that Australia would regard the loss of Singapore as an 'inexcusable betrayal'.¹⁸ But Britain was unable to fulfil earlier undertakings to hold this vital base. It fell to Japan on 15 February 1942 and more than 15,000

¹⁶ Christopher Thorne, Allies of a Kind: The United States, Britain and the War against Japan, 1941–1945 (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), ch. 9; David Horner, High Command: Australia and Allied Strategy 1939–1945 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1982), ch. 3.

^{17 (}Melbourne) Herald, 27 December 1941; Graham Freudenberg, Churchill and Australia (Sydney: Macmillan, 2008), ch. 20.

¹⁸ W.J. Hudson and H.J.W. Stokes (eds), Documents on Australian Foreign Policy 1937–49. Volume V: July 1941–June 1942 (Canberra: AGPS, 1982), p. 253.

members of the 8th Division were among the 80,000 Allied troops taken prisoner. A crucial axiom of imperial defence – that the Dominions would send troops to fight distant wars on the assumption that British seapower would keep their homelands safe – was shattered, and recriminations have echoed in the national historiography.¹⁹ By the end of March 1942 Japan conquered Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies. Rabaul, the capital of the Australian-controlled territory of New Guinea, and the coastal towns of Lae and Madang were lost.

It was decided in Washington and London that the war in the Pacific would be fought under US command with Australia as the southern base. General Douglas MacArthur was appointed the Supreme Commander of the newly formed South-West Pacific Area. Henceforth MacArthur and Curtin constituted the Prime Minister's War Conference, with Shedden in attendance but not the Australian chiefs of staff, who were thus excluded from determination of strategy. Reluctant as well as ill equipped to challenge MacArthur, Curtin accepted the division of labour that the American proposed: 'You take care of the rear, and I will handle the front'.20 This arrangement has been criticised as a surrender of national sovereignty, but it is better understood as a relationship of mutual dependence. Both men opposed the decision to beat Hitler first and both wanted a greater effort in the Pacific. They did so for different reasons: Curtin to dislodge Japan from the islands to Australia's north, MacArthur to avenge the loss of the Philippines. The refusal of the Supreme Commander to let anyone share the limelight would cause increasing strains - but not in 1942 when the two men invoked each other in their separate appeals to Washington for an offensive in Papua New Guinea.²¹

In May a Japanese fleet heading for Port Moresby, the seat of administration and vital southern port, was intercepted west of New Guinea and turned back in the Battle of the Coral Sea. One month later, the Japanese were defeated decisively by the US Navy at Midway Atoll, and lost control of the Pacific. Having failed in its seaborne attempt to take Port Moresby, Japan landed troops on the north coast of Papua, with the aim of crossing the Owen Stanley Ranges to do so by land. The terrain consisted of dense tropical rainforest and steep mountains, with malarial swamplands along the coast; temperatures soared during the day, and the nights were bitterly cold.

¹⁹ John Darwin, The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970 (Cambridge University Press, 2009), ch. 11; David Day, The Great Betrayal: Britain, Australia and the Onset of the Pacific War, 1939–42 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1988).

²⁰ Douglas MacArthur, Reminiscences (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), p. 157.

²¹ Grey, A Military History of Australia, p. 177; Horner, Defence Supremo, ch. 7.

Australian troops advanced north from Port Moresby along an immensely difficult single-file track to the airstrip at Kokoda. They were forced to retreat until by September the enemy was within sight of Port Moresby, but then was driven back. The heroism of Australian soldiers on the Kokoda Track, aided by Papuans, became one of the key images of the Pacific war. In August Japanese marines landed to the west at Milne Bay, but were again repulsed. In a costly battle, Australians and Americans then drove the Japanese from their fortified beachheads at Buna, Gona and Sanananda on the northern cost of Papua.²²

With the entry of Japan into World War 2, the Australian home front was transformed. Air Raid Precaution (ARP) drills were introduced, communal air raid shelters erected, shop windows boarded up and first aid stations introduced. Dimmed or restricted night lighting was established as a protective measure in coastal Australian cities and in areas of strategic industrial and transport activity. Australians hung black curtains or paper over their windows and dug hundreds of miles of air raid trenches under the watchful gaze of ARP wardens.²³

The bombing of Darwin by the Japanese on 19 February 1942 increased concern. Although censored newspaper accounts understated the number of lives lost, around 250, rumours spread of the heavy damage inflicted on shipping in the harbour and the panicked reaction of the garrison. The pearling town of Broome was raided two weeks later, with 70 killed. Throughout 1942–43 the Japanese launched 97 air raids against towns and military bases in northern Australia, in addition to attacks on coastal shipping. Contrary to a persistent legend, Japan did not intend a full-scale invasion; its purpose was to isolate Australia and render it ineffective as an Allied base.²⁴ Nevertheless, a Japanese landing was seen as a real possibility in early 1942. Plans were laid to implement a scorched earth policy, destination signs were removed from railway stations and schoolchildren were evacuated from coastal centres. In remote Arnhem Land, in Australia's north, a special reconnaissance force of Yolngu men, under the direction of the anthropologist Donald Thomson, patrolled for signs of Japanese approach.²⁵ A raid by three Japanese midget

²² Paul Ham, Kokoda (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2004).

²³ Michael McKernan, All In! Australia during the Second World War (Melbourne: Nelson, 1983); Kate Darian-Smith, On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime: 1939–1945, new edn (Melbourne University Press, 2009), pp. 15–49.

²⁴ Peter Stanley, Invading Australia: Japan and the Battle for Australia, 1942 (Melbourne: Viking, 2008).

²⁵ Donald Thomson and Nicolas Peterson, *Donald Thomson in Arnhem Land*, rev. edn (Melbourne University Press, 2003).

submarines, which entered Sydney Harbour in May 1942, shelling suburbs and sinking a converted ferry, contributed to the alarm.

The Labor government initially relaxed some of the security measures taken by its predecessor. Communist internees were released since the Communist Party had become a supporter of the war effort following Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, although the party did not regain legal status until the end of 1942. Also released were the 2,000 'enemy' internees deported in 1940 from Britain to Australia aboard the ship Dunera. Most were Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, and they included highly educated professionals who would be influential in Australian intellectual life. The Japanese threat heightened concern for domestic security. Internment of enemy aliens increased, as did censorship and surveillance.²⁶ In March 1942 the government interned two groups of right-wing nationalists, both calling themselves the Australia First Movement, on flimsy grounds of collaboration with Japan. Australia also accommodated more than 25,000 prisoners: 5,600 Japanese, 1,650 Germans and 18,430 Italians, the majority captured by the Allies in the North African campaign. Some 500 Japanese POWs escaped from the Cowra camp in 1944, and more than 200 achieved a 'glorious death' through suicide. Labour shortages meant the pool of refugee and enemy aliens was directed to construction projects. Thousands of Italian POWs were also sent to assist on farms, billeted with Australian families in a cross-cultural exchange that was to prefigure the mass migration of southern Europeans to Australia after the war.

Austerity came abruptly into force with the advent of the Pacific war. New regulations gave the government control of finance, production and labour. The Department of War Organisation of Industry, under the leadership of John Dedman, rationalised the production of goods and availability of services such as banking in tandem with the Manpower Directorate's control of labour. All Australians over 16 years were required to register with the Directorate and carry identity cards. They were prevented from leaving essential industries and occupations, and other industries had to seek permission to absorb labour. Manpower officials raided hotels and racecourses, seeking out the idle.

There was a rapid expansion of numbers in the Militia, munitions production and construction as the new Allied Works Council built airfields, roads,

²⁶ Margaret Bevege, Behind Barbed Wire: Internment in Australia during World War II (Brisbane: UQP, 1993); Yuriko Nagata, Unwanted Aliens: Japanese Internment in Australia (Brisbane: UQP, 1996).

docks, barracks and hospitals for the Australian and American forces. The reduction of the civilian workforce imposed particular strain on agriculture, which had been dogged in the 1930s by failing markets and high levels of debt. With uncertainties of overseas demand and lack of shipping during the early years of the war, farm workers flowed into the services; but after the outbreak of the Pacific war it was necessary to provide for American needs throughout the Pacific as well as for domestic consumption and continued exports to Britain. Arguably, Australia's most significant contribution to the Allied war effort was the production of food.²⁷

By mid-1942 it was necessary to restrict domestic consumption. The distribution of ration books was precipitated by a shortage of clothing, and rationing was subsequently extended to tea, sugar, butter and meat. There were frequent shortages of fruit and vegetables, and such everyday items as cooking pots, clothes pegs and matches, as well as luxuries such as chocolate and cigarettes. Alcohol was not rationed but its production was limited and the opening hours of pubs were reduced, along with restrictions on race meetings and gambling. Wartime rationing inconvenienced Australians but did not pinch heavily: in comparison with Britain, the limits on foods such as butter or meat were minimal. Rationing did, however, contribute to the notion of 'equality of sacrifice' across Australian society, and was important in maintaining civilian commitment.

During the crisis year of 1942, the Commonwealth took over the collection of income tax from the States. This measure became permanent after the war. Similarly, the Commonwealth acquired new controls over banking in 1942 when Chifley required all private banks to deposit their reserves with the government's Commonwealth Bank; this gave it the powers of a central bank that were confirmed in 1945. The war, which came to absorb 40 per cent of gross national product (GNP), was financed by taxation, war loans and credit provided by the Commonwealth Bank. The last of these sources, together with increased earnings, created inflationary pressures that posed a threat to the restrictions on consumption. In 1943 the government extended the income-tax schedule to even the lowest paid workers, coupling this reversal of Labor policy with the introduction of a new range of social services. Child endowment had been introduced in 1941 and was now supplemented by widows' pensions, maternity benefits for Indigenous mothers, and

²⁷ J.G. Crawford et al., Wartime Agriculture in Australia and New Zealand 1939–50 (Stanford University Press, 1954); Lizzie Collingham, The Taste of War: World War Two and the Battle for Food (London: Allen Lane, 2011), pp. 443–52.

unemployment and sickness benefits. At a time of full employment the government was able to draw on the unused balance in the new National Welfare Fund and reduce the danger of inflation.²⁸

Despite the government's regulation of labour and tight restrictions on travel, the Australian population had never been so mobile: workers moved from rural areas for better paid jobs in war industries, from the cities to the country to undertake seasonal farm work, and from all around the nation to enlist in the military. Industrial relations were closely controlled and the number of days lost in disputes declined from 984,000 in 1941 to 378,000 in 1942, fewer than two hours per worker. The 11 million days lost in sickness and accidents in that year prompted the Department of Labour and National Service to improve working conditions in the war industries and provide canteens, washrooms and medical care.²⁹ The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) cooperated with the government and most disputes arose from local grievances despite the efforts of union officials. The most serious were in the coal and maritime transport industries since they were vital to the war effort, leading the government to create commissions to control them. Days lost in industrial disputes increased as the war emergency receded, to 990,000 in 1943 and over 2 million by 1945.30

Despite the emphasis on an 'All In' war effort, and a collective memory of a nation undivided, differences of class, gender and generation were sharply delineated.³¹ War had a marked impact on particular groups within Australian society. Indigenous Australians had few citizenship rights in the 1940s, although as many as 3,000 Indigenous people enlisted and served both overseas and in Australia.³² The military and auxiliary services provided them with cash wages and training, and these wartime experiences were to have an important impact on Indigenous demands for equal rights and self-determination later in the century.

Women's employment opportunities and social freedoms also widened. In World War I Australian women undertook copious voluntary work, but unlike British women were not mobilised into industry. In 1939

²⁸ Rob Watts, The Foundations of the National Welfare State (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

²⁹ Walker, *The Australian Economy in War and Reconstruction*, pp. 284, 308–9; S.J. Butlin and C.B. Schedvin, *War Economy 1942–1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1977), p. 372.

³⁰ Butlin and Schedvin, War Economy 1942-1945, p. 372.

³¹ Liz Reed, Bigger than Gallipoli: War, History and Memory in Australia (Perth: UWA Press, 2004).

³² Robert A. Hall, The Black Diggers: Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in the Second World War (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989).

the Australian government recognised the economic importance of voluntary duties by assisting an unofficial register. The number of women in factory work increased markedly by 1941, notably in munitions. The lower wages paid to women in comparison to the men they were replacing was of great concern to unions, which feared that male jobs and wages would be threatened after the war. In response, the Curtin government formed the Women's Employment Board in 1942 to determine higher female wages in the war industries. Around 80,000 women in metal, munitions and the aircraft industries were awarded 90 per cent of the male wage during the war. Women's pay in the traditionally female industries of textiles and food processing was also raised to 75 per cent to reduce the difference with the munitions industry.

Women also moved into white-collar, professional and managerial positions. Some married women were allowed to return temporarily to their previous employment as teachers or clerks. The establishment of the women's auxiliary branches of the armed services in 1941, despite initial government objections, aimed to release men from non-combat roles for active duty. The Women's Auxiliary Australian Air Force (WAAAF), the first and largest with 27,000 members, was followed by the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) and the Women's Royal Australian Naval Service (WRANS). The Women's Land Army was also formed to direct women to agricultural work.³³

By 1944 the wartime employment of women in Australia peaked with 855,000 in paid labour, 25 per cent of the total workforce.³⁴ The influential *Australian Women's Weekly* promoted women's elevated national importance as war workers alongside its advocacy of their traditional roles as homemakers and mothers. The tension between the overt expressions of female sexuality and consumerism that dominated popular culture in the inter-war years, and the reconceptualisation of a modern femininity that emerged from the war was heightened by the arrival of the American forces on the Australian home front.³⁵

³³ Joyce A. Thomson, *The WAAAF in Wartime Australia* (Melbourne University Press, 1991); Sue Hardisty (ed.), *Thanks Girls and Goodbye! The Story of the Australian Women's Land Army* 1942–45 (Melbourne: Viking O'Neil, 1990).

³⁴ Richard White, 'War and Australian Society', in M. McKernan and M. Browne (eds), Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), pp. 410–12.

³⁵ Marilyn Lake, 'Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II', Australian Historical Studies, 24, 95 (1990): 267–84.

The American presence

American troops began disembarking in Australia in December 1941. At first they were concentrated in Melbourne, which was MacArthur's initial headquarters because the military command and war departments were based there. Arriving on 17 March 1942 after his dramatic flight from the Philippines, MacArthur was greeted by a cheering crowd of thousands and rose to the occasion with customary showmanship. His troops were already established at Camp Pell, in Melbourne's Royal Park. In a pattern repeated in other Australian cities, buildings were requisitioned for American use, and a hospitality bureau opened to manage interaction with civilians. By May there were 30,000 American servicemen stationed in Melbourne, straining the city's infrastructure and entertainment facilities.

The US troops were issued with a *Pocket Guide to Australia* upon arrival, while the Australian press was crammed with articles on American culture, including the dietary preferences of American soldiers for coffee, hot dogs and ice cream. In the inter-war years Australian understandings of the USA and its people were formed primarily through the popularity of American films and a growing familiarity with American consumer products. The wartime presence contributed to unease about the 'Americanisation' of Australian society, as well as vigorous discussions about the distinctive Australian character.³⁶ Despite the disparities in power, the promotion of Australia and the United States as 'Pacific Partners', sharing similar values and a democratic spirit, was to be the cornerstone of Allied public relations during the war.³⁷

There was also much wartime commentary on American masculinity and the relationships that developed with Australian women. The arrival of the US forces in Australia coincided with growing concerns by the police, churches and politicians about the shifting economic and social status of women, and associated changes in sexual morality. Swept up by 'war fever', Australians were marrying at a younger age than in the 1930s, and after shorter courtships.³⁸ In a climate of growing moral alarm, civil and military authorities

³⁶ Philip Bell and Roger Bell (eds), *Americanization and Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1998); Philip Bell and Roger Bell, *Implicated: The United States in Australia* (Oxford University Press, 1993).

³⁷ George H. Johnston, Pacific Partner (New York: World, 1944).

³⁸ Libby Connors et al., Australia's Frontline: Remembering the 1939–45 War (Brisbane: UQP, 1992); Kate Darian-Smith, 'War Stories: Remembering the Australian Home Front during the Second World War', in Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton (eds), Memory and History in Twentieth Century Australia (Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 137–57; Rosemary Campbell, Heroes and Lovers: A Question of National Identity (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989).

expressed concern about increases in prostitution and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases among the forces. States introduced laws to police the sexual behaviour of women, including forced health checks, although these were only sporadically enforced.³⁹

MacArthur moved his headquarters north to Brisbane in July 1942 to be closer to the fighting. By August 100,000 US troops were located throughout the Australian continent, peaking at 119,000 in September 1943, and declining markedly in the later war years. Almost 1 million Americans passed through Australian towns and ports between 1942 and 1945, en route to action in the Asia-Pacific region. Many formed strong attachments with Australian families, and at the end of the war some 12–15,000 Australian women travelled as 'war brides' to commence new lives in the United States.⁴⁰

The Curtin government initially rejected the inclusion of African American troops, but US military authorities insisted they were essential to the racially segregated US Army. Agreement was reached that African Americans, who were mainly deployed in engineering and other support units, would be stationed away from the southern cities. Riots erupted in Brisbane between white and African American soldiers on leave, resulting in the introduction of racially segregated zones and amenities in Brisbane and other northern towns.⁴¹ There were also brawls between US and Australian soldiers, often fuelled by alcohol and competition over Australian women.

Artists and writers captured the heightened emotions, separated families and unknown future prompted by these extraordinary conditions. Modernist painters such as Albert Tucker, Arthur Boyd and John Percival depicted the wartime city as a world turned upside town. Tucker's famous series 'Images of Modern Evil' represents images of unchecked sexuality in Melbourne's streets, and his well-known *Victory Girls* shows women in red, white and blue skirts in the company of leering Australian and American soldiers. Subsequent novels such as Dymphna Cusack and Florence James' *Come in Spinner* and Xavier Herbert's *Soldiers' Women* were

³⁹ Kay Saunders, *War on the Homefront: State Intervention in Queensland* 1938–1948 (Brisbane: UQP, 1993); Susan Lemar, "Sexually cursed, mentally weak and socially untouchable": Women and Venereal Diseases in World War Two Adelaide', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 79 (2003): 153–64.

⁴⁰ E. Daniel Potts and Annette Potts, Yanks Down Under 1941–45: The American Impact on Australia (Oxford University Press, 1985); Anthony J. Barker and Lisa Jackson, Fleeting Attraction: A Social History of American Servicemen in Western Australia during the Second World War (Perth: UWA Press, 1996).

⁴¹ Sean Brawley and Chris Dixon, 'Jim Crow Downunder? African American Encounters with White Australia, 1942–1945', *Pacific Historical Review*, 71, 4 (2002): 607–32.

confronting in their commentary on Australian society in the throes of wartime upheaval.⁴²

By the end of 1942 the Japanese advance had ended and after the Battle of Stalingrad the tide in Europe had turned against the Germans. Attention shifted to the anomaly of a volunteer AIF and a conscript Militia that were fighting in Papua New Guinea but could not do so elsewhere in the Pacific. The Opposition called for this restriction to end and MacArthur, who believed it was prejudicing American opinion against sending the reinforcements he sought, urged Curtin to remove it. In January 1943 Curtin, who had been jailed for anti-conscription activism during World War I, finally won acceptance of his proposal that conscripts could be used within the South West Pacific theatre.

MacArthur made little use of the additional force. By this stage the US forces commanded the air and the sea in the Pacific, and began advancing up the island chain. In 1943–44 the Australians drove the Japanese from the coastal settlements of Salamaua and Lae in New Guinea, pursuing the retreating Japanese through the Markham–Ramu Valley and the Huon Pensinsula. The marginalisation of the Australian forces by MacArthur meant they were reduced to 'mopping up' entrenched Japanese garrisons in operations of little strategic importance, though in Borneo they did launch assaults against the Japanese in the last Allied campaign in the Pacific. This restricted Australian participation caused growing discontent, especially among the troops who remained in their camps, but Curtin was determined that Australia should maintain a military presence to the end of the war as a means of strengthening the nation's voice in the peace negotiations. The final operations in New Guinea also showed the local people that the Australian administration was committed to restoring order once the Japanese were defeated.

Writing to Washington from Canberra late in 1942, the head of the American legation praised the Australian leader's sincerity, determination and 'high moral courage'. Noting the fractiousness of his party and mixed calibre of his ministry, this diplomat added that at no time had the prime minister 'given the impression of the happy warrior, confident of his strength and his cause'.⁴³ Curtin undoubtedly felt the loneliness of command, and it undermined his health. But he had risen to the emergency with decisiveness and in his austere fashion he exhibited genuine qualities of leadership.

⁴² Dymphna Cusack and Florence James, *Come in Spinner* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1951); Xavier Herbert, *Soldiers' Women* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1961).

⁴³ P.G. Edwards (ed.), Australia through American Eyes, 1935–1945: Observations by American Diplomats (Brisbane: UQP, 1979), p. 81.

Against a fractured Opposition, he led the Labor Party to a decisive victory in the election held in September 1943.

Only then was he prepared to venture overseas. Previously he had allowed Evatt, as Minister for External Affairs, to press Australia's interests in Washington and London, although Evatt's abrasive style on visits in 1942 and 1943 had been unproductive. In reaction to Australia's exclusion from meetings at Cairo and Tehran, where the senior Allies had begun to plan post-war arrangements, Evatt initiated a conference with New Zealand in early 1944 that claimed a leading role for the two Dominions in the Pacific. This challenge to the USA overshadowed Curtin's meeting with Roosevelt in April 1944, and his proposal for closer Commonwealth arrangements was rebuffed at a subsequent meeting of prime ministers in London. The extensive travel taxed Curtin's strength and capacity to accept criticism. He suffered a coronary occlusion at the end of the year and was barely able to resume duties before he died in July 1945.

Curtin lived long enough to see Germany's unconditional surrender on 7 May 1945, but not the end of the Pacific war on 15 August. The Japanese surrender was formalised aboard the USS *Missouri* on 2 September 1945, with Blamey signing on behalf of Australia. Sixteen thousand Australian troops were committed to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force and an Australian represented the British Commonwealth Countries on the Allied Council.⁴⁴ The end of the war also brought revelations of the Japanese maltreatment of POWs: the experiences at Changi prison in Singapore and the deprivations endured in the camps on the Burma–Thai Railway, where 7,000 of a total of 9,500 Australians survived, would become particularly prominent in the war memory.⁴⁵ The *Australian War Crimes Act* was passed in October 1945, and Australia conducted around 300 trials of alleged Japanese war criminals in the ensuing years.

Following Curtin's death the caucus elected Ben Chifley to the Labor leadership. Evatt was not present for the vote, for he was returning from the meeting to form the United Nations at San Francisco, where he played a prominent role in efforts to strengthen its charter and restrict the veto right of the leading powers in the Security Council. Evatt's commitment to a more independent foreign policy would be rewarded by his election in 1948

⁴⁴ Robin Gerster, *Travels in Atomic Sunshine: Australia and the Occupation of Japan* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2008).

⁴⁵ Hank Nelson, P.O.W. Prisoners of War: Australians under Nippon (Sydney: ABC Books, 1985); Christina Twomey, Australia's Forgotten Prisoners: Civilians Interned by the Japanese in World War Two (Cambridge University Press, 2007).

as president of the United Nations General Assembly, but brought increasing criticism from the United States.⁴⁶

Post-war reconstruction

The war brought upheaval and loss, but it also brought economic growth. Between 1939 and 1945 Australia's GDP increased in real terms by 25 per cent.⁴⁷ Under the stimulus of total war, resources that had lain idle during the 1930s were mobilised. At the same time, the war changed the shape of the economy, augmenting some sectors and reducing others. The emphasis on the production of weapons brought a remarkable development in manufacturing: whereas in 1939 there were just three local manufacturers of the machine tools needed for mass production, by 1943 there were 100. The sudden need for self-sufficiency in items previously imported meant that Australia built up an aircraft industry that by 1944 involved 600 firms and employed 44,000 people; the country was able to produce an advanced aircraft engine at a time when it was still to manufacture a motor-car engine.⁴⁸

The aim of the Chifley government was to consolidate these advances by converting war industries to peacetime purposes, thereby maintaining full employment and lifting living standards. A Department of Post-War Reconstruction was established in December 1942, with Chifley as minister and the young economist H.C. Coombs as director-general. It prepared ambitious plans covering the demobilisation, training and placement of members of the armed forces along with schemes for housing, health, transport, rural reconstruction, industrial development, migration and public works.⁴⁹ The planning emphasised the importance of local communities in nation building, promising expanded support for families through the provision of localised facilities such as libraries, health centres and recreational clubs. A product of both planning and community consultation, it suggested a new relationship between the government and people.⁵⁰

- 46 W.J. Hudson, Australia and the New World Order: Evatt in San Francisco 1945 (Canberra: ANU Press, 1993).
- 47 The World Economy. Volume 1: A Millennial Perspective; Volume 2: Historical Statistics (Paris: OECD, 2006), p. 462.
- 48 A.S. Milward, *War, Economy and Society* 1939–1945 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), pp. 200–1; see D.P. Mellor, *The Role of Science and Industry* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1958).
- 49 H.C. Coombs, *Trial Balance* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1981), chs 1–2; Walker, *The Australian Economy in War and Reconstruction*, chs 14–16.
- 50 Hannah Lewi and David Nichols (eds), Community: Building Modern Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010); Tim Rowse, 'The People and Their Experts: A War Inspired Civics for H.C. Coombs', Labour History, 74 (1998): 70–87.

Realisation of this vision for post-war Australia would require expanding the limited powers of the Commonwealth during peacetime. In late 1942 the States undertook to transfer powers needed for post-war reconstruction, but failed to do so. The Commonwealth's attempt to obtain them by referendum in 1944 also failed, so that post-war reconstruction relied on agreement with the fractious States. Moreover, after 1945 the High Court struck down a number of the measures that the government introduced, including a pharmaceutical benefits scheme.⁵¹ The government succeeded in a 1946 referendum that confirmed its power to provide social services, but failed in two other constitutional amendments designed to give it powers over employment and the marketing of primary products. In the most contentious of the constitutional cases, Chifley pursued a quixotic campaign to nationalise the banks after the High Court disallowed legislation to compel State and municipal authorities to conduct their business through the Commonwealth Bank.⁵²

The medical profession's antagonism to a scheme for public health and the protracted debate over bank nationalisation combined to reinvigorate the Opposition. War had brought broad consensus on the new order: business organisations accepted the need for planning and managing the economy, ensuring full employment and expanding public welfare.⁵³ Leading figures in the Opposition also embraced the extension of government activity: in the series of radio broadcasts in 1942 that Robert Menzies used to evoke 'The Forgotten People' - those who stood between big business and regimented labour - he made it clear that there could be no return to the old and selfish notions of laissez faire. Social obligations would increase and 'there will be more law, not less; more control, not less'.⁵⁴ The new Liberal Party that replaced the discredited UAP in 1945 appealed to this broad-based constituency, but it was assisted financially by the banks and benefitted from the mobilisation of doctors and bank employees against state regimentation.⁵⁵ While the Labor Party held its ground in the election in September 1946, the tide of public opinion began to turn.

- 51 Brian Galligan, Politics of the High Court: A Study of the Judicial Branch of Government in Australia (Brisbane: UQP, 1987), ch. 4.
- 52 A.L. May, The Battle for the Banks (Sydney University Press, 1968); James A. Gillespie, The Price of Health: Australian Governments and Medical Politics 1910–1960 (Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- 53 J.R. Hay, 'The Institute of Public Affairs and Social Policy in World War II', *Historical Studies*, 20, 79 (1982): 198–216.
- 54 Martin, Robert Menzies, A Life. Volume 1, 1894–1943, p. 402.
- 55 Ian Hancock, National and Permanent? The Federal Organisation of the Liberal Party of Australia 1944–1965 (Melbourne University Press, 2000), chs 1–5.

The government had mixed success in the tasks of reconstruction. Demobilisation proceeded smoothly and the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme proved remarkably successful in a program that allowed nearly 20,000 ex-servicemen and women to complete university courses. Together with other measures to assist universities, this signalled the new importance of education and expertise in the tasks of nation building. The provision of technical training was far less successful: the 300,000 ex-military applicants faced long delays caused by the shortage of facilities and union resistance, with only 75,000 eventually obtaining qualifications.⁵⁶

Since applications for training in the building trades were the most popular, this disappointing outcome had particular implications for the ambitious scheme to construct 300,000 dwellings. An acute shortage of qualified labour was exacerbated by the lack of building materials, as the shortage of coal made it impossible to produce sufficient quantities of bricks and tiles, and such basic items as nails, hinges and taps were in short supply. As those returning from war service married and set up their own homes, so a black market in housing circumvented rent controls and exacerbated discontent. Despairing of the wait for public housing, an increasing number of young couples bought their own block of land and spent weekends with hammers and saws. In doing so they turned their backs on the government.⁵⁷

There was greater success in the field of employment. In May 1945 the government issued a White Paper setting out the techniques of demand management that would maintain full employment. There was no need to stimulate demand as the number of vacancies registered with the new Commonwealth Employment Service soon exceeded the number of applicants. Against expectations of a return to their pre-war difficulties, primary producers enjoyed strong demand and high prices. The vast munitions factories were leased or sold for civilian production in an expanded range of manufactures. Taking advantage of the increased technical capacity and assisted by generous government support, General Motors set up car production and in 1948 Chifley watched the first Holden motor car roll from the assembly line. The stock of public works that had been prepared to soak up surplus labour was not needed, but the Commonwealth joined with New South Wales and Victoria to begin construction of seventeen dams, five power stations and 225 kilometres of

⁵⁶ John Watters, 'A Study of the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme', PhD thesis, La Trobe University, 1992, p. 281.

⁵⁷ Patrick Troy, Accommodating Australians: Commonwealth Government Involvement in Housing (Sydney: Federation Press, 2012), chs 3–6.

pipes and tunnels in the Snowy Mountains, the largest Australian engineering project ever undertaken.58

Much of the labour was provided by those displaced by the war in Europe and the changes of regime that followed. Some 180,000 of these displaced persons were brought to Australia from 1947, a larger number than those resettled in any other country outside Europe other than the United States. This was a decisive break with previous immigration policy favouring British settlers, whose arrival in sufficient numbers was delayed by the shortage of shipping, and it required a substantial investment in accommodation and services. The public acceptance of non-British migration was made possible by directing the migrants' employment for the first two years and courageous advocacy by Arthur Calwell, the Minister for Immigration. Most displaced persons endured the rigour of their initiation to Australia and flourished.⁵⁹

The other arm of population policy was natural increase. A wartime inquiry concluded that social and economic insecurity during the Depression and its aftermath discouraged large families, and reported the anxiety of Australian women about the availability of housing and facilities to support family life.⁶⁰ Modern women wanted increased control of their reproduction and sexuality within marriage – for despite the moral panic about women's sexual freedom during the war, marriage and the ideology of motherhood remained central to the structure of Australian society.⁶¹ Just before the federal election of 1943, Curtin told the *Australian Women's Weekly* that women's entitlement to post-war economic security would arise through their 'natural urge' for motherhood, a husband and a home rather than their retention in the paid workforce.⁶² While Curtin wanted to quell unease about potential male unemployment, his comment accorded with widespread social expectations about the return to pre-war models of gendered public and private lives.

Women did relinquish paid employment at the end of the war, sometimes involuntarily, but their eviction from the workforce has been exaggerated. A study of women in the munitions industry found that many were content to

- 58 Lionel Wigmore, Struggle for the Snowy: The Background of the Snowy Mountains Scheme (Oxford University Press, 1968).
- 59 Jean Martin, Refugee Settlers: A Study of Displaced Persons in Australia (Canberra: ANU Press, 1965).
- 60 Bettina Cass, 'Population Policies and Family Policies: State Construction of Domestic Life', in Cora V. Baldock and Bettina Cass (eds), *Women, Social Welfare and the State in Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1983), pp. 167–83.
- 61 Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front*, pp. 196–206; Lisa Featherstone, 'Sexy Mamas? Women, Sexuality and Reproduction in Australia in the 1940s', *Australian Historical Studies*, 36, 126 (2005): 234–52.
- 62 Australian Women's Weekly, 14 August 1943.

give up demanding and exhausting work once it was no longer necessary.⁶³ The unmet demand for women's labour after the war has usually been explained by the reluctance of women to return to unrewarding, lower paid jobs, though the same aversion was apparent among male workers – they too shunned heavy manual work. An additional explanation is less often noticed: at a time of full employment and chronic shortages, there was little for married women to gain by augmenting the family income. The number of births had begun to rise during the war and continued to do so in its aftermath as new families formed, contributing to a population increase from 7.4 million to over 7.9 million by 1949.

The successful economic transition from war to peace brought new strains. Productive capacity suffered from the low level of wartime private investment, and the shortages of housing, power and many basic materials imposed further limits. Full employment created inflationary pressures that required the maintenance of many wartime controls, including the rationing of clothing and food, over a population weary of austerity. The government's determination to control wages and obstruction of an application for a 40-hour week in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court brought increasing difficulties with the trade unions. The growing militancy of the Communist Party, which had increased its following in the unions during the war, saw a series of major disputes in key industries, but Chifley's obduracy also exhausted the patience of the ACTU. Faced with a strike by coalminers in 1949, he froze union funds, gaoled Communist union officials and sent troops into the pits.⁶⁴

A further difficulty was the shortage of foreign exchange. During the war Australia had benefitted from the provision of equipment, tools, fuel and other material from the United States under the Lend-Lease scheme. This assistance came to an end in 1945 at the same time as new arrangements for international trade came into operation: to provide backing for a multilateral system of payments, member countries contributed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and received drawing rights on the fund, while agreeing to limit any change in their currency exchange rates. Fearful that this restriction would endanger the competitiveness of its exports, Australia pushed hard for a full-employment component in the IMF until it joined reluctantly in 1947. Australia had a trade surplus in the immediate post-war

⁶³ Gail Reekie, 'Industrial Action by Women Workers in Western Australia during World War II', *Labour History*, 49 (1985): 75–82.

⁶⁴ Tom Sheridan, Division of Labour: Industrial Relations in the Chifley Years, 1945–1949 (Oxford University Press, 1989).

years, but a deficit in its trade with the United States, on which it relied for vital commodities. As a member of the sterling bloc, it could draw on dollar reserves but was enveloped in the sterling crisis when Britain exhausted its reserves. As part of the further restriction of dollar imports, the government had to reintroduce petrol rationing in 1949.

Beholden to American economic supremacy, the Chifley government was unable to withstand the pressures of the Cold War on its diplomatic and strategic policies. Evatt continued to use the United Nations as a forum where issues could be decided on their merits and to support decolonisation, though he manoeuvred shrewdly to retain control of Papua New Guinea and sought to exert influence within the region through cooperation with the colonial powers. It was Chifley who decided that Australia would not help the Dutch reimpose their control of the East Indies, and the maritime unions that championed the new republic of Indonesia. A 'new order' was proclaimed in Papua New Guinea, with improved labour conditions and initiatives in health and education, but the Australian planters quickly reasserted their influence.⁶⁵

Australia pursued a defence partnership with Britain as a counterweight to US hegemony, which among other outcomes enabled British weapons testing at the Woomera weapon range. Australia also embarked on developing its own nuclear capacity when the physicist Mark Oliphant was brought back to Australia to build a cyclotron at the new Australian National University.⁶⁶ Concerned about its lax security arrangements, the United States stopped providing Australia with classified information in 1948, and Chifley acceded to the establishment of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO). The government also tightened control over defence science in 1949 with the reconstitution of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

A reinvigorated Opposition joined the international and domestic Cold War to demand that the government take action against communism. Internationally, it was assisted by the suppression of democratic freedoms in Eastern Europe and the rapid deterioration in relations between the Soviet Union and the West, and domestically, by the prominence of communists in strikes. Until 1949 Chifley was adamant that he would not interfere with a minority's political liberties. While rejecting communism, he saw it as a

⁶⁵ Ian Downs, *The Australian Trusteeship, Papua New Guinea, 1945–75* (Canberra: AGPS, 1980), ch. 3.

⁶⁶ Wayne Reynolds, *Australia's Bid for the Atomic Bomb* (Melbourne University Press, 2000).

product of capitalism and colonialism; but with the miners' strike he was persuaded that communists planned deliberately to 'hold up the life of the community'.⁶⁷ By this time the Communist Party was under siege following allegations of sedition and espionage.

In a speech to the New South Wales conference of the ALP in June 1949, Chifley confessed the difficulties of leadership: 'it is a man-killing job'. In calling for unity he insisted that the purpose of the labour movement was not 'putting an extra sixpence in somebody's pocket or making somebody prime minister', but to bring 'greater happiness to the mass of the people. We have a great objective – the light on the hill – which we aim to reach by working for the betterment of mankind'.⁶⁸ But as he spoke the lights were out, and power for domestic heating and cooking was unavailable, because of the shortage of coal.

In the election campaign that followed Menzies called for a ban on communism and a rejection of the 'socialist state' with its 'subordination of the individual to the universal officialdom of government'.⁶⁹ He led a party strengthened by the infusion of younger members with military experience – 50 of the 74 successful Coalition candidates were new to the parliament, and 34 had served in the war – in contrast to the grey hair of the sitting Labor members. The swing against the ALP was just 4 per cent, but it was enough to give Menzies a decisive victory.⁷⁰ Labor had led the country in the most serious threat to its security; it had renovated the economy, augmented national institutions and increased provision for social welfare, but by 1949 its energies were spent. The country that emerged from the war was impatient for change.

⁶⁷ A.W. Stargardt (ed.), Things Worth Fighting For: Speeches by Joseph Benedict Chifley (Melbourne University Press, 1953), p. 68.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 64-5.

⁶⁹ A.W. Martin, Robert Menzies, A Life. Volume 2, 1944–1978 (Melbourne University Press, 1999), p. 116.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 125; Colin A. Hughes and B.D. Graham, A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics 1890–1964 (Canberra: ANU Press, 1968), pp. 375, 380.

⁵ The Menzies era, 1950–66

JUDITH BRETT

The Menzies era began when the Liberal–Country Party Coalition won federal government in December 1949 and Robert Menzies became prime minister for the second time. It ended in January 1966 when the 71-year-old Menzies retired, having won a further six elections. The Coalition won two more elections before being defeated in December 1972 by a rejuvenated Labor Party led by the middle-class lawyer Gough Whitlam. The title of this chapter captures Robert Menzies' dominance of Australian politics during these years. He dominated his party and his governments; his political skills consigned Labor to 23 years of opposition, forcing it to undertake major reforms to rebuild its electability; and for the generation coming of age in the late 1950s and early 1960s, his generally conservative cultural and social outlook seemed to mark the culture. Born in 1894, he was shaped by the values of another age, when Britain ruled the waves and white men were the masters of the world.

Menzies' command of these years was, however, not quite as easeful as it looked from the retrospect of his retirement. The early 1950s were fraught with both economic and political uncertainty as people feared both another world war, this time with nuclear weapons, and an economic recession such as followed World War I. It was not until the middle of the 1950s that these fears subsided somewhat; and until the Labor split in 1955, elections were close. In 1961 his government hung on by only one seat after it tightened monetary policy. For Menzies' subsequent reputation it would have been better had he lost that election, avoiding acerbic judgements such as those of the social commentator Donald Horne, that by the time he retired he was 'perplexed by a changing world offering strange problems to which he could not be bothered offering solutions'.¹ Demographically, culturally and

I Donald Horne, *The Lucky Country: Australia in the Sixties*, 2nd edn (Melbourne: Penguin, 1968), p. 190.

economically, Australia had changed a great deal since 1949. The population, which had grown from 8 million to around 11.5 million, was both younger and more culturally diverse. Externally, European colonial governments had been defeated by nationalist movements and Britain had retreated from the region. By the early 1960s pressures were building for the major domestic and foreign policy reforms that were implemented later by the Whitlam government.

The first wave of historical writing on the decade was driven by the left's desire to explain Menzies' electoral dominance over Labor and to show the limiting effects of anti-communism on Australia's foreign policy.² The second wave engaged with the home and suburban-centred lives of the 1950s in their own terms, seeing them not as the result of an anxious retreat into private worlds but as the expression of positive values and a shared sense of citizenship. It also explored the material transformation of the lives of ordinary Australians with rising affluence, suburbanisation and increased mobility.³ More recently, as communism has faded in political salience, issues of race have been attracting historians' attention.⁴

The formation of the Liberal Party and the 1949 election

When the Coalition won the 1949 election, the Liberal Party itself was only five years old and Menzies had already failed once as prime minister. The party he had led, the United Australia Party, fractured badly and at the election of 1943 it won only 12 seats to Labor's 49.⁵ The conclusion was clear: non-Labor needed another major reorganisation. Two conferences were held during 1944, at which representatives of the various non-Labor organisations

2 Ann Curthoys and John Merritt (eds), Australia's First Cold War: Society, Communism and Culture, 1945–1953 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984); Ann Curthoys and John Merritt (eds), Better Dead than Red, Australia's First Cold War: 1945–1959 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986).

- 3 Judith Brett, Robert Menzies' Forgotten People (Sydney: Macmillan, 1992); John Murphy, Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000); John Murphy and Judith Smart (eds), The Forgotten Fifties: Aspects of Australian Society and Culture in the 1950s, special issue of Australian Historical Studies, 27, 109 (1997); Janet McCalman, Journeyings: The Biography of a Middle-Class Generation 1920–1990 (Melbourne University Press, 1993), ch. 5; Graeme Davison, Car Wars: How the Car Won Our Hearts and Conquered Our Cities (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2004).
- 4 Gwenda Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia* (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2005); Marilyn Lake, *Faith: Faith Bandler, Gentle Activist* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2002); Bain Attwood, *Rights for Aborigines* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2003), chs 6–8.
- 5 All election statistics come from the Australian Politics and Elections Database at the University of Western Australia, http://elections.uwa.edu.au.

worked to form a new party, with a refreshed philosophy to meet the electorate's changing expectations of government.

The result was the Liberal Party of Australia, with a strong national organisation, professional salaried staff at State and federal levels, an independent financial structure and enthusiastic new branches recruiting middle-class men and women keen to contribute to building the post-war world. As Menzies had recognised a year or two earlier, there could be no 'return to the old selfish notions of laissez faire. The function of the State will be much more than merely keeping the ring in which the competitors will fight.'6 Compared with its predecessor, the Liberal Party accepted an expanded welfare state and greater role for government planning, the latter in the context of a partnership between government and private enterprise, rather than the oppositional relationship it attributed to Labor. Differentiation from Labor centred on the role of the state, with the home, individual freedom and private enterprise pitted against Labor's socialist commitment to equality achieved through bureaucratic state planning. The Country Party declined the invitation to send representatives to the conferences, believing it could better represent its rural electoral base if it remained independent.7

Menzies was the obvious leader of the new Liberal Party. He had led the re-formation and was immensely able. A successful barrister before he entered politics, he had a sound understanding of processes of government and was an experienced and persuasive public speaker, with the gravitas Australians expected of the man who would represent them at the centres of global power in London and Washington. Menzies was born in 1894 in the small and newly established Wimmera town of Jeparit, where his parents ran a general store. Proud Australian Britons, they brought their children up to believe in the virtues of the British Empire. A clever and ambitious boy, Menzies won scholarships to complete his secondary education and to study law at Melbourne University. In 1918 he entered a Bar depleted by World War 1 and rose rapidly. Once in politics, his failure to enlist in that war, which was for family reasons, drew repeated political criticism. It also deprived him of the opportunity to mix with Australians from all walks of life and rub off some of the air of smug superiority that hampered his early political career. In 1920 he made a name for himself as a rising constitutional lawyer when he successfully argued before the High Court for an expansion of

^{6 &#}x27;The Forgotten People', radio broadcast 22 May 1942, reproduced in Brett, *Robert Menzies' Forgotten People*, p. 14.

⁷ Ian Hancock, National and Permanent? The Federal Organisation of the Liberal Party of Australia 1944–1965 (Melbourne University Press, 2000), ch. 1.

Commonwealth powers in the *Engineers' Case*. He entered the Victorian parliament as a member of the Legislative Council in 1928, and in 1934 contested and won the federal seat of Kooyong in the heart of middle-class Melbourne, which he held until his retirement. He went straight into the ministry as federal attorney-general and became prime minister in 1939 at the age of 44. It was a stellar rise, which came to an abrupt halt with the events leading to his resignation in 1941. Many believed that the new party would never win with Menzies, whose lack of the common touch contrasted starkly with the homeliness of Labor's prime minister, Ben Chifley. But there was really no one else. And as his subsequent career showed, his rapid rise and humiliating fall had changed him, teaching him to curb his quick tongue and deepening his understanding of the country he was to lead.

The new Liberal Party lost the 1946 election. Over the next three years, however, its support grew. The turning point was Labor's ill-judged decision in 1947 to nationalise the banks, which mobilised a wide range of middle-class interests against the government. A year later the Liberal Party had further success with the rejection of a referendum on prices and rent control, and a year after that it won government. The non-Labor vote was no longer dissipated across minor parties and independents, and the Liberal–Country Party coalition won a majority of votes. Significant in explaining the result was the government's decision to reintroduce petrol rationing to shore up the sterling bloc, a decision Menzies promised to reverse.⁸ Menzies established good working relations with the Country Party leader, Arthur Fadden, and from 1958 with his successor, John McEwen, who became the second most familiar face of the government in the 1960s.

Australia's Cold War

The first years of the new government coincided with the intense early years of the Cold War. The Soviet Union had established its dominance of Eastern Europe and developed nuclear weapons. Mao Zedong's communist forces won control of China in 1949 and signed a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union. War broke out between South Korea and the Communist-controlled north, in which Australia participated under the auspices of the newly established United Nations. And communists were leading participants in Asian struggles for independence. The bipolar world that would last for the next

⁸ David Lee, 'The 1949 Federal Election: A Reinterpretation', Australian Journal of Political Science, 29, 3 (1994): 501–19.

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40 years was rapidly taking shape, confronting political leaders with the frightening possibility of another war, fought this time with nuclear weapons.

Menzies was convinced that Australia needed to prepare for the possibility of a third world war and part of these preparations was legislation to ban the Communist Party of Australia, as had been promised in the Coalition's election policy. Banning the party turned out to be more difficult than envisaged. Legislation to dissolve the party was introduced on 27 April 1950 but the government did not control the Senate. A deeply divided Labor Party eventually passed the Bill, which was immediately challenged by ten unions in the High Court, with H.V. Evatt, the Deputy Leader, accepting a brief from the Waterside Workers' Federation. The Court found that the legislation was unconstitutional since it relied on defence powers available to the Commonwealth only in a time of war. The government called and won a double-dissolution election, which gave it control of the Senate. It then, in September 1951, held a referendum on amending the Constitution to enable the Commonwealth to make laws dealing with the Communist Party. Evatt threw himself into the campaign against the proposals, denouncing them up and down the country as a general threat to civil liberties.9 The referendum was defeated narrowly.10 By this time Evatt was Labor's leader, Ben Chifley having died of a heart attack three months earlier. The almost eighteen months from the introduction of the legislation to the defeat of the referendum was filled with high drama and bitter debate about the nature and extent of the dangers facing Australia and the free world. The basic, divisive question was whether the threat Australian communists posed was sufficient to justify the suspension of the civil liberties of some of its citizens.

The object of the legislation, the Communist Party of Australia, was established in 1920 as a branch of the Communist International. It was a small party, drawing support from radical intellectuals and some trade unionists. Membership increased during the war, helped by the alliance with the Soviet Union, but declined rapidly as that alliance fell apart in the post-war division of Europe.^{III} Its threat was not electoral, but from its growing power in the union movement, which gave it capacity to become a fifth column and

^{9 &#}x27;Herbert Vere Evatt', Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol. 14, pp. 108–14; Peter Crockett, Evatt: A Life (Oxford University Press, 1993); Ken Buckley, Barbara Dale and Wayne Reynolds, Doc Evatt: Patriot, Internationalist, Fighter and Scholar (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1994).

¹⁰ Leicester Webb, Communism and Democracy in Australia: A Survey of the 1951 Referendum (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1954).

¹¹ Alastair Davidson, *The Communist Party of Australia: A Short History* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1969), ch. 5.

disrupt vital industries should a third world war break out. Menzies, who had previously opposed banning the Communist Party, gave the danger of an imminent third world war as the reason for his change of mind in 1949, and he could point to the massively increased global power of communism to support it. Domestically, communism was positioned as a threat to the freedoms and civil peace of 'the Australian way of life'.

The Australian Labor Party (ALP) was thrown into turmoil by the legislation to dissolve the Communist Party. Labor trod the constitutional road to socialism and rejected communism's preparedness to use violence to achieve its ends. Alarmed by the Communist Party's increasing power in the union movement, as revealed at the 1945 Congress of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), it established Industrial Groups in some unions to combat communist influence. In a parallel and slightly earlier development, a young Catholic social activist, B.A. Santamaria, was using the parishes to organise Catholic anti-communists into the Catholic Social Studies Movement, generally known as the Movement. Communism's avowed atheism, together with horrific tales of the fate of Catholics at the hands of communists, were powerful motivators and membership of the Movement and the Industrial Groups overlapped. This overlap was greatest in Melbourne, where the powerful and charismatic Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, provided the Movement with official sanction and support. The government's plans to ban the Communist Party were thus welcomed by a well-organised anti-communist bloc within the ALP. Others were more wary: the definition of communist was so wide and loose that it would capture many on the left, including members of the ALP, and many feared the sort of general persecution of the left that was occurring in the United States. Especially concerning was the legislation's reversal of the onus of proof, which was designed to protect the sources of information in the newly established Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO).

Chifley had the reserves of loyalty and trust as well as the personal skills to contain the differences. His successor, H.V. Evatt, did not, and he had already antagonised the anti-communists in the party by his leading role in the defeat of the attempt to ban the Communist Party. Like Menzies, Evatt came to politics from law. Born in the same year, both were clever, ambitious sons of the lower middle class whose talent and energy had taken them to the top of their profession and then into politics, though on different sides. Evatt was attorney-general and Minister for External Affairs in Labor's governments from 1941 to 1949. The election after the defeat of the referendum was due in 1954. With the government struggling to control inflation, Evatt hoped to

lead Labor to victory. A hugely successful tour in 1954 by the young Queen Elizabeth II and her handsome husband, Philip – the first visit to Australia of a reigning monarch – had bolstered Menzies' popularity, however, and Evatt responded with extravagant and uncosted election promises. Then, on the eve of the election, a Soviet diplomat, Vladimir Petrov, defected, bringing with him claimed evidence of Soviet espionage in Australia. This was explosive, and soon followed by the dramatic rescue of Petrov's wife from the arms of two burly Soviet agents on the steps of a Moscow-bound aircraft. Images of the communist threat were on every newspaper front page and newsreel. Menzies announced a royal commission into the claims, which began twelve days before the election.

Labor lost the election narrowly. Evatt was devastated, convinced that Menzies had cynically used Petrov's defection to fan public fears about communism and rob him of victory. When members of his staff were named in the royal commission, he appeared in their defence, making such intemperate claims about conspiracies that he was banned from further appearance. Tensions within the Labor Party over communism were inflamed by Evatt's actions, and his paranoia about disloyalty in the party grew. In 1955 the party split, with the formation of the Anti-Communist Labor Party, which subsequently became the Democratic Labor Party (DLP).12 Taking advantage of Labor's turmoil, Menzies called an election in December 1955. Labor's vote dropped by 5.4 per cent and further in 1958, to a primary vote of 42.8 per cent. Labor's membership and electoral support were disproportionately Catholic, and the core of the new party was the Catholic membership of the Industrial Groups and the Movement, supplemented by fiercely anti-communist immigrants from Eastern Europe and the Baltic states. In its Victorian stronghold, defections brought down the Labor government of John Cain senior. With a core vote of around 10 per cent, the DLP had little chance of winning lower house seats. Its electoral strategy was to deny Labor office under Australia's system of the transferable vote by directing its preferences to the Liberal Party, and to win Senate seats. Able to deliver a tight preference flow, the DLP ensured Coalition victories in the close federal elections of 1961 and 1969.13 At the 1963 election, Catholic DLP supporters received their reward

¹² Robert Murray, *The Split: Australian Labor in the Fifties* [1970] (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1984); Bruce Duncan, *Crusade or Conspiracy: Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2001); Brian Costar, Peter Love and Paul Strangio (eds), *The Great Labor Schism: A Retrospective* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2005).

¹³ P.L. Reynolds, *The Democratic Labor Party* (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1974), p. 49; L.F. Crisp, 'The DLP Vote, 1958–1969 and After', *Politics*, 5, 1 (1970): 62–6.

when Menzies overturned the longstanding policy of denying state aid to church schools, announcing that the Commonwealth would provide funds to all schools to upgrade their science teaching facilities.

How have historians interpreted this series of events? For the next two decades and beyond, the left saw a Menzies whose professed liberalism came a distant second to his authoritarian tendencies and cynical use of fear to maintain political power. Parallels with McCarthyism in the United States seemed obvious, with some justification. Although the government abandoned the legislation to ban the Communist Party after the defeat of the referendum, communists were still regarded as serious threats to Australia's internal security. Files were kept on a wide range of left activists, contributing to the sense of cultural embattlement and marginalisation among the left intelligentsia, including many writers and artists.¹⁴ Even as sympathetic an historian as Menzies' biographer, Allan Martin, is troubled by Menzies' illiberalism during the Cold War, although the Liberal prime minister did eschew anti-communism's more extreme forms.¹⁵

Recent historical work, much drawing on hitherto restricted sources, has somewhat redeemed Menzies' reputation. Based on high-level briefings in England and the United States, David Lowe argues that Menzies' fear of a third world war was genuine and that the attempt to ban the Communist Party was part of a larger effort to put Australia on a war footing.¹⁶ Menzies' cynical manipulation of the fact, timing and aftermath of Petrov's defection to rob Labor of victory in 1954, which was a core assumption of the first historical accounts, has not stood up to subsequent research.¹⁷ For Labor, the election defeat had such devastating consequences that belief in a conspiracy was comforting and hard to shake, particularly as the royal commission failed to find prosecutable evidence of communist espionage, supporting the contemporary left's perception of a McCarthyist witch hunt. Subsequent historical work since the opening of Soviet archives after 1989 has, however, vindicated contemporary claims about Soviet espionage

- 15 A.W. Martin, *Robert Menzies: A Life. Volume 2, 1944–1978* (Melbourne University Press, 1999).
- 16 David Lowe, Menzies and the 'great world struggle': Australia's Cold War 1948–1954 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1999).
- 17 See Nicholas Whitlam and John Stubbs, *Nest of Traitors: The Petrov Affair* (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1974); Robert Manne, *The Petrov Affair: Politics and Espionage* (Sydney: Pergamon Press, 1987) for these two opposing approaches.

¹⁴ Fiona Capp, Writers Defiled: Security Surveillance of Australian Authors and Intellectuals 1920–1960 (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1993); Andrew Moore, 'The Great Literary Witch-hunt Revisited: Politics, Personality and Pique at the CLF, 1952', Labour History, 82 (2002): 81–95.

activities in Australia in the late 1940s, which included some members of the Communist Party. $^{\rm \scriptscriptstyle I8}$

Much less controversial among historians is the influence of anticommunism on Australian foreign policy in this period. The communist threat provided the framework for Australia's foreign policy, masking both the decline of Britain's global power and the nationalism driving Asian postcolonial wars of independence. The European colonial powers that had governed much of South and Southeast Asia before World War 2 were unable to re-establish their control and Australian governments were soon dealing with new nationalist governments and complex conflicts in a region they perceived as threatening and unstable. Australia was, according to Menzies, washed on its 'western and northern shores by potentially hostile seas', and so would be unable to defend itself effectively without massive aid from her friends.¹⁹ Prime among these were the United States and Britain, and Australia was determined to keep both engaged with the region.

In 1951 Australia and New Zealand signed a regional defence treaty with the United States, known as ANZUS. This was largely driven and negotiated by the Minister for External Affairs, Percy Spender. Although the explicit commitments were loose, it provided a framework for strategic and defence cooperation between the three western allies in the Asia-Pacific region. Somewhat to its annoyance, Britain was not included. Australia continued close defence and strategic cooperation with Britain, however, making tracts of inland Australia available for testing its nuclear weapons from 1953 to 1963. The agreement and the tests were shrouded in secrecy. Aboriginal people were shifted from their traditional lands without compensation and many defence personnel were subjected to unsafe levels of radiation. Australia also participated with Britain and the USA in the formation of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), which included some non-communist Asian countries.

The catalyst for the formation of SEATO was the defeat of the French forces in Indochina and the subsequent Geneva Conference, which divided the newly independent Vietnam between a communist-governed north and a non-communist south, pending a subsequent popular vote. SEATO's purpose was to prevent further communist gains in Southeast Asia, and although not a particularly effective organisation, it framed Australia's relations with its region as concerned primarily with the containment of communism, rather

19 Robert Gordon Menzies, The Measure of the Years (Melbourne: Cassell, 1970), p. 44.

¹⁸ Desmond Ball and David Horner, Breaking the Codes: Australia's KGB Network, 1944–1950 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998).

than with building a sense of shared regional membership. It would take a long time for Australia to shake off the assumptions and manner of colonial superiority in its relations with the region. Neighbouring states were to create a buffer zone against the downward spread of communism from the People's Republic of China. Announcing Australia's participation in a Commonwealth Strategic Reserve in Malaya to fight the communist insurgency, Menzies articulated Australia's policy of 'forward defence', in which Australia was to defend itself 'as far from our own soil as possible'.²⁰ At Britain's request, it provided military aid to the new Malaysian Federation during the confrontation with a belligerent Indonesia from 1962 to 1966.

From 1951 to 1959 a national service scheme required all 18-year-old men to undertake some military training. At the end of 1964 the government introduced two years of compulsory military service for 20-year-old men, and included the obligation to serve overseas. Because of capacity constraints in both the defence forces and the booming economy, only a portion of the eligible cohort was to be conscripted, with selection based on a lottery of birth dates. An anti-conscription movement formed almost immediately. Australia was already being drawn into the conflict in Vietnam, where the promised plebiscite had not occurred and the United States was supporting the south against the communist north. Australia had sent military advisers in 1962, and in 1965 Menzies announced that Australia would support its ANZUS ally by providing an infantry battalion to assist the South Vietnamese government. The battalion would include national servicemen. When Menzies retired in early 1966 Australia's participation in the war in Vietnam was generally supported, as was conscription; however, both were soon to become matters of fierce conflict, with a sharp generational edge. In retrospect it is clear that the perception of aggression by the People's Republic of China as a major factor in the war between North and South Vietnam was wrong and that anti-communism had distorted the Australian government's capacities to understand the profound changes taking place in its region.²¹

Economic and social change

Besides communism, the other threat of the early 1950s was inflation. Some of its causes were temporary, such as the wool boom during the Korean War, but most were systemic: an ambitious post-war migration scheme, large

²⁰ Alan Renouf, The Frightened Country (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 176–7.

²¹ John Murphy, Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), chs 7, 8, 11–12.

infrastructure projects such as the massive Snowy Mountains hydro-electric scheme, high defence spending, a labour shortage and pent-up demand after two decades of Depression and war in which domestic consumption had been severely curtailed. In 1951–52 inflation soared to over 20 per cent and imports depleted foreign exchange reserves. Opinion polls showed that inflation had replaced fear of another war as the most pressing issue.²² Capacity constraint was the problem and the government attempted periodically to curtail demand with credit squeezes and import restrictions.

Global trade expanded rapidly in the 1950s, assisted by the multilateral General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Labor led Australia's participation in the lengthy negotiations that established GATT in 1948. The Coalition was wary. It wanted to maintain the imperial preference system of the 1932 Ottawa Agreement with Britain as Australia's main trading partner, and was influenced in this by the hostility of key producer groups manufacturers, trade unions, and horticulturalists - for whom Britain was the major export market. Wool and wheat growers, keen to diversify their markets, were supportive of GATT, although as it turned out, the agreement did not prove an effective forum for liberalising agricultural trade. Australia's export income was earned overwhelmingly from rural products, with wool the leading export commodity at more than half of commodity trade in 1950. Australian manufacturing, by contrast, was oriented to the domestic market and enjoyed substantial protection from imports. Australia had achieved some exemptions from GATT by arguing that it was still building its industrial capacity within a framework of import replacement, developing a car and large whitegoods industry based largely on imported capital, technology and management.

Australian trade policy began to shift direction at the beginning of 1956 when the Department of Trade was established under the leadership of two powerful men: Jack McEwen, who became the first minister and would soon become leader of the Country Party; and its Secretary, John Crawford, who had led Australia's delegation to the 1954–55 GAT'T review. Against Menzies' wishes, they began to unwind the preferential trading agreements with Britain and negotiated a trade treaty with Japan in 1957. Manufacturers, trade unions and the ALP all opposed the deal, but a shift in the pattern of Australian trade, away from Britain and towards Asia, was an inevitable response to shifts in global power. Thus, when in the early 1960s Britain attempted to enter the European Economic Community (EEC), Australia was not caught

22 Murphy, Imagining the Fifties, p. 119.

totally unprepared. By 1967 Japan had replaced Britain as Australia's leading trade partner and South and Southeast Asian countries were of increasing importance.²³ Although the global struggle against communism was the main framework for Australia's foreign and defence policy, the pragmatists in the Department of Trade were selling wheat to Communist China long before Australia gave it diplomatic recognition. The other significant change in trade during the 1960s was the growing importance of mineral exports.

After around 1955 inflation eased. John Murphy argues that the decade can be usefully divided between the anxious early years dominated by economic and strategic fears, and the second half when Cold War tensions reduced somewhat and the economy settled into a pattern of steady growth.²⁴ Except for a brief period in 1961–62, unemployment was less than 2 per cent, and average real incomes rose by around 4 per cent per annum.²⁵ With strong commodity exports, rural Australia generally shared in this economic prosperity. Marriage rates reached new highs as the generation that became known as the baby boomers were born into families in which high male wages enabled married women to stay at home. Women who needed or wanted to work faced unequal pay, restrictive work practices and a good deal of social disapproval, though this was declining. Migrant women, however, participated in the workforce in large numbers, as overall female workforce participation increased from 22.8 per cent in 1954 to 31.7 by 1971.²⁶

Car ownership increased as the boundaries of capital cities expanded into their semi-rural fringes to accommodate both the new migrants and the post-war newly-weds. Councils changed zoning laws, forcing out farmers and market gardeners to provide homes for families.²⁷ A building boom lifted rates of home ownership to 70 per cent by the 1960s.²⁸ As the provision of services such as education, sewerage, roads, police and public transport were all State responsibilities, this rapid expansion placed enormous strains on State budgets, as well as on the new suburbanites themselves struggling with unmade roads and overcrowded schools. Houses filled with labour-saving domestic appliances were now cheap enough for the average householder

- 23 Ann Capling, Australia and the Global Trading System: From Havana to Seattle (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 201.
- 24 Murphy, Imagining the Fifites, pp. 1-9.
- 25 Geoffrey Bolton, The Oxford History of Australia. Volume 5, 1942–1988: The Middle Way (Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 89–90.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 200.

²⁷ Graeme Davison, Tony Dingle and Seamus O'Hanlon (eds), *The Cream Brick Frontier: Histories of Australian Suburbia* (Melbourne: Monash Publications in History, 1995).

²⁸ Patrick Troy, Accommodating Australians: Commonwealth Government Involvement in Housing (Sydney: Federation Press, 2012), p. 140.

to obtain with help from the expansion of consumer credit through hire purchase schemes.²⁹ The possibilities for home-based entertainment were also expanding, particularly after television was introduced in 1956 for the Melbourne Olympics. It quickly became a conduit for an emerging youth culture with teenage music programs such as *Bandstand*.

During the 1950s a steadily growing economy and an expanding range of affordable consumer durables enabled what came to be seen by politicians and the public alike as 'the Australian way of life' or 'the Australian Dream', epitomised by a family living in its own home in the suburbs with a back-yard, a car and the time to enjoy the great outdoors.³⁰ Car ownership opened up the coast and countryside to new leisure opportunities, with families taking weekend drives and annual holidays to enjoy the increasing leave entitlements as unions traded extra wages for more time off.³¹ Increased leisure and the material pleasures of suburbia drew critics from the intelligentsia, who deplored the hedonism of 'the land of the long weekend', the ugliness of the new suburbs, and the political quietism and individualism symbolised by a man mowing his lawn rather than attending church or a party branch meeting.³²

The chance to enjoy 'the Australian way of life' was the centrepiece of Australia's campaign to attract new settlers. When Australians were told after the war by Labor's Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, that they must 'populate or perish', Australia looked first to its traditional sources in the United Kingdom and Ireland, then to Europe's refugee camps and then to Europe more generally, the government signing immigration agreements with seven European countries including Italy and Greece. The intention of the scheme was to attract permanent settlers; hence new immigrants faced few formal restrictions and citizenship was relatively easy to acquire. Those on assisted passages were bound to designated jobs for a specified period, with many working on the large public infrastructure projects such as the Snowy Mountains hydro-electric scheme. Crucially, they were included in the award system of wages, which had been a condition of union support for

- 30 Richard White, 'The Australian Way of Life', Historical Studies, 18, 73 (1979): 528-45.
- 31 Richard White et al., On Holidays: A History of Getting Away in Australia (Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2005).
- 32 Ronald Conway, *The Great Australian Stupor: An Interpretation of the Australian Way of Life* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1971) and *Land of the Long Weekend* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1978); Robin Boyd, *The Australian Ugliness* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1960); Allan Ashbolt, 'Godzone: 3 Myth and Reality', *Meanjin*, 25, 4 (1966): 373–88; Tim Rowse, 'Heaven and a Hills Hoist: Australian Critics on Suburbia', *Meanjin*, 37, 1 (1978): 3–13.

²⁹ Judith Brett, Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 135–9.

government-sponsored migration. Thus whatever cultural marginalisation they experienced was not compounded by economic exploitation.³³

European migrants were expected to find jobs, learn English and assimilate quickly. Many did, but others stayed close to their compatriots and some inner suburbs in the capital cities began to develop a distinctive ethnic character, as did a few regional towns such as Griffith and Mildura, where Italians became prominent in horticulture. Inner-city, working-class neighbourhoods were transformed as existing residents moved to the new houses in the suburbs and were replaced by European immigrants. Similarly transformed was the manufacturing workforce as migrant men, many of them unskilled, took jobs in the new car and whitegoods factories and their wives in clothing, footwear and textiles.

Stable economic growth continued until the end of the long post-war boom in the early 1970s. While all sectors of the economy expanded, their relative importance was shifting. Agriculture's share of both gross domestic product (GDP) and the workforce was shrinking. Farm incomes were high and country towns flourished, but from about 1960 the cost-price squeeze began to force farm consolidation. This spelled long-term trouble for the Country Party. Its electoral base was being steadily eroded and with better transport and communications, the cultural distance of the country from the city was shrinking, weakening the ideological base for a separate rural party. Manufacturing increased to a peak in the mid-1960s, and then began to decline slowly. The service sector rose steadily with the expansion of economic activity and the modernisation and expansion of government activities that required more and better trained public servants.³⁴ Between 1947 and 1971 white-collar occupations increased from 25.3 per cent of the workforce to 31.7 per cent, with professional and administrative jobs that required some post-school training increasing from 12 to 17.2 per cent.³⁵ A class of knowledge workers was being created, sometimes described as 'the new middle class', who were different from the old professional and self-employed middle class in that they were employees, yet like it in that they had good salaries, security of employment and a fair degree of autonomy in the workplace.

³³ Ann-Mari Jordens, Alien to Citizen: Settling Australian Migrants in Australia, 1945–75 (Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1997); Constance Lever-Tracy and Michael Quinlan, A Divided Working Class: Ethnic Segmentation and Industrial Conflict in Australia (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988).

³⁴ Gerald E. Caiden, Career Service (Melbourne University Press, 1965).

³⁵ D.A. Kemp, Society and Electoral Behaviour in Australia: A Study of Three Decades (Brisbane: UQP, 1978), p. 48.

These new professional and administrative jobs required better educated workers. School retention rates grew steadily in the post-war decades: in 1947 10.4 per cent of females and 12.2 per cent of males aged 15–19 were in full-time education; in 1961 it was 24 and 28.4 per cent respectively.³⁶ The State-based universities and teachers' colleges struggled to meet this increased demand. In 1956 Menzies established a committee to enquire into university education, chaired by the chairman of the British University Grants Commission, Sir Keith Murray. The Murray Report (1957) recommended a vastly increased Commonwealth involvement in tertiary education, with expanded funding to improve the existing universities and create new ones.³⁷ The first of these, Monash, opened in Melbourne in 1961. Others soon followed. Teachers' colleges also expanded.

Popular images of the period have been dominated by the baby boomers' memories of their home-centred childhoods, the growth of consumerism and the emergence of a distinctive youth culture given form by the music and fashions of America and England, and the youth rebellion that was to come.³⁸ The fifties have taken on powerful meanings in popular memory as a symbol of traditional and restrictive gender roles, intolerance, and national insecurity. From the 1970s perspective of the radical baby boomers, the fifties was a decade of anxious, home-centred suburban conformism dominated by the conservative values of their parents' generation. There is much in this. Many artists and intellectuals went abroad, mainly to London, to seek both recognition and wider opportunities than were available in Australia's small and largely derivative cultural industries. Homosexual men and women hid their private lives, and male homosexuality was a crime.³⁹ The social movements of the 1970s used the fifties to measure the distance Australia had moved on attitudes to gender, sexual identity, race, national identity, and a more critical attitude to consumerism, glossing over the variations in people's experience and missing much that was new in the lives of the young adults who were their parents.40

For as well as the conformity, there was also a new energy in Australia compared with the 1930s, a new sense of possibility for men and women

- 37 Menzies, The Measure of the Years, pp. 81-97.
- 38 Helen Townsend, *Baby Boomers: Growing up in Australia in the 1940s, 50s and 60s*, (Sydney: Simon & Schuster, 1988).
- 39 Graham Willett, 'The Darkest Decade: Homophobia in 1950s Australia', in Murphy and Smart (eds), *The Forgotten Fifties*, pp. 120–32.
- 40 Murphy, Imagining the Fifties, pp. 2-3.

³⁶ Simon Marginson, Educating Australia: Government, Economy and Citizen since 1960 (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 23.

with more economic security than their parents had enjoyed. The decade is also embedded in popular memory by its distinctive look: the streamlined, clean functionalism of international modernism. New colours and synthetic materials resulting from wartime technological advances were incorporated into clothing, household goods and domestic architecture.⁴¹ Women and little girls wore nylon dresses; people painted their interiors with a rainbow of new colours and ate from kitchen tables laminated with formica.

Home building and family formation were not just private pursuits but part of a shared general project of post-war development and nation building, contributing to the post-war peace and prosperity so many had fought for. It was a period of active community building and busy associational life. For the churches, it was a time of confidence and expansion. New parishes were established in the expanding suburbs and membership grew rapidly.⁴² The Melbourne poet and academic Vincent Buckley remembered the 1950s as years of excitement, broadening imaginative horizons, and passionate discussions among a heterodox range of political, intellectual, cultural and religious clubs and organisations, many campus-based but others connected to larger political and religious institutions.⁴³

New publishing ventures flourished: a plethora of short-lived small magazines whose names are now barely remembered; literary and political quarterlies such as *Meanjin*, *Overland* and *Quadrant*; and later in the decade two new national fortnightlies. In 1958 Australian Consolidated Press started the *Observer*, a fortnightly intellectual review edited by the journalist Donald Horne, which was absorbed into the *Bulletin* a few years later when Horne became its editor.⁴⁴ In the same year, the financial editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Tom Fitzgerald, launched another fortnightly, *The Nation*, which was to last until 1972 as a vehicle for progressive opinion.⁴⁵ Both were Sydney-based and both were edited by experienced journalists on the cusp of 40, who had served in the war and were impatient with Australia's intellectual conservatism. Spaces were needed for new thinking and new voices to challenge the orthodoxies of the pre-war elites who still occupied

42 David Hilliard, 'God in the Suburbs: The Religious Culture of Australian Cities in the 1950s', *Australian Historical Studies*, 24, 97 (1991): 399–419.

44 Donald Horne, Into the Open (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2000), chs 2-3.

⁴¹ Peter Cuffley, Australian Houses of the Forties and Fifties (Melbourne: Five Mile Press, 1993).

⁴³ Vincent Buckley, Cutting Green Hay: Friendships, Movements and Cultural Conflicts in Australia's Great Decades (Melbourne: Penguin, 1983), ch. 10.

⁴⁵ K.S. Inglis (ed.), Nation: The Life of an Independent Journal of Opinion 1958–1972 (Melbourne University Press, 1989).

key positions of political and cultural power. When Menzies retired, the average age of his Cabinet was over 60. In his 1964 best-selling critique of contemporary Australia, *The Lucky Country*, Horne expressed the frustration of those he described as 'sensitive, intelligent people of the middle generation' who were losing faith in the future of their country as they awaited a generational change that might never come.⁴⁶ The most difficult challenges were around questions of race, externally as Australia tried to accommodate itself to a postcolonial Asia while still maintaining the white Australia policy, and internally in relation to Australia's Indigenous population.

Pressures for reform

Australia was a founding member of the United Nations, with Australia's Minister for External Affairs, H.V. Evatt, playing an active role in the 1945 conference at which it was established. He was the third president of the General Assembly in 1948, when it adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Combined with the revelations in Europe of the horrific extremes to which racially based thinking had led, this increased sensitivity to racially discriminatory policies and practices and gave reformers new energy. As the 1950s progressed it was clear to government officers in the departments of Immigration and of External Affairs that Australia's racially restrictive immigration policies were increasingly difficult to sustain. In the late 1940s there was a series of high-profile cases in which non-European people resident in Australia during the war were forcibly deported, even as Australia was markedly increasing its immigration intake. At the 1949 election Menzies promised that in contrast to the harshness of Labor's rigid bureaucracy, his government would exercise more discretion, particularly in cases that involved breaking up families. This temporarily took white Australia off the front page, but it did not counter the mounting practical pressures as various groups of non-European and part-European residents sought equitable treatment, and others sought entry. Especially difficult for the government were the Japanese war brides of Australian ex-servicemen whose entry was not approved until 1952. The government also faced increasing diplomatic pressure from newly independent Asian nations. India, where the elites spoke English, was particularly insulted by Australia's determination to maintain its white Australia policy. Australia was very conscious of the need to build relations with its northern neighbours and to support programs that would

46 Horne, The Lucky Country, p. 228.

inhibit the spread of communism. In 1950 Percy Spender was instrumental in the adoption of the Colombo Plan by the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference. The plan included bringing Asian students to Australia and the government hoped it would be taken as evidence of Australia's goodwill toward the region. But the High Commissioner to India, Walter Crocker, reported to External Affairs in 1954 that whatever goodwill the Colombo Plan generated quickly dried up in resentment against Australia's immigration policy.⁴⁷

Incremental changes were made during the 1950s, mainly in relaxing conditions of citizenship and permanent residency, the government all the while publicly opposing any easing of restrictions on non-European migration. The strategy was to make small changes in order to reduce the pressure for substantial reform. In 1958 the dictation test was omitted from the new Migration Act, in favour of less offensive means of restricting Asian migration. But attitudes to race were changing among younger Australians. Immigration Reform Associations were formed to lobby for change, their members internationalist in outlook and deeply opposed to race-based discrimination. With civil rights campaigns in the United States and opposition to apartheid in South Africa, racial discrimination was becoming an international issue. Younger Labor politicians such as Gough Whitlam in the Commonwealth parliament and Don Dunstan in the South Australian parliament began attempts to remove support for white Australia from Labor's official platform, succeeding at the 1965 Federal Conference against resistance from older members. Similar pressure was exerted by younger members of the Liberal Party, including Hubert Opperman, who replaced the conservative South Australian, Alexander Downer, as Minister for Immigration in 1963. Substantial change, however, had to wait for Menzies' retirement; stalled reform proposals were among the first submissions dealt with by Harold Holt's new government.

Immigration reform was one adjustment Australia had to make to live in a postcolonial world. It also had to change fundamentally the way it thought about the region and its position in it. In comparison with Labor, Menzies had not welcomed the new Asian nationalism and at first hoped it would be possible to keep European powers in Southeast Asia. It was, he said, foolish to take sides against European nations 'as though they were... interlopers in countries where they have long been colonists, administrators

⁴⁷ Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia*, p. 86; David Lowe and Daniel Oakman (eds), *Australia and the Colombo Plan: 1949–1957* (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2004).

and educators'.⁴⁸ When this hope proved futile, his fallback position was to keep Britain and the USA involved in the region as part of the global struggle against communism. By the early 1960s Britain's capacity and will to maintain an effective presence in Southeast Asia was declining fast; and the USA did not always see matters as Australia did. For example, in 1962 it did not support Australia's opposition to Indonesian claims to West New Guinea, which had remained in Dutch control when the rest of the Dutch East Indies became Indonesia. Australia was itself a colonial power in the eastern half of New Guinea, and did not relish sharing a border with a restive Indonesia. It had to accept the inevitable, however, as it also came to accept the inevitability of future independence for Papua and New Guinea and prepared for an orderly and peaceful transfer of power.⁴⁹

To Menzies and much of his Cabinet, the region to the north was unstable and threatening.⁵⁰ As in the Colombo Plan, they conceptualised Australia's role as a provider of benefits to assist poor northern neighbours in their fight against communism. They did not see themselves as partners with the new governments in a shared geopolitical space and few thought that the newly independent Asian nations had much to offer Australia, except for markets. As well, many men of Menzies' generation, shaped by the racialist assumptions of the Edwardian era, found it all but impossible to treat coloured men, no matter how urbane and well-educated, without condescension. Menzies, for example, was never really comfortable with India's President Nehru, whom he met regularly at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conferences in London, but rarely in Delhi.⁵¹ There were exceptions. Richard Casey, who was Minister for External Affairs from 1951 to 1960, worked hard to build mutual relations with newly independent Asian nations and to see countries such as India and Indonesia in terms other than the global struggle against communism. He was supported by some of the new generation of Australian diplomats, such as Arthur Tange, whom Casey appointed Secretary of the Department of External Affairs in early 1954, and Walter Crocker, who was ambassador to both India and Indonesia during this period. Knowledge of Asia was growing, too, among journalists and in the academy, with new and

⁴⁸ Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 15 February 1949, p. 269.

⁴⁹ Ian Downs, The Australian Trusteeship: Papua New Guinea 1945–1975 (Canberra: AGPS, 1980); Paul Hasluck, A Time for Building: Australian Administration in Papua and New Guinea 1951–1963 (Melbourne University Press, 1976).

⁵⁰ Renouf, The Frightened Country.

⁵¹ Meg Gurry, 'Leadership and Bilateral Relations: Menzies and Nehru, Australia and India 1949–1964', *Pacific Affairs*, 65, 4 (1992): 510–26.

expanded departments of Asian studies introducing undergraduates to the complexities of Asian culture and history.

New attitudes to race were also evident in debates about the place of Australia's Indigenous people in the post-war nation. In 1901 the Constitution had excluded the Commonwealth from making laws in relation to native people, who remained subject to the State jurisdictions. The Commonwealth did, however, have jurisdiction from 1911 over the Northern Territory, which had a significant Indigenous population, including in the large Aboriginal Reserve of Arnhem Land. Paul Hasluck, from Western Australia, became Minister for Territories in 1951. Unusually among his Cabinet colleagues, he already had a deep interest in the welfare of Indigenous people, many of whom lived in conditions of appalling privation. Aboriginal affairs had generally been an underfunded backwater at both Commonwealth and State levels. Hasluck used his position to improve cooperation between federal and State governments and to increase the political visibility of Indigenous issues. His focus was on practical improvements in Indigenous welfare - health, housing and hygiene, educational opportunities. These were pursued within a general framework of assimilation in the expectation that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would gradually adapt to and come to enjoy the same manner and standard of living as other Australians. In 1956 Aboriginal people were brought within the general provisions of the social security laws, and in 1962 they gained Commonwealth voting rights. Western Australia quickly amended its electoral legislation in 1963, with laggard Queensland taking until 1965. The other States had never explicitly excluded Aboriginal people from the franchise. Hasluck oversaw the removal of most racially specific provisions from Commonwealth legislation and administration, and all States except Queensland followed suit. Queensland was the most extreme in restrictive laws and practices, with the day-to-day lives and personal relations of people living on reserves regulated by regimes similar to those found in a prison or asylum. It did not finally eliminate all forms of racial discrimination until the late 1980s.

The Indigenous population was no longer declining. After the war many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people moved to the cities seeking work, particularly to Sydney and Brisbane.⁵² Indigenous advancement organisations sprang up and in 1958 the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines was formed. In 1964 it was renamed the Federal Council for the Advancement

⁵² Richard Broome, Aboriginal Australians: Black Responses to White Dominance, 1788–1994, 2nd edn (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994), p. 174.

of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to give separate recognition to the other Indigenous people within Australian jurisdiction. Membership of these organisations was initially drawn from sympathetic white Australians, mostly communist or Christian, and from a new generation of Indigenous activists, including Doug Nicholls, Charles Perkins and Chicka Dixon, and the Pacific Islander Faith Bandler.⁵³ By the late 1960s the organisations were in the hands of the Indigenous people themselves.

The goal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activism in the 1950s and 1960s was the achievement of equal citizenship by raising general public awareness of Indigenous people as members of the nation. A core aim was to amend section 51 (xxvi) of the Constitution to enable the Commonwealth to pass special laws for Aboriginal people. This proposal was controversial within the government. Both Menzies and Hasluck argued that it was expanding the scope for discriminatory legislation when the aim should be to remove it.⁵⁴ Advocates of the change argued that it would enable the Commonwealth to develop Aboriginal policy within a national framework and to provide special assistance from the much greater funds the Commonwealth had at its disposal compared with the States. At a referendum in 1967 both proposals were accepted by more than 90 per cent of voters.

Indigenous activism shifted quickly after the referendum, from citizenship and equal rights to land rights and self-determination. In 1963 people from Yirrkala on the Gove Peninsula in the Northern Territory sent a bark petition to federal parliament protesting against the proposed lease of their traditional land to a mining company and claiming rights to their traditional lands. New mining activity in the remote north and west was met with new demands for the recognition of prior sovereignty and rights to compensation such as had been granted to indigenous people in Canada, the United States and New Zealand. From the perspective of the more radical Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander politics that were to come in the 1970s, the policies of the Menzies government towards Indigenous issues seem backward-looking, committed to an assimilationist model in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identities and traditions would gradually disappear. From the perspective of the time, however, the government achieved much in improving material conditions and achieving civil equality for Indigenous Australians, although social attitudes were slower to change. Reflecting in

54 Will Sanders, 'Aboriginal Policy', in J.R. Nethercote et al. (eds), *The Menzies Era:* A Reappraisal of Government, Politics and Policy (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1995), pp. 258–72.

⁵³ Lake, Faith; Peter Read, Charles Perkins: A Biography (Melbourne: Viking, 1990).

the 1980s on these differences of perspective, Paul Hasluck wrote that he and others like him were motivated by faith in the capacities of individuals to choose and to change. They rejected the prejudice and the laws that restricted opportunities for Indigenous people and treated them as inherently inferior, but they 'did not see clearly the ways in which the individual is bound by membership of a family or a group'.⁵⁵ They were, that is, relatively blind to culture and so unprepared for the identity-based race politics of the coming decades and the resurgence of Indigenous cultural confidence.

Labor responded to the new pressure for reform on questions of race more quickly than the Liberal Party, which is somewhat surprising given the strength of Labor's founding belief in a white Australia and the Liberals' traditional commitment to individuals' rights and freedoms. In both parties, the conflict was generational, but the young Labor activists had more scope to change the party's direction than their Liberal counterparts. Not only were the Liberals in government, but the mechanisms for party members to debate policy were little used in the 1950s and 1960s. Policy directions were essentially the prerogative of the leader, which meant Menzies. Labor's policy, by contrast, was formulated in the extra-parliamentary organisation where the fights during the 1960s were fierce.

Labor came very close to winning office in December 1961 after the government responded to an increase in inflation with a squeeze on credit. Evatt had resigned as leader in January 1960 and was replaced by Arthur Calwell, already 64 and a veteran of the conscription battles of World War 1. His deputy was Gough Whitlam, a social democratic lawyer representing the new middle-class voters Labor would need to attract as its traditional working-class base declined. As tall, middle-class and well spoken as Menzies, he had joined the Labor Party during the war, attracted to its commitment to expand Commonwealth powers for national reform. By the 1960s the post-war suburban expansion had far outrun the States' capacities to provide adequate services, and Whitlam believed Commonwealth provision was the answer. The son of a senior Commonwealth public servant, he had little sympathy with States' rights, and few links with the party's trade union and working-class base. But like the young Menzies, he was immensely able and just as impatient for office.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Paul Hasluck, *Shades of Darkness: Aboriginal Affairs* 1925–1965 (Melbourne University Press, 1988), p. 130.

⁵⁶ Graham Freudenberg, A Certain Grandeur: Gough Whitlam in Politics (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1977); Jenny Hocking, Gough Whitlam: A Moment in History. The Biography, Volume I. (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2008).

Although the coalition kept on winning elections, its electoral dominance can be exaggerated. Labor retained solid electoral support. Its lowest share of the primary vote was 42.8 per cent at the 1958 election, the first after the formation of the DLP. In 1961 it was 47.9 per cent. The Liberals were frustrated by the hold Labor had on its supporters' loyalty. Why, despite its weak leadership and demoralised condition, did almost half of the electorate continue to vote for it?57 Labor, however, fought elections handicapped by a cumbersome organisation that was more concerned with the maintenance of Labor's traditions than the winning of elections. Labor's organisation had changed little since the early years of the century, with the Federal Conference and Executive maintaining tight control over the official platform, which Labor's parliamentarians were pledged to uphold. The Federal Conference was composed of six representatives elected from each of the six State branches, the organisational base of which was the affiliated trade unions. The parliamentary leadership had no automatic membership. In 1963 the Federal Conference was determining party policy towards the United States' strategic military installations at North West Cape in Western Australia. Calwell and Whitlam, neither of whom were members, were caught by a press photographer as they waited outside the Hotel Kingston in Canberra to learn of the policy they would be advocating at the election due later that year.⁵⁸ For 60 years, Liberals had been attacking Labor's parliamentarians as beholden to an external organisation, and here was visual proof that Labor was controlled, in Menzies' words, by 'thirty-six faceless men'. At the election in November the Coalition won by ten seats. After Whitlam became leader in 1967, following yet another election defeat for Labor, he pushed through structural reforms that expanded the role of the parliamentary leadership and branch membership in the party's organisation and established a series of policy committees to refresh and expand the party's reform agenda. These reforms laid the basis for the program Whitlam took to the men and women of Australia at the 1972 election.

⁵⁷ Hancock, National and Permanent, p. 229.

⁵⁸ Ross McMullin, The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891–1991 (Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 293–4.

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Instability, 1966–82

6

PAUL STRANGIO

Australia entered the post-Menzies age in a reassuringly languid fashion in the summer holiday of early 1966. Menzies had stayed so long and exercised such effortless supremacy over the nation's politics right to the end that no-one seriously doubted he was retiring on his own terms or begrudged his explanation that he had simply run out of steam. Harold Holt's instalment as Liberal Party leader and prime minister was similarly bloodless. After being elected unopposed, Holt recorded with satisfaction that he had reached the office without 'stepping over anyone's body'.¹

The tranquillity of the leadership transition belied the upheavals ahead. At his farewell press conference Menzies observed majestically that it could not be said he was 'leaving a sinking ship' - the nation was prosperous and strong.² Yet his inheritance was not so uncomplicated. Change, not stability, was becoming the leitmotif of the times. A survey of the national mood in 1966 described Australia as 'a society in transition...the old patterns of living and thinking and acting have broken up and the new ones are still evolving'.3 Whereas the incipient nature of this transition during the final stages of his prime ministership had allowed Menzies to avert his eyes imperiously, his successors were not permitted that luxury as the social trends ripened and the calls for change grew insistent in the decade's second half. Ironically, it was the material security that Menzies proudly extolled that was fundamental to the transformed expectations and attitudes of the generation coming of age at this time. In the year he retired 40 per cent of the population was under 21 years old. Menzies' insouciant assessment of his legacy failed also to take into account the ticking time bomb of intervention in the Vietnam War. Opposition to the war and conscription would soon become the defining issue of the age, unsettling the political landscape and stimulating other

¹ Tom Frame, The Life and Death of Harold Holt (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005), p. 137.

^{2 (}Melbourne) Age, 21 January 1966.

³ Craig McGregor, Profile of Australia (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1966), p. 15.

movements of social dissent. Never quite sure whether they should try to flow with or tame this restless tide, Menzies' heirs were swept aside.

The confounded heirs

'Young Harold', as Menzies had persisted in referring to him, was 58 years old and had been in parliament for three decades when he assumed the reins of government; no other Australian prime minister has served such a lengthy apprenticeship.⁴ With his sunny disposition and informal manner, Holt embodied the relaxed optimism of the post-war decades. In publicity choreographed by his press secretary and with an aptitude for television, he brought an aura of generational change and renewed vigour to the prime ministership. There was a nagging doubt, however, that Holt lacked seriousness of purpose.

While Holt was open to change, his government's major social reforms were hedged with ambivalence. Early on he resurrected proposals for liberalising Australia's immigration policy that Menzies had blocked. For Holt the changes were a means to stake out his prime ministerial identity, but he was also sensitive to the humanitarian case for lowering the barriers to non-European immigration and keenly appreciated that the white Australia policy was a blot on the nation's reputation in Asia. Holt placed greater priority on regional engagement than his predecessor, as symbolised when he toured Southeast Asia in his first overseas trip as prime minister. In foreshadowing the changes, however, he assured the public they would not alter 'fundamentals of the restrictive policy'.⁵ The Liberal–Country Party Coalition stayed rhetorically wedded to racial homogeneity during the remainder of the 1960s, even as its liberalisation of immigration facilitated a steady increase in non-European settlement. This was reform in *sotto voce*.⁶

The ambivalence was also pronounced when Holt's government undertook a referendum in May 1967 to end the exclusion of Aboriginal people from the census and empower the Commonwealth to enact 'special laws' on their behalf.⁷ Here too Menzies had resisted progress, despite a domestic campaign for constitutional change by Indigenous and white

⁴ Frame, The Life and Death of Harold Holt, p. 133.

⁵ Ibid., p. 159.

⁶ Gwenda Tavan, The Long, Slow Death of White Australia (Melbourne: Scribe, 2005), pp. 138–45, 156–66.

⁷ Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, *The 1967 Referendum: Race, Power and the Australian Constitution* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2007).

activists and international censure of the nation's treatment of its Indigenous population. The Holt government agreed to the referendum largely to defuse these pressures. Cabinet indicated that should the referendum pass, the Commonwealth had no intention of elbowing aside the States to assume a leadership role in Indigenous affairs. When the change was approved by more than 90 per cent of voters, Holt seemed at a loss about what to do with this overwhelming mandate. As it became evident that the referendum's passage had not ushered in a new dawn for Indigenous Australians, a younger generation of black leaders questioned the value of the quest for civil equality in white society and instead championed the separate and unique identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Holt government was much less equivocal about deepening Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. Thrice it ratcheted up the nation's commitment, the most significant expansion coming in March 1966 when Holt announced the despatch of a two-battalion task force that included national servicemen. Uninhibited by the same kind of sentimental attachment to Britain as Menzies held, Holt's prime ministership dispelled any lingering doubt that the alliance with the United States was the lynchpin of Australia's foreign and defence policy. In turn, the Vietnam War was conceived unashamedly as an opportunity to solidify that bond and promote the interposition of American military power in the region. The finer points of the diplomacy, however, tended to be lost in public transmission, as during Holt's mid-1966 pilgrimage to Washington. Flattered by a lavish White House reception, he appropriated Johnson's 1964 presidential election slogan by declaring that Australia would go 'all the way with LBJ'. Suggesting he had a tin ear for growing nationalist sentiment at home, Holt was surprised to find his remarks criticised as sycophantic.8 They also distorted his government's policy: by late 1967 Holt informed a disappointed Johnson administration that Australia had reached the upper limit of its military engagement in Vietnam.

Before this, though, Johnson reciprocated Holt's rhetorical generosity by becoming the first incumbent US president to step foot on Australian soil in October 1966. The anti-war movement, which had been galvanised by the despatch of national servicemen to Vietnam, gatecrashed the presidential parade. In Melbourne paint bombs were splattered over Johnson's motorcade, and in Sydney demonstrators blocked its progress by lying on the

⁸ Peter Edwards, A Nation at War: Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy during the Vietnam War 1965–1975 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), pp. 94, 112; Frame, The Life and Death of Harold Holt, pp. 181–4.

road. Otherwise, the president received a rapturous welcome as hundreds of thousands of star-struck or simply curious Australians lined city streets to cheer 'LBJ'.⁹ His visit was an ideal curtain raiser to the Holt government's November 1966 election campaign, which was dominated by the Vietnam War. It was a one-sided contest. The transition to Holt had enabled the Liberals to steal a generational march on the Australian Labor Party (ALP), led by the septuagenarian Arthur Calwell. Calwell was like a character in a Samuel Beckett play – doomed to waiting in vain. Blooded politically during the World War I anti-conscription struggles, he seized on the issue for his final tilt at glory. While polls showed Australians had reservations about sending conscripts to Vietnam, Calwell's intemperate campaign alienated an electorate that strongly supported the war.¹⁰

Holt prevailed at the 1966 election by a greater margin than Menzies had ever achieved, yet his triumph soured in the following year. Labor was invigorated by a new leader, Gough Whitlam, who turned the generational tables back on the Coalition. His mission – resisted by party traditionalists – was to modernise the ALP's platform and organisation in order to widen its appeal beyond its shrinking manual working-class base.¹¹ Supremely eloquent and prodigiously industrious, Whitlam gained ascendancy over the prime minister, eroding the fragile faith in Holt on a bloated government backbench. Also debilitating for the Coalition were the rancorous relations between the veteran Country Party leader, John McEwen, and the Liberal treasurer, William McMahon. McMahon and his department were challenging McEwen's expansive protectionist regime. They also thwarted his scheme for a public corporation to lend Australian companies funds to stem growing foreign ownership of the nation's natural resources, which in McEwen's emotive phrase amounted to 'selling off the farm'.¹²

Holt's other headache was that the gloss was falling off the Vietnam War. Initially disorientated by the 1966 election debacle, the anti-war movement regrouped as it took its cue from the United States, where protests against Johnson's Vietnam policy grew as American casualties spiralled. In a pattern of disillusionment with his heirs, Menzies privately damned 'Young Harold's' performance during 1967 and predicted that he 'would have lost the next

- 9 Edwards, A Nation at War, pp. 128-9.
- 10 Paul Strangio, Keeper of the Faith: A Biography of Jim Cairns (Melbourne University Press, 2002), pp. 163–4.
- 11 Graham Freudenberg, A Certain Grandeur: Gough Whitlam in Politics (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1977), ch. 5.
- 12 Peter Golding, Black Jack McEwen: Political Gladiator (Melbourne University Press, 1996), ch. 11.

election'.¹³ Holt was spared that possible indignity. On 17 December he misjudged the rip while swimming near his holiday retreat in Portsea and was swallowed by the sea. Despite a massive search his body was never recovered: the first post-Menzies prime minister had been literally swept away.

The full ferment of the 1960s arrived in Australia during the incumbency of Holt's successor, John Gorton. Like other western industrialised countries, Australia abounded with young people as the offspring of the post-war fertility boom hit adolescence and entered adulthood. It was not just their numbers that made this cohort conspicuous, but their outlook – they were a generation of broad horizons, who believed their world was malleable to change. Material security was integral to this confidence: whereas the early lives of their parents had been blighted by Depression and war, the baby boomers had known only affluence. And the buoyant times looked set to continue as a mining boom fired economic confidence.¹⁴

The 'generation gap' between the baby boomers and their elders was widened by a distinctive youth culture. Films, music, television and fashions catered to, and defined, the consciousness of this lucrative demographic cohort. Much of the culture was imported; this period of awakened interest in Australian self-identity coincided, paradoxically, with a rapid increase in international cultural transmission. Exhorted by marketers to fulfil their desires, the young also rebelled at the moral and sexual strictures of their parents. Expanding educational opportunities reinforced generational difference and encouraged the restlessness. Staying on at secondary school was now the norm and university enrolments had grown several-fold since the end of World War 2. The expanding army of undergraduates enjoyed the lifestyle and intellectual freedom to chafe at the status quo.¹⁵

It would be wrong to assume that the bulk of young people in the late 1960s were long-haired students bursting to change their world. Most did not attend university and those who did were mainly politically apathetic or confined their rebellion to lifestyle experimentation. Nonetheless, young people and dissent became synonymous by the late 1960s. Moreover, the student radicals overlapped with and were complemented by a predominantly urban-dwelling, 'new' middle class, which energised civil society in the same

¹³ Quoted in Frame, The Life and Death of Harold Holt, p. 224.

¹⁴ Frank Crowley, *Tough Times: Australia in the Seventies* (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1986), pp. 19–20.

¹⁵ Peter Cochrane, 'At War at Home: Australian Attitudes during the Vietnam Years', in Gregory Pemberton (ed.), *Vietnam Remembered* (Sydney: New Holland, 2002), pp. 167–70.

period. Changes to the workforce were crucial to the formation of this modern middle class. By the mid-1960s employment growth was strongest in the public sector and service industries.¹⁶

The professional and white-collar middle class was receptive to a repertoire of 'post-material' concerns - gender and sexuality, race and ethnicity, conservation, national identity - that became prominent in public discourse in these years. These animated the social movements: Aboriginal rights, women's liberation, environmentalism.¹⁷ Each had distinctive catalysts. The Indigenous movement was stimulated by frustration at lack of progress following the 1967 referendum and inspired by a pioneering land rights struggle by the Gurindji people in the Northern Territory, while militant Indigenous activists modelled themselves on the American Black Power movement. The women's movement was spawned as patriarchal assumptions about gender relations were eroded by the greater post-war opportunities afforded to women: heightened demand for female labour, increased access to education and advances in contraception. It drew intellectual sustenance from emancipatory tracts by feminist authors. The infant environment movement was galvanised by the ecological toll of untrammelled economic growth and disquiet about rampant urban development.

In the late 1960s an alliance between a progressive component of the middle class, student radicals and elements of the traditional left – in the ALP, trade unions and Communist Party – was responsible for a resurgence of left politics following the long post-war conservative ascendancy. It was a fractious set of relationships. Student radicals, who styled themselves a New Left, were generally antagonistic to the established left and institutional politics, while many in the ALP were wary of extra-parliamentary agitation. Furthermore, the focus of the social movements on non-material grievances ran counter to organised labour's traditional preoccupation with economic disadvantage. It was hostility to the Vietnam War and conscription that provided the different strands of the left with a unifying cause. The controversy over Vietnam was the wellspring of an age of dissent.

The premises upon which the Coalition had committed Australia to the Vietnam War disintegrated from 1968. In the aftermath of the Vietcong's Tet offensive in South Vietnam early that year, President Johnson announced that he would pursue a negotiated peace with North Vietnam and would not

¹⁶ Donald Horne, Time of Hope: Australia 1966–72 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1980), ch. 5.

¹⁷ Verity Burgmann, Power and Protest: Movements for Change in Australian Society (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993).

seek re-election. It was the first step in the United States' disentanglement from the conflict and a portent of a shift away from the Cold War doctrine of containment of communist expansionism to that of rapprochement. Johnson's successor, Richard Nixon, ordered the first withdrawal of US forces from Vietnam in June 1969. Nixon also articulated the Guam Doctrine, which placed the onus on the United States' allies to be more responsible for their security.

While the Gorton government was disorientated by the changed circumstances in Vietnam and the United States, the anti-war movement gained impetus. Young radicals were also intoxicated by displays of 'student power' in Paris and other sites of upheaval during the 'year of revolution' of 1968. Though there was nothing to match those convulsions in Australia, ultra-left student groups indulged in fantasises of insurrection and flirted with violence in campaigning against the war. A more constructive expression of heightened militancy was the evolution of individual acts of defiance of the *National Service Act* to collective resistance. The vast majority of young men still dutifully complied, but coordinated 'Don't Register' campaigns eroded the scheme's legitimacy.¹⁸

The pinnacle of the anti-war movement came in May 1970 with the first of three Moratorium demonstrations that drew hundreds of thousands of marchers across the country. Modelled on similar protests in the United States, the event united disparate elements of the anti-war movement and harnessed the support of a substantial cross-section of society. Previously marginal arguments that Australia's participation in the conflict was morally indefensible as well as futile had become normalised. In August 1969 the Gallup Poll found for the first time that a majority of respondents favoured Australia leaving South Vietnam.¹⁹ The success of the Moratorium was also attributable to its leadership by the quietly charismatic champion of Labor's parliamentary left, Jim Cairns. He defended it against an onslaught by conservative forces who sought to equate mass protest with mob rule.²⁰

When the Moratorium occupied the streets without descent into anarchy as the naysayers had forecast, supporters celebrated it as a watershed of generational transition. But their expectations that the Moratorium heralded a new model of participatory, grassroots democracy went unfulfilled. Following 1970

¹⁸ John Murphy, Harvest of Fear: A History of Australia's Vietnam War (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), pp. 211–26.

¹⁹ Ann Curthoys, 'Mobilising Dissent: The Later Stages of Protest', in Pemberton (ed.), Vietnam Remembered, p. 151.

²⁰ Strangio, Keeper of the Faith, pp. 199-210.

the energies of the anti-war movement dissipated as the Coalition government, trailing behind the White House, wound down Australia's involvement in Vietnam. The moment also passed because the ALP was on a trajectory to office and the promise of a Labor government in Canberra induced many on the political left to trade extra-parliamentary protest for a strategy of working for reform through the state.

Compared to the diffident Holt, Gorton had been more receptive to the quickening times. For him, risk taking was the quintessence of leadership. Gorton lacked strategic clarity and self-discipline, however, and ran roughshod over Cabinet and administrative processes. By neglecting to build support within his government and the Liberal Party for policies that were regarded as antithetical to the Menziean tradition, he aroused profound resentment. Yet his government's troubles were hardly Gorton's fault alone. Conservative elements in the Liberal Party had no appetite for new directions.

Gorton's distancing from Menzies was highlighted by his unabashed nationalism. 'I'm Australian to the boot-heels', he declared.21 National development was elevated to a core theme of government, but Gorton's piecemeal policies and habit of speaking in circumlocutions deprived his program of coherence.22 Their respective health policies exemplified the overlap between the directions of Gorton and Whitlam, as well as their differences. Whereas the ALP had developed a comprehensive scheme for universal health insurance, Gorton made nips and tucks to the existing voluntary system by providing insurance for low-income families. One manifestation of his nationalist outlook was impatience with State chauvinism, but this antagonised the non-Labor premiers. Gorton set a precedent for Commonwealth intervention to protect the environment by blocking the Queensland government's plans for mineral exploration on the Great Barrier Reef. Otherwise, he hailed the mining boom as an agent of Australia's economic independence and proof of its destined greatness. Like McEwen, he wanted to limit foreign ownership and in 1970 his government created the Australian Industry Development Corporation to lend capital to local companies to develop the nation's natural resources. His critics in the Liberal Party shuddered at this 'socialistic' enterprise.

Though affecting personal indifference to the arts, Gorton regarded their cultivation as important to promoting national sentiment and another

²¹ Alan Reid, *The Gorton Experiment: The Fall of John Grey Gorton* (Sydney: Shakespeare Head Press, 1971), p. 28.

²² The following largely relies on Ian Hancock, *John Gorton: He Did It His Way* (Sydney: Hodder, 2002), chs 8–13.

ingredient in Australia's coming of age. He created an Australian Council for the Arts, established the Australian Film Development Corporation and laid plans for a film and television school. This beneficence encouraged a wave of cultural production, much of it preoccupied with reinterpreting Australian identity during a period of social flux.

Given Gorton's patronage, it is ironic that the totemic play of the era was Don's Party, David Williamson's evocation of the blighted optimism of election night in October 1969: members of the new middle class gather in anticipation of an ALP victory, but as those hopes fade the evening degenerates into recrimination between the jaded guests. Labor had come close to an unlikely victory at the October 1969 election with a 7 per cent swing. While voters initially found Gorton's unconventional style diverting, his haphazard administration sowed doubts that were reinforced by a ragged re-election campaign. Whitlam, on the other hand, brandished the fruits of the methodical policy development of the past three years. Because the conservatives had hogged the Treasury benches since the end of the 1940s, Australia had not enjoyed the salad days of social democracy that Western Europe and other advanced democracies experienced as left-of-centre governments intervened in the economy on an unprecedented scale and constructed cradle-tograve, universal welfare states.²³ In Australia public sector growth had been relatively constrained and government social spending comparatively low. Under Whitlam, Labor had a plan for catching up with government provision in this late blooming social democracy, to be directed at the expanding and service-poor outer suburbs of the major cities.

There were no real winners of the 1969 election. The collapse in government support left Gorton prey to mutinous forces within the Liberal Party. He survived uneasily until March 1971 when his Minister for Defence, Malcolm Fraser, triggered a leadership coup by resigning and accusing Gorton of having 'cast aside the stability and sense of direction of earlier times'.²⁴ But Whitlam and the Labor Party were also victims of the near miss of 1969. These were lost years during which expectations of the transformative potential of the coming Labor government grew larger and the party's ambitious catalogue of promises was augmented to meet the aspirations of the social movements. By the time of the 1972 election, Whitlamism had ballooned into a phantasmagoric manifesto comprising some 200 specific promises.

²³ Tony Judt, Postwar: A History of Europe since 1945 (London: Vintage Books, 2010), ch. 11.

²⁴ Quoted in Hancock, John Gorton, p. 322.

Since Labor's plans were premised on continued prosperity, it was ominous that by the early 1970s the economic outlook was deteriorating. A wage-price spiral was occurring simultaneously with slowing economic activity and rising unemployment: a phenomenon that entered the lexicon as 'stagflation'. This volatility was connected to international developments. President Nixon inaugurated a new era of instability in the world economy in August 1971 by announcing that the United States was abandoning the system of fixed exchange rates. A decision induced by the massive debt the USA had accrued fighting the Vietnam War, it precipitated the collapse of the international financial arrangements established at Bretton Woods that had underpinned the post-war economic order; and as Washington increased the money supply, inflationary pressures were let loose.

McMahon was the final heir to the crumbling post-Menzies Liberal throne. A leader of last resort, he was neither trusted nor much respected by his colleagues. Like its predecessors, the McMahon government modernised fitfully. Australia's musty censorship regulations were liberalised: books were unbanned, an 'R' category for films introduced and the importation of sex aids authorised.25 In other areas, the McMahon government set its face against the times. When in his 1972 Australia Day address the prime minister rejected the principle of land rights based on historical association, black activists erected a tent embassy in front of Parliament House to protest against Indigenous dispossession.²⁶ McMahon also obdurately opposed recognition of Communist China. In accord with Labor's objective of normalising relations with Beijing, Whitlam created history in July 1971 by leading a delegation to Communist China. Only days after McMahon accused Whitlam of being a puppet of the Communist regime, President Nixon announced his intention to visit China. McMahon's humiliation was as powerful a symbol as any of an Australian government out of touch in a changing world.27

A political tempest

Labor won the December 1972 federal election. It was not, however, the landslide anticipated by those caught up in the euphoric atmosphere

²⁵ Horne, Time of Hope, pp. 15–16, 21.

²⁶ Bain Attwood, Rights for Aborigines (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2003), pp. 339-45.

²⁷ David Goldsworthy et al., 'Reorientation', in David Goldsworthy (ed.), Facing North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia. Volume 1, 1901 to the 1970s (Melbourne University Press, 2001), pp. 331-5.

generated by the campaign slogan 'It's Time'. The modest victory pointed to the disjunction between the fervent disciples of Whitlamism and the great mass of the public who were more grudging in their support. Moreover, for all the new government seemed to exemplify the modern, the core of its program was to complete Labor's interrupted post-war social reconstruction project. Indeed, this was a government composed mostly of ageing political veterans with long-harboured ambitions. The government also looked backwards rather than forwards in its faith that economic abundance would fund its program, despite warning signs that the post-war boom was faltering.

Impetuosity was a feature of Whitlam's leadership. In opposition he had burst through obstacles, a practice he styled 'crash through or crash'. He brought the same approach to office. Rather than wait for the election results to be finalised and the full ministry elected, Whitlam arranged for himself and his deputy to be sworn in as a two-man national government. The 'duumvirate' made an avalanche of decisions over the next fortnight. Diplomatic recognition was granted to Communist China; the residual contingent of military advisers stationed in South Vietnam was ordered home; Australia was to ratify UN conventions on human rights and racial discrimination and the international treaty on nuclear non-proliferation; conscription was abolished and gaoled draft resisters released; an equal pay claim for women was to be reopened before the Arbitration Commission; the excise tax on wine and the sales tax on the contraceptive pill were abolished; and applications for further mining leases on Aboriginal reserves were suspended pending an inquiry into land rights. The sense of the old order turned upside down was reinforced in late December when senior government members criticised President Nixon's decision to resume bombing of North Vietnam following the collapse of peace talks with Hanoi. A chill descended on relations between Washington and Canberra that never quite thawed throughout the life of the Labor government.

On the other hand, the government's admirers were exhilarated by its early whirlwind. The historian Russel Ward described it as 'the end of the ice age'.²⁸ This first flush of optimism obscured the formidable barriers in Labor's path. Chief among them was a hostile Senate and Coalition parties that were so habituated to office that they viewed the new government as an illegitimate interloper. In a similar vein, the bureaucracy was unsettled by the change of regime in Canberra. Furthermore, there was the monumental

28 Russel Ward, 'The End of the Ice Age', Meanjin, 32, 1 (1973): 5-13.

scale of the government's reform ambitions, its dearth of ministerial experience, and unwieldy decision-making machinery: Cabinet comprised the entire 27-strong ministry. Despite the uncertain economic outlook, the government was determined to implement its full program. 'We did not use recession as an alibi against reform', Whitlam wrote later.²⁹

Occupying pride of place in the program was education – in Whitlam's words, 'the great instrument for the promotion of equality'.³⁰ Labor implemented a needs-based formula for funding government and private schools that marked a watershed in the Commonwealth's movement into school education funding and emergence as the main provider of funds for non-government schools. Commonwealth expenditure on schools trebled in the two years to mid-1975. The government's impact on higher education was equally far-reaching. From I January 1974 the Commonwealth assumed full responsibility for government funding of universities and colleges of advanced education, abolished tuition fees and introduced a means-based system of living allowances for higher education students.³¹

Health was another signature area of Whitlamism. The government's national health insurance scheme (Medibank) weathered fierce resistance from the Coalition parties in the Senate, doctors, private hospitals and private health insurance funds, before finally coming into operation in September 1975. In the interim the government boosted public hospital funding, instigated a community health program and pioneered women's health services. Labor's largesse extended to welfare: benefits were increased across the board, the means test on aged pensions was abolished and a supporting mothers' allowance introduced. Spearheaded by a newly created ministry for urban and regional development, the government also invested heavily in rehabilitating inner-city areas and regional growth centres.³² Nor was the flurry of activity confined to large-spending portfolios. The attorney-general, Lionel Murphy, rushed through changes to divorce regulations as a precursor to a major overhaul of family law, abolished the death penalty in federal jurisdictions, and introduced trade practices and racial discrimination legislation.33

32 Whitlam, The Whitlam Government, chs 7-9.

²⁹ Gough Whitlam, The Whitlam Government, 1972–1975 (Melbourne: Penguin, 1985), p. 183.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 314.

³¹ Simon Marginson, 'The Whitlam Government and Education', in Jenny Hocking and Colleen Lewis (eds), *It's Time Again: Whitlam and Modern Labor* (Melbourne: Circa, 2003), pp. 244–72.

³³ Jenny Hocking, *Lionel Murphy: A Political Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), chs 12–13.

Foreign policy was the domain of a globetrotting prime minister.³⁴ While Whitlam reassured Washington that the US alliance was a central axis of his government's foreign policy, he insisted on autonomy within that relationship. Labor also downgraded the residual ties with Australia's older traditional ally, Britain: 'Advance Australia Fair' replaced 'God Save the Queen' as national anthem and the imperial honours system was superseded by the Order of Australia. In the tradition of Labor foreign policy harking back to H.V. Evatt, Whitlam stressed the importance of international cooperation through the work of the United Nations. Equally, Labor's diplomacy prioritised the Asia-Pacific region, as highlighted by its development of relations with Communist China and Indonesia. Consistent with the thrust to improve Australia's regional standing, the government erased the last vestiges of the white Australia policy. If this completed what the Coalition began in the 1960s, Labor displayed none of the same reticence in enunciating Australia's transition from Anglo-monoculturalism to racial pluralism. Touring the Philippines in 1973, the ebullient Minister for Immigration, Al Grassby, announced the death of the white Australia policy: 'give me a shovel and I will bury it'.35

Cultivation of the arts was another strand of Labor's 'new nationalism'. Like a latter-day Medici, Whitlam revelled in the role of arts patron. His government upgraded the Australian Council of the Arts to the Australia Council, created the Australian Film and Television School, completed work on the Sydney Opera House and commenced building the national art gallery in Canberra. Such initiatives endeared the government to the arts community, but piqued popular prejudices. The purchase of Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles* for \$1.3 million became a symbol of Labor extravagance.

A more novel aspect of the Whitlam government's 'new nationalism' was its connection of 'the treatment of Aborigines directly to the national image and the theme of national self-respect'.³⁶ Labor increased spending to mitigate Indigenous disadvantage, created the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee to provide advice on Indigenous policy and, acting on the recommendations of a royal commission into land rights, drew up legislation to give Aboriginal people title over reserves in the Northern Territory. The Bill

35 Quoted in Goldsworthy et al., 'Reorientation', p. 327.

³⁴ For a detailed account of the government's foreign policy, see Henry S. Albinski, *Australian External Policy under Labor: Content, Process and the National Debate* (Brisbane: UQP, 1977).

³⁶ James Curran, *The Power of Speech: Australian Prime Ministers Defining the National Image* (Melbourne University Press, 2004), p. 91.

was on the Senate noticeboard when the government was defeated. Previously, Labor had granted a tract of land to the Gurindji people. The transfer was solemnised in a moving ceremony in August 1975 in which Whitlam poured earth through the hands of the Gurindji's leader, Vincent Lingiari.

In May 1974 Whitlam became the first Labor prime minister to win consecutive terms of office. The government had obtained a double-dissolution election after the opposition parties held up supply in the Senate. The election did not resolve the bicameral divide as control of the upper house narrowly eluded Labor, while in a sign of ebbing popular support for the Whitlam project the ALP's majority was halved in the House of Representatives. Disquiet at the haste of the government's changes and misjudgements by tyro ministers had weakened its standing, as had the relentless antagonism of conservative interest groups. Probably most damaging was the growing mood of economic insecurity. Labor's first year in office had coincided with an upswing in conditions as international commodity prices boomed and the value of Australian exports soared. This buoyancy presented its own perils as the increased spending required to fulfil Labor's social objectives further strained the economy's overstretched resources. By December 1973 inflation had climbed to an annual rate of 13.2 per cent.³⁷

The economic problems deepened during 1974-75, draining the Labor government's lifeblood and emboldening its opponents. Australia was hardly unique in being beset by economic turmoil and policy confusion in this period. The economic environment was further destabilised in late 1973 when the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) cut production in protest at western support for Israel in the Yom Kippur War with Egypt and Syria. The first of two 'oil shocks' of the decade, it stoked international inflationary fires. Inflation was also fed in Australia by a wages outbreak as trade unions pursued pay increases in response to rising prices and sought to capitalise on the rare event of Labor in office. More fundamentally, the wage-push inflation being experienced by Australia and other industrialised countries originated from the increased bargaining power and heightened expectations of organised labour in a prolonged period of full or near full employment. By the 1970s this had created an unsustainable situation in which real wages continued to rise as productivity declined and business profit margins and investment shrank.

The economic slump of the 1970s was magnified, not only by the extended prosperity that had preceded it but because the Keynesian management

37 Crowley, Tough Times, p. 95.

model had seemingly exhausted its utility. A trade-off between inflation and unemployment was an article of Keynesian faith: one could have rising inflation or unemployment, but not both simultaneously. As the Whitlam government entered its second term, this no longer held true. In the second half of 1974 inflation spiralled upwards and unemployment reached a post-war high of 3.6 per cent. While a replacement economic orthodoxy would take time to fully materialise, Treasury had already abandoned faith in 'Keynesian meliorism' and was espousing the 'benefits of market-imposed discipline, combined with a rise in the unemployment rate...as a means of restoring order'.³⁸

For some twelve months after its re-election, Labor held out against the deflationary formula advocated by Treasury and a growing band of converts in the Opposition, the business community and the media. For at least some of that time the government's economic policy making was in a state of paralysis, but amid the confusion most of its members instinctively rejected the idea of using unemployment as a weapon against inflation. The economic indicators worsened: inflation climbed to over 17 per cent and the budget deficit blew out.³⁹

Comparatively, Australia's situation was not so bad – inflation reached nearly 25 per cent in Britain and the deficit became so severe that in 1976 the International Monetary Fund (IMF) was called in to bail the country out.⁴⁰ The international dimensions of the downturn provided little domestic comfort for the Whitlam government, however, and in mid-1975 it finally altered economic course. Bill Hayden became treasurer in a ministerial reshuffle that elevated Labor's economic conservatives. In unveiling the government's August budget, Hayden announced the passing of the post-war economic policy regime and a retreat from its core objective of full employment.⁴¹

The shift in economic direction afforded only a temporary reprieve for the besieged Labor government. In October 1975 the Coalition parties again blocked supply in the Senate. The catalyst was Whitlam's sacking of the Minister for Minerals and Energy, Rex Connor, which was the latest episode in the 'loans affair' that had plagued the government for several months.⁴² At the end of 1974 Whitlam and other senior ministers had issued Connor

³⁸ Greg Whitwell, The Treasury Line (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986), p. 178.

³⁹ Strangio, Keeper of the Faith, pp. 333-4.

⁴⁰ Judt, Postwar, pp. 457-8.

⁴¹ Barry Hughes, Exit Full Employment (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1980), chs 6-9.

⁴² Michael Sexton, The Great Crash: The Short Life and Sudden Death of the Whitlam Government (Melbourne: Scribe, 2005), ch. 8.

with the authority to raise a large overseas loan to fund plans for increased Australian ownership of the nation's minerals and energy resources (another dimension of Labor's 'new nationalism') and Connor's grandiose vision for massive development of that sector. Labor's borrowing activities focused on the Middle East, then awash with petro-dollars. Leaving aside the economic and constitutional implications of the proposed loan, which the responsible ministers never considered adequately, the quest for funds was doomed by the use of untrustworthy intermediaries.

The first casualty of the 'loans affair' was the deputy prime minister, Jim Cairns, who was dismissed from the ministry after it was revealed he had cavalierly explored alternative options for a loan. Labor's efforts to defuse the issue were undone when evidence emerged that Connor had continued negotiations for a loan following the revocation of his authority. Upon his election as Liberal Party leader in the previous March, Malcolm Fraser had warned that in the event of the government becoming 'so reprehensible' then the Opposition might have to resort to using 'whatever power is available to it'. It now made good that threat by refusing supply.

Australia was in constitutional deadlock for 27 days.43 The Coalition used its numbers in the Senate to defer a vote on the appropriation bills, vowing to do so until Whitlam called an election. The prime minister was equally adamant that the Opposition's actions were an affront to the principles of responsible government and hallowed convention that ministries are made and unmade in the lower house of parliament. Whitlam's certainty in how the constitutional system would operate was to be misplaced - like the economy, it proved more capricious than he had allowed. In particular, Whitlam had not accounted for the vice-regal adventurism of Sir John Kerr, whom he had appointed governor-general in 1974. An unsteady mix of grandiosity and insecurity, Kerr courted opinion that it was his duty and within the prerogatives of the office to break the impasse. He drew succour from clandestine consultations with the High Court justice, Sir Anthony Mason, 'to fortify myself for the action I was to take'.44 Defying the prime minister's express instruction, Kerr also solicited advice from the Chief Justice of the High Court and former Liberal Party minister, Sir Garfield Barwick. Against the background of (inflated) reports of wavering in Liberal ranks and Whitlam having decided to request a half-Senate election, on 11 November Kerr

⁴³ See Jenny Hocking, Gough Whitlam: His Time. The Biography, Volume II (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2012), chs 8–10; and Paul Kelly, November 1975: The Inside Story of Australia's Greatest Political Crisis (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995).

⁴⁴ Quoted in Hocking, Gough Whitlam, vol. II, p. 306.

terminated Whitlam's commission and installed Fraser as caretaker prime minister. The dismissal joined Remembrance Day and Ned Kelly's hanging in a trio of momentous events on this date on the Australian calendar.

Whitlam endeavoured to transform the ensuing election into a plebiscite on the safeguarding of Australian democracy, charging the Coalition parties and Kerr with constitutional infamy. In the emotion-charged post-dismissal atmosphere, his rallies were more messianic than those of 1972. But Fraser was the ideal foil. A towering man of aloof bearing, whose ruthlessness during the constitutional crisis made him appear even steelier, he looked every inch the strong man who would put a stop to the political and economic rot of the past three years. Fraser won in a landslide.

Living in the seventies

With its 'Turn on the Lights' slogan at the 1975 election, the Liberal Party invited expectations that the Fraser government could transport Australia back to the sunny uplands of the past. Menzies loyalists certainly believed the Liberals had finally found a rightful heir – following Fraser's victory one wrote to the aged patriarch to express relief at seeing 'the Party you created restored to health and the nation...once more on the path to sanity'.⁴⁵ These were the revelries of old men. The rest of the decade showed there was no returning to the 'good old days', even if the Fraser government had been interested in reinventing the Menzies era, which it was not. Australia had changed irrevocably by the second half of the 1970s. It was a more diverse and sophisticated society. But it was also a less easygoing place. Gone was the exuberance of the late 1960s and early 1970s, replaced by a sober national mood as economic insecurity stalked the land.

Though population growth was sluggish during the 1970s, by the time of the 1981 census there were nearly 15 million Australians, an increase of 3 million since the mid-1960s.⁴⁶ Australia had become even more urbanised, despite an abatement of the decline in the proportion of rural dwellers in the second half of the 1970s. Close to two-thirds of Australians lived in New South Wales and Victoria, more than 6 million in Sydney and Melbourne alone. Yet it was the 'outer' states of Queensland and Western Australia that

⁴⁵ Quoted in A.W. Martin, *Robert Menzies: A Life. Volume 2, 1944–1978* (Melbourne University Press, 1999), p. 563.

⁴⁶ Unless otherwise indicated statistics in this section were obtained from the *Census* of *Population and Housing* (1966 and 1981) and the *Year Book Australia* (1968 and 1983), accessed at <http://www.abs.gov.au> on 1 February 2012.

had highest rates of population increase during the 1970s. The hottest growth spot in Queensland was the Gold Coast, a 40-kilometre coastal strip of wide beaches, high-rise apartments and shopping malls located in the State's south-east. It was Australia's sixth largest population centre by the beginning of the 1980s, with many of its new inhabitants retirees who had relocated from the southern States. That demographic was growing as life expectancy increased, while at the other end of the spectrum there had been a decline in the proportion of children in the population as the last waves of baby boomers reached adulthood and the birth rate fell steeply.

The decline in Australia's birth rate mirrored the experience of other advanced industrial countries. By the late 1970s the fertility rate had dipped below 2.0 children per woman, compared to around 3.3 children per woman in the first half of the 1960s. This was a manifestation of the changing role and status of women and related transformations of the traditional family model. Reliable contraception and the altered expectations of women contributed to the declining birth rate, but economic hardship also played a part. More women were joining (and staying in) the labour force, both by choice and necessity. In the decade and a half following Menzies' retirement, the number of females in the workforce grew at almost three times the rate for males. While women were clustered in low-paid sectors of the economy and many worked only part-time, their increased economic independence was a cause and effect of altered gender relations.⁴⁷ A related change was the rise in the divorce rate. Following the Whitlam government's family law reforms, the number of divorces rocketed to more than 60,000 in 1976 before stabilising at about 40,000 per annum during the remainder of the decade. This translated to around one in four marriages ending in divorce.

Such changes should not be exaggerated: most Australians were still marrying, still having children and still aspiring to a quarter acre block in the suburbs. But families were diversifying in composition and becoming less stable. Levels of pre-marital sex, de facto coupling and the proportion of children born out of wedlock all increased significantly. The number of single-parent families nearly doubled between the mid-1970s and early 1980s. Taboos about sex that had been breaking down since the second half of the 1960s were shattered. Sex had become ubiquitous in popular culture and advertising. Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen fought a rearguard action against this licentiousness by trying to make Queensland a fortress against permissiveness and Australia got its own Festival of Light movement, inspired by the example

47 Crowley, Tough Times, p. 226.

of Mary Whitehouse and Malcolm Muggeridge in Britain.⁴⁸ Yet the moral campaigners were losing ground against the liberalisation of mores. Similarly, religious observance was declining in an increasingly secular society.

Australia's ethnic composition was also changing. By the early 1980s, 14.1 per cent of the population had been born outside Australia or the United Kingdom. Southern Europeans made up the largest proportion of this component, but there had been a near fourfold rise in the number of Australians born in Asia over the previous decade and a half. If the Whitlam government had consigned the white Australia policy to history's rubbish bin, the Fraser government cultivated a multicultural Australia. In the second half of the 1970s Asians made up around one-third of the immigration intake. A substantial number of them were Indochinese refugees fleeing Vietnam after the fall of Saigon in 1975. Despite disquiet within parts of his government and the bureaucracy, as well as pockets of xenophobia within the community, Fraser insisted on accepting these refugees, some of whom journeyed to Australia in rickety vessels across treacherous seas.⁴⁹

The de-homogenising of Australia was reflected in many walks of life. The population was eating differently. Perhaps the most substantial change to culinary habits was the growing consumption of takeaway foods – American fast food franchises proliferated after establishing a foothold in the 1960s. But Australians were also developing a taste for 'exotic' cuisines. Discerning diners consulted restaurant reviews and 'good food guides' as they chose from a smorgasbord of eateries in fashionable inner suburbs. By the early 1980s everyone seemed be sipping cappuccino, even if there was a local twist to the fledgling café culture with new customers mispronouncing the beverage as 'cup-of-cino'. Increasing cosmopolitanism was also manifest in a new enthusiasm for wine, which Australians had once derisively called 'plonk'. Yet another sign of a more outward-looking society was the growth in overseas travel. Asia eclipsed Europe as an exotic destination for young, educated adventurers.⁵⁰

Paradoxically, as Australian families contracted in size, their homes were filled by more labour-saving appliances.⁵¹ Freezers, tumble driers and microwave ovens were common household items. Two cars in the garage

⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 203-5, 235.

⁴⁹ Malcolm Fraser and Margaret Simons, *Malcolm Fraser: The Political Memoirs* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2010), pp. 416–21, 424–5.

⁵⁰ Craig McGregor, *The Australian People* (Sydney: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980), pp. 143, 154; Robin Gerster and Jan Bassett, *Seizures of Youth: The Sixties and Australia* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1991), pp. 123–5.

⁵¹ The following paragraphs are largely based on Crowley, Tough Times, chs 17, 24.

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was typical, while more backyards were excavated for swimming pools. Australians embraced new technologies avidly. Colour television arrived in 1975 and the take-up was high by international standards. Similarly, the public swiftly took to such gadgets as digital watches, pocket calculators, cassette recorders, and early model word processers that began superseding electric typewriters by the 1980s. These goods were paid for on credit card and purchased in gargantuan suburban shopping centres. The journey by car to these centres required both drivers and passengers to buckle up; seat belts first became compulsory in Victoria in 1970 and Australia was a leader in road safety innovations.

In their spare time Australians remained entranced by the beach and sport. Bathing costumes became skimpier, although stubby shorts, towelling hats and thongs were the prevailing summer attire for middle-aged men. This was the uniform of the 'ocker', a coarse representation of Australian manhood depicted in advertising and popular culture. Like all such representations it was a stereotype, albeit a hardy one. Urbane men grew their hair shoulder length, sported Bandido-style moustaches and sideburns, and wore shirts with wide collars and flared trousers. Women's fashions changed from miniskirts and hot pants at the beginning of the decade to low hems by its end. They continued to wear their hair long, but frizzed or layered in imitation of American television starlets. Jeans were *de rigueur* for the young of both sexes. Casualness was the order of the day – the era of hats and Sunday best had passed.

Though Australians watched lots of sport, participation rates declined. Lawn bowls and squash defied that trend, while skateboarding was popular with teenagers. Worried that Australia was becoming a nation of watchers rather than doers, authorities took measures to get the population active. A 'Life Be in It' campaign was inaugurated in Victoria and subsequently extended to the other states. Its star was the animated character 'Norm', an affable, overweight everyman. He remains lodged fondly in the memory of Australians of that era, but the campaign's effectiveness in prising 'Norms' off the couch was limited.

Australia's self-image as a nation of sporting champions was dented at the 1976 Montreal Olympics when it failed to win a single gold medal. This prompted the Fraser government to establish the Australian Institute of Sport in Canberra, which became an incubator for future high performers. In the meantime the public took solace in their continuing love affair with the domestic football codes. The all-conquering Australian cricket team, an irresistible combination of swagger and skill, was the nation's pride in the mid-1970s. Yet the players had grown resentful at their niggardly share of the game's revenue and the outmoded and oppressive ways of its governing bodies. In 1977 the media mogul Kerry Packer, frustrated by lack of access to television broadcasting rights, contracted a stable of Australian and international players for a breakaway competition called World Series Cricket. The rebellion lasted only two years before a rapprochement, but World Series' seductive formula of marketing glitz and television technology left an enduring impression on the game.⁵²

The film industry continued to receive government assistance that from 1980 included tax subsidies for investors. Hollywood films did best at the box office, but local releases increased in number and evolved from the aggressively 'ocker' genre to quality period productions.⁵³ Aided by the local content quotas and growing audience interest, Australian television production also expanded. Dramas, soap operas, quiz and variety shows were standard fare. Colour television encouraged the popularity of sporting telecasts, as did new technologies such as slow motion replays. Whereas the late 1960s and early 1970s had been notable for the advent of probing and irreverent current affairs programs, by the early 1980s a populist, tabloid style of current affairs had emerged.

American and British artists initially exercised a dominant influence in popular music, but soon there were local challengers. Described as the 'first band in Australian rock history to be unabashedly Australian', in 1974 Skyhooks released *Living in the 70's*, which became the largest selling Australian album to that time.⁵⁴ Australian acts began to enjoy increased overseas success and a homegrown 'pub rock' scene flourished. Disco and punk – the two major international trends of the second half of the decade – caught on, but even here there were local inflections. Australia's first punk rock bands predated their British counterparts, while teenagers were exposed to disco at suburban 'Blue Light' venues organised by police. The television program *Countdown*, hosted by Ian 'Molly' Meldrum, became part of the fabric of lives of younger Australians in the later 1970s, and a crucial platform for local and overseas

54 Louise Douglas and Richard Geeves, 'Music, Counter-Culture and the Vietnam Era', in Philip Hayward (ed.), From Pop to Punk to Postmodernism: Popular Music and Australian Culture from the 1960s to the 1990s (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), pp. 106–7.

⁵² Gideon Haigh, The Cricket War: The Inside Story of Kerry Packer's World Series Cricket (Melbourne University Press, 2007).

⁵³ Tom O'Regan, 'Cinema Oz', and Graeme Turner, 'Art Directing History', in Albert Moran and Tom O'Regan (eds), *The Australian Screen* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1989); Susan Dermody and Elizabeth Jacka, *The Screening of Australia: Anatomy of a Film Industry, Volume* 1 (Sydney: Currency Press, 1987).

acts. Meldrum enjoyed a rare access to international stars who regularly appeared on the program, but he remained quintessentially Australian in his mangled diction and informality. Memorably, when interviewing Prince Charles, heir to the British throne, Meldrum committed a royal faux pas by referring to Queen Elizabeth II as 'your mum'.⁵⁵

Probably the most profound changes occurred in the workplace and economy. The inexorable shrinkage of the agricultural labour force was overshadowed in the 1970s by employment shedding in manufacturing as jobs were lost to automation and competition from the newly industrialised nations of Asia. By the early 1980s 17.7 per cent of the workforce was employed in manufacturing, down from a level of 27 per cent in the mid-1960s. Conversely, employment grew steadily in the tertiary sector, especially in community services, finance and business, and entertainment and recreation. As blue-collar jobs declined relative to professional, technical, managerial and administrative occupations, it was not surprising that fewer Australians categorised themselves as working class.⁵⁶ Yet if 'middle Australia' was expanding, it was also more stretched. Wage disparities widened between the upper and lower echelons of the labour force. In addition, growing numbers of Australians struggled to find a place in the changing economy. In the second half of the 1970s unemployment became entrenched: the number of jobless was four times higher at the decade's end than at the beginning. Scourges virtually unknown during the balmy days of the Menzies era, long-term and 'hidden' unemployment, were symptoms of the new economic malaise.57

'Life is not meant to be easy'

Entrenched unemployment was the Fraser government's chief economic legacy, despite a seven-year effort to restore prosperity. Following the high turnover of prime ministers in the decade after Menzies' retirement, the Fraser era did bring renewed political order to the country. The Coalition won three consecutive elections. The second in 1977, against a diminished Whitlam, repeated the 1975 landslide, while the third victory in 1980 was much tighter against his successor Hayden, who had worked hard to repair Labor's economic credentials. The 1980 election was a sign the tide was going

⁵⁵ Peter Wilmoth, *Glad All Over: The Countdown Years* 1974–1987 (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1993), p. 40.

⁵⁶ McGregor, The Australian People, p. 62.

⁵⁷ Crowley, Tough Times, pp. 410, 415.

out on Fraser, but by extending his incumbency it enabled him to become Australia's second-longest serving prime minister up to that time.

Notwithstanding his longevity, Fraser never attained the comfortable command enjoyed by Menzies. Under his rule everything seemed hard work. His overriding message was austerity and his leadership style dour. Cartoonists caricatured him as a flint-hearted, jaw-jutting Easter Island statue. Fraser demanded the public's respect, rather than craved its affection. He spoke in strictures: most emblematically, 'life is not meant to be easy'. Borrowed from George Bernard Shaw and shorn of the Irish playwright's consoling addendum, 'but take courage: it can be delightful', it originated in a lecture he gave to the Liberal faithful in 1971. Even before the good times had broken, he fretted that prolonged prosperity had rendered Australians too complacent about meeting the challenges that inevitably lay ahead.⁵⁸ In office, Fraser drove himself, his ministers and his staff relentlessly. He was a stickler for probity, and the attrition rate among colleagues was high. Sound administration was the object rather than the grand flourishes beloved by Gorton and Whitlam. As a biographer noted, 'there were no permanent solutions, just the necessity for a continuous struggle to make the society work'.59

The act of creation of Fraser's prime ministership – the 1975 constitutional crisis – lingered. For Labor partisans and their fellow travellers in the middle-class intelligentsia, his governments always carried a stain of illegitimacy. There were retrospective suggestions, including from ministers, that the polarisation unleashed by the events of 1975 inhibited the way Fraser governed. In other words, conscious of a responsibility to bind those wounds, he was more ideologically circumspect than he might otherwise have been. Fraser adamantly rejected this theory.⁶⁰ Whatever the truth, the divisions of 1975 added to the sourness of the period and jaundiced contemporary views of his prime ministership.

Most notably, the progressive elements of the Coalition's policies – and their continuities with the innovations of the previous decade – were under-appreciated at the time. Fraser established an enviable humanitarian record on immigration and racial tolerance.⁶¹ After immigration had fallen to a post-war low during the Whitlam government, the Coalition substantially

60 Fraser and Simons, Malcolm Fraser, p. 321.

⁵⁸ Curran, The Power of Speech, p. 125.

⁵⁹ Patrick Weller, Malcolm Fraser PM: A Study in Prime Ministerial Power (Melbourne: Penguin, 1989), p. 406.

⁶¹ The following paragraphs are largely based on Fraser and Simons, *Malcolm Fraser*, part 2, but see also Philip Ayres, *Malcolm Fraser: A Biography* (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1987), chs 14–19.

boosted the intake and, as noted above, resettled a large number of Indochinese refugees. It complemented its non-discriminatory immigration regime with services to assist settlers from non-English speaking backgrounds, including the establishment in 1978 of the ethnic broadcaster, the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). Despite pressure from the mining and pastoral industries and the Northern Territory conservative government to emasculate Labor's stillborn land rights legislation, the Fraser government enacted the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act of 1976. It kept intact the right of Aboriginal people to veto and earn royalties from mining development and was a model for land rights legislation in some of the States. The Coalition's conservation record was more ambivalent, torn as it was between upholding State rights and protecting the environment. Nevertheless, it overruled Bjelke-Petersen's conservative Queensland government to stop sand mining on Fraser Island and prevent oil drilling on the Great Barrier Reef, created the Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory and banned whaling. In the early 1980s, however, the Coalition baulked at using the Commonwealth's external powers to prevent the Tasmanian government damming the Franklin River in the south-west of the State. This cost it electoral support on the mainland.

Fraser's realpolitik approach to international relations was softened by a pronounced liberal streak. He was sceptical of superpower détente and hawkish on the need for vigilance against Soviet expansionism. Fraser worried that the United States, under presidents Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter, lacked the resolve to confront the Soviet threat. Notwithstanding his badgering of Washington on security and also trade, the alliance with the United States was put back on an even keel following the stresses of the Whitlam period. Fraser walked in the footsteps of his predecessors by emphasising regional cooperation. Lest he be construed an old-style Cold War warrior, in a major twist on post-war conservative foreign policy Fraser identified China as a partner in the containment of Soviet influence. Indonesia's 1975 military annexation of East Timor coincided with the final throes of the Whitlam government and Fraser's caretaker period. Both Labor and the Coalition acquiesced in Indonesia's takeover, placing preservation of harmonious relations with Jakarta above the principle of self-determination for the East Timorese.62

Another way in which Fraser broke the post-war conservative mould was his strong advocacy of bridging inequalities between the developed and

62 Goldsworthy et al., 'Reorientation', pp. 360-70.

underdeveloped worlds. This was partly motivated by his view that western assistance for third world development was vital to checking Soviet ambitions, but he had a genuine humanitarian impulse to secure a better deal for developing countries. Fraser singled out the Commonwealth as a forum in which to pursue that goal. He aligned Australia with the Commonwealth's non-white and developing member countries by forcefully championing opposition to South Africa's apartheid system and support for majority rule in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).

It was economic policy, however, that dominated the Fraser era. The Coalition's strategy was to rein in inflation by cutting government spending and restraining wage growth. It believed this would create the space for private enterprise to lead a return to investment, employment growth and prosperity. The Fraser government was frugal compared to its predecessors. During its seven years in office, the average annual rate of growth in federal outlays was over half what it had been under Holt, Gorton and McMahon, but less than a quarter of the rate under Whitlam.⁶³ Cuts were applied widely and accompanied by criticism of 'dole bludgers' and tightening of eligibility rules for recipients of unemployment benefits. Medibank was gradually dismantled and reduction of university funding slowed the growth of higher education. Yet the government's pruning of expenditure never quite lived up to Fraser's stern rhetoric and was offset by tax cut handouts and spending on welfare initiatives such as family allowances. The government's ability to impose discipline on the economy was also frustrated by the lack of an effective wages policy. The Arbitration Commission's wage decisions during the second half of the 1970s satisfied neither the government nor trade unions. The former wanted the Commission to take greater account of the economic implications of its judgments, while the latter protested at its failure to lift wages in line with increases in the cost of living.

By the late 1970s there were signs the Fraser government's harsh economic medicine was working. Inflation was down, unemployment had stabilised, government spending had been reduced and the budget was headed for surplus. Optimism was also engendered by forecasts of another resources boom. It proved a false dawn. The economic progress was wiped out in the early 1980s as a renewed global recession engulfed Australia. A second oil shock in 1979 unleashed another bout of inflation, and when western governments responded by tightening monetary policy, activity contracted. In Australia the situation was compounded by a wages breakout caused by trade unions cashing in on the

63 Fraser and Simons, Malcolm Fraser, p. 375.

temporary domestic economic pick-up of the late 1970s. A devastating drought in the eastern states in the early 1980s further debilitated the economy. Inflation and unemployment headed back up. By the time the Fraser government lost office in March 1983 both were running at over 10 per cent. To add insult to injury, the Coalition's final budget of 1982 blew out the deficit as the government tried forlornly to combat the effects of recession and drought and mollify the electorate. Fraser resembled the Grand Old Duke of York: he had marched up the economic hill and down the other side. Amid a mood of pervasive gloom, it seemed all the financial penance had been for nought.

While Labor capitalised on the economic reversals of the early 1980s to return to office, the most lacerating critique of the Fraser government's policies issued from within the Liberal Party. In the final years before the Coalition's defeat, a free-market ginger group formed inside the government. Dubbed the 'dries' (since they derided the defenders of the mixed economy as 'wet'), these critics believed Fraser had been pusillanimous in tackling Australia's structural economic weaknesses. They cited his cautious response during his final term to the recommendations of a government-appointed inquiry into the financial system for a floating exchange rate and deregulation of the banking sector, and his reversion to Keynesian-style 'pump priming' in the 1982 budget. The 'dries' insisted that Australia's recent chequered economic history could only be remedied by sweeping market reforms that would free the country from its regulatory straightjacket and enable it to compete successfully in the global economy.⁶⁴

While there was some truth to the critique of Fraser's economic policy by these 'dries', it was also tinged with unrealism. His government had been ahead of the western industrialised world in coming to terms with the new environment of scarcity and in dampening expectations of state provision. The advent of the free marketeers emphasised how much the terms of public discourse had transformed over the previous decade and a half. When Menzies stepped down Australians had grown so accustomed to economic prosperity as to regard it as their birthright. The economy was viewed as a benign instrument for supplying an expanding bounty of social goods to be distributed by government. Hand in hand with that optimism had been a growing confidence about asserting Australia's place in the world and an inquisitiveness about the nation's identity.

⁶⁴ Paul Kelly, *The End of Certainty: Power, Politics and Business in Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994), ch. 2.

Now, as it headed into the 1980s, Australia was a chastened and more anxious country. Its economic difficulties appeared intractable and responsible management of the economy was becoming a fetish of policy and synonym for good governance. Changes in the workforce, the expansion of education, the influence of the social movements, altered immigration patterns and intensifying global forces had transformed Australia into a more pluralistic society. While that diversity had exploded the traditional clichés of 'the Australian way of life', it had also rendered obsolete the innocent and occasionally strident notions of identity associated with 'new nationalism'. This added to the apprehensions of the times. These paradoxes were a fitting legacy of the topsy-turvy post-Menzies age.

7 Growth resumed, 1983–2000

JAMES WALTER

On 26 September 1983 an Australian team led by the entrepreneur Alan Bond won a yacht race contested only by the very wealthy: the America's Cup. The New York Yacht Club had defended the Cup successfully for the previous 126 years. The euphoria generated by this victory prompted the prime minister, Bob Hawke, to endorse an unofficial public holiday: 'Any boss who sacks anyone today for not turning up is a bum!' Bond returned to Australia a hero. He represented, said Hawke, 'the kind of tenacity with which Australians and Americans can identify', adding: 'Coming on top of the success of Australian films in the United States, we are now firmly registered with Americans as a country worthy of attention. The economic benefits to Australia...will be very substantial.'^T It is notable that the call for attention turned rapidly from sporting prowess to economic advantage. Also apparent is the portfolio approach to marketing on the world stage, as the yacht race was added to 'the success of Australian films'. Such preoccupations with a global marketplace are integral to this chapter.

Bond's trajectory reveals much about the 1980s and 1990s. He was both a kind of Everyman and a rapacious practitioner of crony capitalism. At his most successful, he attracted wide popular support. A migrant boy who began as a sign-writer but reached the pinnacle of corporate success, he capitalised on his achievement as a battler winning against the odds. He exploited the emerging celebrity culture to capture public attention: his greatest sales job was his own story. He was an audacious risk taker both in business (where he specialised in takeovers) and in politics (where he used his wealth, celebrity and media influence to support State and federal governments, in return for deals that benefitted his own interests). All the time, he was 'constantly dealing between his public and private companies,

I George Megalogenis, The Australian Moment: How We Were Made For These Times (Melbourne: Viking, 2012), pp. 170–1.

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selling assets backwards and forwards, charging fees, receiving commissions, providing services in exchange...you could never know where the profits would end up...but you always expected a large portion would find its way into Alan's pocket'.²

Some noted that 'way below Alan Bond there is an army of ambitious little entrepreneurs trying to emulate him',³ but the wheeler-dealer culture ended in grief. Bond's overexposure to the stock market crash of 1987 prompted serious questions about where all the money had gone; eventually, as his empire collapsed, it was found that with his constant transfers between public and private companies, he had misused funds and he was jailed for four years. His remarkable achievement was that despite playing fast and loose he was vaunted as national saviour, the model of unrestrained individual enterprise in a free market. Despite his disgrace he represented a shift in public values: 'the identification of one's very soul with socio-economic achievement...a dangerous bargain, worthy of Faust'.⁴

Bond represents one aspect of the public culture: at levels below that of the corporate and political elite, the experience was rather different. The middle class, at least as it had been influentially defined by Robert Menzies in the 1940s as the backbone of the nation, was being squeezed economically: incomes for those in work were to rise in the 1990s, but the culture of saving and self-sufficiency had been replaced by the culture of consumption and many lived close to the limit of their resources. What Judith Brett has called the moral middle class once eschewed the notion of a socio-economically based identity, instead marrying values of individual effort with social responsibility.⁵ The Faustian economic bargain now undermined the equation of virtue with social responsibility: as each scrambled to achieve aspirational values, self-interest was encouraged, freedom associated with unrestrained choice.

What lay behind these shifts in behavioural models, in experience and in values? They reflected changes common to all the western democracies as globalisation took root, but in every country this assumed a particular pattern: it is therefore necessary to tease out the Australian experience. In every country, too, the combination of what were thought to be economic

² Paul Barry, The Rise and Fall of Alan Bond (Sydney: Bantam Books, 1990), p. 107.

³ Peter Smark and Mark Sculley, 'State of Unholy Matrimony – When Government Merged with Business', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 8 November 1988.

⁴ Ronald Conway, 'The Rise and Decline of the "80s Man"', Bulletin, 21 May 1991.

⁵ Judith Brett, Australian Liberalism and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 7–12.

imperatives and the political measures taken to cope with them had a profound effect upon common life.

The cockpit

The most striking aspect of the last quarter of the twentieth century was the way in which the language of politics and its possibilities changed, and with it the ways in which rights, community, association and national culture were transformed. This was a reaction to the decay of the post-war policy cycle and the instability of the 1970s. It was driven by a conviction that 'managed prosperity',6 with an active role for government, had ultimately failed the test of sound economic management and threatened to impoverish everyone: now was the time for a return to 'free markets'. Rather than concerns with nation building and protective politics, economic imperatives - removal of trade barriers, competition, privatisation, deregulation and unfettered enterprise - monopolised political debate. In time the argument would be couched as the inevitable response to 'globalisation' and the need to compete effectively in a world market, though that term was scarcely used before the mid-1980s.7 After 1979, Margaret Thatcher in Britain would insist 'there is no alternative', and even question the existence of collective entities such as 'society'. In Australia, advocates of the new regime were Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser's tormenters in the Liberal Party room in the last days of his government. They began to share ideas with their Labor Party counterparts: on this common ground were seeded the reforms that would be undertaken by a new Labor government, elected in 1983.

The fundamental question was how could instability be managed to cope with what seemed to be an increasing rate of change? From the mid-1970s, governments had struggled to find the means for economic revival. Business uncertainty had constrained investment; the reining in of government expenditure, and the tight fiscal and monetary policy believed to be necessary to contain inflation, had dampened demand. The result was a lengthy period of stagnation, alleviated only briefly by a mining boom in the early 1980s before a global economic slump brought that to an abrupt end. Between 1981–82 and 1983–84 unemployment rose from 6.2 to 9.6 per cent. 1982 saw

⁶ Nicholas Brown, Governing Prosperity: Social Change and Social Analysis in Australia in the 1950s (Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁷ Anthony Giddens, Runaway World: How Globalisation Is Reshaping Our Lives, 2nd edn (London: Profile Books, 2002), pp. 7–9.

the worst Australian economic performance since the Depression.⁸ Those who had attempted to initiate reform – especially Fraser, who had talked of a new order but whose actions merely confirmed his message that 'life wasn't meant to be easy' – faced growing resentment. Behind the scenes the advocates of more radical change were ready to seize their opportunity. Their message was less one of resolving instability than of adapting to uncertainty. Part of this would require giving up the illusion of protection and taking charge of one's own life.

The transition was driven by generational change. A cohort of activists who had come of age in the 1960s and experienced the bitter reverses of politics in the 1970s was ready to take over from the old hands whose formative ideas derived from the 1940s and 1950s. Within this emerging cohort it was agreed that the Keynesian model of state intervention to ensure prosperity had failed. On the Labor side, this was expressed as the need to avoid the mistakes of the Whitlam period in order to demonstrate a capacity for superior economic management. Among the Liberals, it was conceived as recognition of the failure of Deakinite ameliorative liberalism, manifest in the battles between 'wets' and 'dries' in the Liberal Party room during Fraser's government. The defeat of the Fraser government in the federal election of 1983 initiated a revolution in which both of the major parties were accused of the betrayal of core values.⁹

Fraser's penchant for brinkmanship brought him undone. Attempting to capitalise on divisions over leadership in the Labor Party, he called an early election, with a notably short campaign period. He was pre-empted. On the day that he announced the election, 3 February 1983, Labor resolved its leadership: Bill Hayden announced his resignation and on 8 February was succeeded by Bob Hawke, who dominated the campaign. Labor won office on 5 March 1983.

Hawke had been in parliament for only three years prior to the 1983 election, but had long been a leading public figure. As a union leader – president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) from 1970 to 1978, and president of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in the same period – he had demonstrated capacities as a negotiator and communicator. With

⁸ Adrian Pagan, 'The End of the Long Boom', in Rodney Maddock and Ian W. McLean (eds), *The Australian Economy in the Long Run* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 106–29.

⁹ See Graham Maddox, The Hawke Government and Labor Tradition (Melbourne: Penguin, 1989); Paul Kelly, 'The Liberal Revolution', in The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992), ch. 5. Kelly's The End of Certainty gives the best account of the internal party battles over economic reform in the 1980s.

a combination of high intelligence and a larrikin personality, he captured public attention. By the late 1970s he was one of the best known and most popular figures in public life. He had long believed that national leadership was his destiny, a view that some came to share and others to resent.

Hawke possessed extraordinary talents. He was a skilful chair, able to crystallise Cabinet debate to point the way ahead; a brilliant negotiator who could persuade diverse interests to confer and to develop consensus; an analyst able to distil the argument in any brief; a leader who gave productive latitude to a talented team; and a fighter who would do whatever it took to win. He placed consensus building at the heart of political life, initiating a series of national summits on key policy areas. The achievement of compromises, where each interest gained some but not all of its demands, was Hawke's speciality. Paradoxically, inclusiveness was achieved through summitry between contending elites, but this 'elite pluralism'¹⁰ took policy making out of party channels and removed politics even further from 'the punters'.

Central to the Hawke government's initial reforms was an Accord with the unions. Its purpose was to couple wage restraint with the delivery of social benefits, securing cooperation from business and unions in the pursuit of reform. It proved a novel exercise in marrying traditional Labor concerns to the imperative of opening up the economy. With the unions in check, and business onside, the government set to work on economic liberalisation. It brought to fruition what Fraser had merely toyed with, a rolling back of the state in favour of 'market' solutions: the Australian version of what became known internationally as neoliberalism. The government floated the dollar in December 1983 and deregulated capital markets. It progressively reduced tariff protection for Australian industries, not only manufacturing, but also rural production. It reviewed government provision of goods and services and public sector ownership of utilities, and began to privatise such activities and agencies. It streamlined regulation and competition policy. It exerted pressure on the States to dismantle their own monopolies.

Reform of the Labor platform drew on Hawke's capacities as a professional negotiator, but also on his belief – which the party largely shared – that the ALP could not continue in government without him. Hawke and his treasurer, Paul Keating, repositioned Labor as the party

¹⁰ Tony Moore, 'Hawke's Big Tent: Elite Pluralism and the Politics of Inclusion', in Susan Ryan and Troy Bramston (eds), *The Hawke Government: A Critical Retrospective* (Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2003), pp. 112–27.

of market-oriented, realist government, pursuing private sector deregulation, public sector reform, and economic growth. Hawke's argument was that 'if the world decides it does not trust you, it can ruin you', and hence disciplined, 'responsible' economic reform must be the overriding policy objective."

That reform agenda was broadly supported by leaders in business, finance, the unions and welfare sectors – a measure of Hawke's ability to negotiate compromise and consensus – and would later be lauded as heroic.¹² Yet the 1980s remained a difficult decade and the new approaches induced more apprehension than support. Unemployment fell, and the combination of Accord provisions and social policy provided some hedge against risk, but conditions remained volatile. The deteriorating exchange rate, increased borrowing (with higher costs as the dollar lost value) and persistent trade deficits created problems that the government no longer had any mechanism to manage. Only improved trade conditions, more efficiency and greater competition would save Australia. This was Paul Keating's message when, in 1986, he warned that unless performance on these measures improved, Australia would 'just end up being a third rate economy...a banana republic'.¹³ He was softening up his audience for even more public sector reduction, wage restraint and ruthless competition.

In these trying circumstances, Hawke's leadership came under question from within his own party. Keating had already decided that Hawke was not up to the job. Regarding himself as the architect of economic reform, he grew contemptuous of the prime minister's lack of vision. Hawke's shield against Keating's ambition was his fabled 'special relationship' with the Australian people that by 1990 had brought four election victories. When that magic wore off in the early 1990s, as reform appeared to have delivered uncertainty, employment insecurity and less prosperity, he was finally left defenceless against his rival, who challenged twice for the leadership in 1991, and succeeded in December 1991.

Keating, an astute, self-educated, conviction politician, saw himself as a storyteller to the masses. In the 1980s he had adopted the leading script of the day, economic reform, and turned it into a story of necessary change. By the 1990s his doctrine of dynamic change provided other big pictures: engagement with Asia, Indigenous reconciliation, a republic. The turning

13 Edna Carew, Keating: A Biography (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), p. 157.

¹¹ Bob Hawke, The Hawke Memoirs (Melbourne: William Heinemann, 1994), p. 175.

¹² See Kelly, The End of Certainty; and Paul Kelly, The March of Patriots: The Struggle for Modern Australia (Melbourne University Press, 2009).

point was the battle for re-election in 1993, against the Liberal Party's leader, John Hewson, who pursued a policy, *Fightback!*, intended to push the market reform process further and faster.¹⁴ Hewson represented the Liberal Party's clearest repudiation of the ameliorative liberalism championed by Deakin and Menzies. By attacking from a more radical neoliberal position, he forced Keating to double-back and revisit both the social agenda and the role of the state in providing public goods. An indicative reform was Keating's introduction in 1992 of compulsory superannuation payments by employers (and later by employees). This would supplement the non-contributory pension scheme, increase national savings, provide more security for many in retirement and allow the state to redirect savings on old-age pensions to other areas of need. Another indicative reform was the introduction of a program of major public works along with family payments and tax cuts. Few expected Labor to win; Keating's popularity was low, unemployment was near 10 per cent and the polls were running against the government. For Hewson it was said to be the 'unloseable election'. Yet he lost. People already anxious about the pace of change were not attracted to even faster reform, even more faith in the market.

In 1994 policies of inclusion were adopted as Keating reinvented himself as a socially concerned leader. His government produced the 'Working Nation' jobs compact, designed to specify how the disadvantaged were to be 'pulled up behind us'; the 'Creative Nation' package, to resuscitate the arts and national identity; promotion of Indigenous reconciliation; a youth summit; and the appointment of a 'civics expert group' to revive responsible citizen politics. Yet this 'social democratic' revision of neoliberalism failed to cut through. Labor's victory in 1993 was aberrant, underscoring the extent of Hewson's misjudgement in pursuing even more radical reform.

Keating's 1996 electoral defeat showed his failure to convince electors of the significance of his new directions. As economic trends turned sour again in 1995, he railed against 'deficit Daleks',¹⁵ but had no resources with which to resist the financial markets' demands for 'more discipline', no persuasive rejoinder to the Opposition's claim that Australians had been allowed 'five minutes of economic sunlight' before the sky fell in again.¹⁶ John Howard, now leading the Liberal Party, offered little in the way of policy detail: he

¹⁴ Fightback! It's Your Australia (Canberra: Liberal and National Parties, 1991), pp. 23, 36.

¹⁵ Quoted in Robert Albon, 'Ensuring Responsibility in Australian Budgets', Agenda, 2, 1 (1995): 17.

¹⁶ Wayne Errington and Peter Van Onselen, John Winston Howard: The Biography (Melbourne University Press, 2007), p. 211.

came to power in 1996 promising a return to conditions where Australians could feel 'comfortable and relaxed'. He had apparently renounced the hard edges of Hewson's 1993 program, reassuring those made anxious by Keating's insistence that more reform was needed. Although neither Howard nor Keating would admit it, there was in fact substantial continuity in their commitment to economic management.¹⁷ The electorate at first was unconvinced. Only after a shaky first term in power did Howard come to dominate his party and his era. He succeeded because he was an inventive and aggressive proponent of the contemporary orthodoxy, able to relate it back to what he claimed to be core liberal ideals, to give it a spin that differentiated his approach from that of his Labor precursors, and to project it forward as the way of the future.

Howard's success was also underwritten by the reforms that Hawke and Keating had initiated and he extended: from the early 1990s Australia's economy began a rise that was not significantly checked until the global financial crisis (GFC) of 2007–08 – and even then it would be regarded as a miracle economy. In the 1990s, and with increasing effect thereafter, per capita gross domestic product (GDP) increased, inflation fell, unemployment rates declined, the uptake of new information and communication technologies enhanced efficiency, greater efficiency boosted both wages and profits. The reduction of barriers to trade and investment, now among the lowest in the developed world, encouraged foreign direct investment.¹⁸ 'Among the larger economies...Australia...turned in the best productivity performance during the 1990s. Economists commonly attribute this to the efficiency-enhancing effects of many years of micro-economic reform.'¹⁹

Howard fashioned a powerful message that professed to speak for the 'ordinary battler' and to advance the interests of 'the mainstream' against vested interests ('elites'), internal division, international challenge and foreign hostility.²⁰ First, seeing that Labor had abandoned popular nationalism in its pursuit of economic reform, he skilfully took over 'the Australian Legend' – once the preserve of radicals and Labor – by insisting that there was an 'essential' Australian heritage to be defended. He turned its values – the fair go, mateship – into a story of conservative individualism. Second, he

¹⁷ George Megalogenis, The Longest Decade (Melbourne: Scribe, 2006); Kelly, The March of Patriots.

¹⁸ These developments are summarised concisely by Michael Wesley, *There Goes the Neighbourhood: Australia and the Rise of Asia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2011), pp. 16–23.

¹⁹ Rodney Tiffen and Ross Gittins, *How Australia Compares* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 65.

²⁰ This paragraph paraphrases Brett, Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class, ch. 9.

articulated what a disconsolate electorate was feeling: that Labor's reform was top-down, a series of injunctions voiced by the knowledge elite. Howard deflected the reform message from the imperatives of the market into a story of careful change delivering more jobs and more choice. Third, recognising that uncertainty engendered by change had generated disabling anxieties, he realised that these emotions could be mobilised to advantage. The naming of specific 'elites' as the enemy of 'mainstream' aspirations gave anxiety a target and political action an objective – the restitution of conditions in which Australians could be 'comfortable and relaxed'.

Howard adapted what he needed to serve his strategic objectives, but ignored whatever impeded his capacity to use government powers to shore up his constituency. Wealth creation was to be served by adopting many of the policy prescriptions of market liberalism, and justified in terms of choice and liberty. But the subsidiary question was to do with wealth transfer. Here, two factors cut in: social conservatism (the retention of social values not far removed from the Menzies era) and Tory instincts (obligation to the underclass; a commitment to placing 'the right people' in positions of responsibility and authority; and a belief that the status of the already privileged should be preserved because success and privilege are just deserts for effort and enterprise). Social conservatism led to a redirection of welfare outlays. While the impact of the taxation system and direct benefit payments assisted those in need, and the real incomes of families at the bottom rose, the average incomes of disadvantaged families did not move closer to the income of all families. Increases in family payments and tax thresholds benefitted less needy Australian families as much or more than those in the poorest circumstances.²¹

The Hawke–Keating governments began the process of market reform, but chose through such initiatives as the Accord to redistribute wealth in ways that can be interpreted as continuing the equalising project of the post-war years. The Howard government continued market reform, but rejected both the Liberal Party's social-liberal heritage, and the class war it deemed to be behind Labor's redistributive measures, instead promoting wealth transfers that rewarded those who were already relatively successful. These distinctive

²¹ Ann Harding, Rachel Lloyd and Neil Warren, 'Income Distribution and Redistribution: The Impact of Selected Benefits and Taxes in Australia 2001–02', paper presented at the 28th General Conference of the International Association for Research in Income and Wealth, Ireland, 22–28 August 2004; Justine McNamara et al., 'Prosperity for All? How Low Income Families Have Fared in the Boom Times', paper presented at the 9th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, Melbourne, 9–11 February 2005.

emphases within a common reform project affected debate and action more broadly than in policy determination alone. They were part of a larger enterprise of rethinking the contemporary situation in the face of uncertainty and instability. That enterprise would impact upon institutions, the cultural domain and common life.

Institutions

Politicians aggregate opinion, bring issues onto the national agenda and foster debate, but institutions have a more pervasive effect on common life. The economic institutions of liberal polities themselves underwent a remarkable transition in the late twentieth century as 'the knowledge economy' emerged. Intellectual resources and technology were now seen as such significant factors that the labour market had to ensure the pre-eminence of knowledge workers (technicians, experts, skilled managers). Old forms of industrial production could be relocated to developing economies, where labour costs were lower; prosperity in the advanced economies would rely on high-tech, high-quality production, research and development, and the marketing of services – education, research and financial expertise – in a global market. Regional knowledge clusters would win the battle for economic growth.

In Australia, Barry Jones' Sleepers Wake! Technology and the Future of Work (1982) was indicative of the trend, and as Minister for Science from 1983 to 1990 he became an energetic public advocate for the 'clever country', though his political skill within the Hawke government failed to match his prescience and hence limited his influence. Jones' preference - that government should ramp up investment in technological development and research - was overridden: the dominant view was that such development was best left to markets. Nonetheless, the mantra of the knowledge economy was broadly accepted. The 'clever country' required an educated labour force but the intrinsic value of education as a public good came to be subsidiary to the emphasis on the skills and attributes thought to be essential to economic competition. Vocational outcomes and economic benefit were emphasised. Expansion of 'opportunities' was accompanied by the argument that education provided a private benefit, so user pays principles began to be applied. Building mass education at every level at a time of funding constraint encouraged efficiency measures: 'sound business principles', introduction of professional managers, detailed accountability mechanisms, performance targets and performance-based budgets, and decreasing per capita rates of public student funding. In schools this meant not only more competition between state schools, but also between the state and the private sector. National reporting of educational outcomes was introduced. Technical and further education providers along with universities were designated components within a 'national training system', and the close ties between education and employment policies were signified by the creation in 1987 of a new Department of Employment, Education and Training.

University tuition fees (abandoned by Whitlam's ALP government in 1974) were reintroduced – now exacted as a loan that students would pay back though the taxation system after graduation, once their incomes reached a certain level.22 The minister for education in the Hawke government, John Dawkins, worked with a hand-picked group of advisers from within universities in developing a plan for a 'unified national system' that abolished the distinction between universities and (non-research) colleges of advanced education. It was strongly opposed by many in the sector and the Labor Party, but with support from the prime minister and the treasurer, Dawkins could ignore criticism. In terms of its stated objectives, it was one of the most successful policy initiatives of the 1980s. The proportion of public funding for universities fell from 85 per cent in 1987 to 65 per cent in 1992 and was down to 40 per cent another ten years later. Enrolments increased from 394,000 to 559,000 between 1987 and 1992. The framework proved remarkably resilient. The Howard government flirted with even more market-oriented reform, but in the main subsequent governments continued to influence university education through performance-based research funding, competitive bidding, standardised data collection and accountability requirements.²³

The public sector was transformed. Belief in the role of the state to serve the public interest had flourished in the era of managed prosperity between the 1940s and the 1970s.²⁴ Levels of trust in public institutions were high.²⁵ Alan Davies, who had once famously lambasted the Australian 'talent for bureaucracy', reflected in the mid-1980s that the post-war bureaucratic order

²² Simon Marginson, 'Steering from a Distance: Power Relations in Australian Higher Education', *Higher Education*, 34, 1 (1997): 68.

²³ Ibid., pp. 63–80; Simon Marginson, 'Education Policy', in Brian Galligan and Winsome Roberts (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 167–70; Jim McMorrow, 'Education Policy', in Ryan and Bramston (eds), *The Hawke Government*, pp. 184–201.

²⁴ Brown, Governing Prosperity.

²⁵ Don Aitkin, Stability and Change in Australian Politics, 2nd edn (Canberra: ANU Press, 1982), pp. 25–6, 275–8; D.A. Kemp, Society and Electoral Behaviour in Australia: A Study of Three Decades (Brisbane: UQP, 1978).

had achieved a remarkable degree of success. It had provided innovation when parties were deadlocked or had run out of ideas, yet it managed to keep the state off a pedestal, with 'a conscious gift for the democratic style of administration, making it look as if consensus directs things'.²⁶

The apparent 'failure of the state' in the late 1970s gave the rhetoric of small government increased purchase. The private sector reaction was that governments should get out of the way; the public sector challenge was to be more responsive and to do more with less. Responsiveness would be assured by exposing senior managers to the discipline that applied in the commercial sector: security of tenure was replaced by contract appointments, candidates from outside the service could compete with career bureaucrats for the top jobs, success would be measured by performance targets and ministers could remove their departmental secretaries much more expeditiously. Whatever could be deemed a commercial enterprise should be sold off. The sale of public assets increased revenue, which could be used to reinforce core activities and to reduce government debt. Divestiture meant a leaner establishment. Staffing costs could be reduced by relying on third-party provision, contracting out specific tasks to private providers as and when needed. In-house expertise could be replaced by steering the research community towards national priorities, by calling on consultants and by drawing on the interest-specific knowledge of the newly proliferating body of think tanks and non-government organisations. This was 'a world of markets and contracts, of competition and consultants' and indeed of cascading staff losses: the Commonwealth public service shed more than 76,000 staff in the decade from 1986, and contractors provided employment only for the period of a contract,²⁷ introducing a new experience – precarious employment – to the middle-class, white-collar world.

For all that, there were still high levels of competence and it can be argued that the overall outcome was that the bureaucracy did manage both to cut back its establishment and to find new means to meet public expectations

²⁶ Alan Davies, 'Small Country Blues' (unpublished manuscript), pp. 69–70, cited in James Walter, 'Australian Democracy and the American Century', in Harold Bolitho and Chris Wallace-Crabbe (eds), *Approaching Australia: Papers from the Harvard Australian Studies Symposium* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), p. 207.

²⁷ Glyn Davis, 'Public Sector Reform', in Galligan and Roberts (eds), The Oxford Companion to Australian Politics, p. 480. The above paragraph also draws on Michael Keating, 'The Public Service and Management of the Public Sector', in Ryan and Bramston (eds), The Hawke Government, pp. 367–80; and John Halligan, 'Public Service Reform under Howard', in Gwynneth Singleton (ed.), The Howard Government: Australian Commonwealth Administration 1996–1998 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1999), pp. 49–64.

through the managerial focus on results, contracting out and facilitating the transfer of public sector activities and agencies to the commercial sector.²⁸ The corollary was that where once it was assumed that government was responsible for the quality of life, now markets would provide that through optimising choice. An important by-product of public sector reform was its impact on currents of ideas that had penetrated the bureaucracy and on non-government forms of public action. The big ideas of the 1960s and 1970s – feminism, liberation movements, identity politics, environmentalism – all arose from social movements, often espousing direct action. Activists carried these ideas into parliament and the bureaucracy: 'femocrats', for instance, achieved a marked influence in policy circles.²⁹ By the 1990s, however, these activists would have to learn a new skill: ideological bilingualism, 'speaking one language (managerialism and economic rationalism) while thinking another'.³⁰

Media and communications take institutional forms that vary in different countries: they provide the lens through which we see the world. In Australia a combination of technological change (the introduction of satellite and cable delivery) demanding capital investment beyond the resources of small players, business deregulation fuelling the takeover culture, and government policy led to even more consolidation in what was already a highly concentrated market. By 1990 two corporations (Rupert Murdoch's News Corp and John Fairfax) controlled 88 per cent of the press, a situation unparalleled in any other comparable country, and Murdoch ended up controlling 60 per cent of major daily newspapers. Seven of the nineteen metropolitan dailies existing in 1987 closed by the late 1980s. On a population basis, daily newspaper circulation halved between 1980 and 2000. Despite an extraordinary spate of takeovers, on-selling and buybacks, in which buccaneers like Alan Bond and the equally criminal Christopher Skase figured prominently, commercial television remained in the hands of three networks.

One result of this shakeout was the disappearance of regional affiliations: programming was increasingly 'national' at the cost of regional interests. Pay television arrived late in the period covered here, and penetrated far less than in, say, the United States, but here again the dominant corporations

²⁸ Michael Keating, Who Rules? How Government Retains Control in a Privatised Economy (Sydney: Federation Press, 2004).

²⁹ Marian Sawer, Sisters in Suits: Women and Public Policy in Australia (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990).

³⁰ Marian Sawer, 'Reclaiming Social Liberalism: The Women's Movement and the State', in Renate Howe (ed.), *Women and the State: Australian Perspectives* (Melbourne: La Trobe University Press, 1993), p. 17.

ruled. The effect was a marked diminution in the variety of opinion that could be voiced, an occlusion of the lens through which Australians saw their world. The dominant Murdoch press was trenchantly pro-market, and became increasingly partisan (anti-Labor) over the course of this period. Commentators noted how difficult it was for dissenting and alternative views to gain publication or airtime. While the public broadcasting networks, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and the Special Broadcasting Service, provided channels for alternatives – the latter especially in relation to ethnic communities – their audience shares were low. In time, the internet would bring another shake-up, but its effects were limited in the 1990s: not until the twenty-first century were the business models of the major media oligopolies challenged.

Art and popular culture also influence perceptions. The way in which both were framed in the 1980s and 1990s is captured in Hawke's comment earlier in this chapter, where film-making success was lauded for drawing attention to Australia and for its spin-off economic benefits. Governments had long regulated radio and television production to ensure a degree of Australian content and introduced subsidy and tax regimes to support film production from the 1960s, but in the 1980s 'cultural policy studies' became a major enterprise and in the 1990s virtually all modes of creative activity were categorised as 'creative industries'.

By the 1990s, as a product of support and incentives, a range of quirky, unpredictable and sometimes confrontational films was emerging: *Bad Boy Bubby, Death in Brunswick, Priscilla, Queen of the Desert, Romper Stomper, The Piano* and *Muriel's Wedding*, for example. The generic 'national identity' inherent in many of the films of the 1970s and early 1980s was displaced; distinctive identities could be accommodated, but another sort of framing was now in play as audiences were 'educated' in possibilities of difference. Relations between art, government and citizenship were now seen as integral to the 'creative industries'. The Australia Council moved into marketing the arts, both in strategies to sell creative products and in active promotion of audience development.³¹ The 'creative industries' approach dispensed with humanist and aesthetic rationales in favour of economic imperatives and a commitment to recognising multiple identities within a civic framework. It was an approach congenial to the Howard government from 1996: the Liberal–National Party Coalition maintained Australia Council funding and allocated new funds for

³¹ Marketing the Arts: A Study of Marketing and Audience Development by Australian Arts Organisations (Sydney: Australia Council, 1997).

regional arts development.³² The film industry could be applauded for fending off Americanisation via the market and preserving space for national culture; it fostered some works that challenged and entertained; but there was sometimes a dogged earnestness in films that exemplified 'the hybridised Australian negotiating a space for herself within a suburbia that is also negotiating its forms and meanings across grids of ethnic and cultural diversity'.³³

Understandings

The refrain for the 1980s and 1990s was globalisation. At its simplest, it was taken to mean that the barriers between countries and regions were becoming redundant: economic growth, generated by the flourishing of world markets, transcended national borders and trumped community interests. Before 1980 the term itself was rarely encountered (in the Australian case, there is no entry for it in the first edition of the *Macquarie Dictionary*, 1981). It may have been sparked by an influential article by Theodore Levitt, 'The globalization of markets', in the *Harvard Business Review* in 1983,³⁴ and certainly the message that governments must be willing to compete in global markets was taken up rapidly – hence Bob Hawke's claim that 'if the world... does not trust you, it can ruin you'. But the definitive fillip was the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War, and the consequent assertion that we now had 'one world'. All countries, it was asserted, would move towards the liberal 'free-market model' and democracy would follow.

Critics of the new dispensation were not wanting. Some economists warned that corporate raiders and speculators would drive the economy down and that markets should not be deregulated but reconstructed for the new conditions. Political scientists indicated that wholesale commitment to a monocausal explanation (globalisation) vitiated political debate and stifled the fresh thinking needed to address future change.³⁵ Such was the ferment

³² This paragraph draws heavily on Lisanne Gibson, 'The Arts as Industry', *Media International Australia, Incorporating Culture and Policy*, 90 (1999): 107–122, and on Graeme Turner, 'Australian Film and National Identity in the 1990s', in Geoffrey Stokes (ed.), *The Politics of Identity in Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 185–92.

³³ Turner's description of the protagonist in *The Heartbreak Kid*, in 'Australian Film and National Identity in the 1990s', p. 190.

³⁴ Theodore Levitt, 'The Globalization of Markets', Harvard Business Review, 61, 3 (1983): 92–102.

³⁵ Hugh Stretton, *Political Essays* (Melbourne: Georgian House, 1987), pp. 23–53; Hugh Emy, *Remaking Australia: The State, the Market and Australia's Future* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993); James Walter, *Tunnel Vision: The Failure of Political Imagination* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996).

over globalisation and so committed was the media elite that such voices were rarely heard. As growth resumed in the 1990s, the promises of the reformers appeared to be borne out and Cassandras could be ignored. The collapse of the command economies with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 seemed, at a stroke, to undermine the critique of contemporary capitalism. The existence of an alternative system of economic development had long given oxygen not only to socialists, but also to progressive critics of liberal excesses and market failures. That some modern states operated on alternative principles underwrote the idea that there was a spectrum from unrestrained markets at one end to command economies at the other – with options in between. The sense that there were options was a resource on which those who sought to 'civilise' capitalism could draw. Now, it was claimed, there could be no other option: those continuing to dissent were painted as in thrall to the failed ideas of the past.

Globalisation's rhetoric of openness and freedom, and the promise of better conditions, implied the freedom of people to move wherever it suited them. The last quarter of the twentieth century saw an increase in population movements – many fleeing war and deprivation, but many also learning from improved communications about disparities in life chances and choosing, as economic migrants, to search for better opportunities in the developed economies. A country built on migration such as Australia could take opportunities to build its skill base. The Hawke government promoted diversified immigration as means of promoting competitive advantage, while the Keating government aimed at a broad agenda of social and economic modernisation – both building upon the cultural pluralism first promoted by Whitlam and Fraser, but now in terms recognisably tied to globalisation.³⁶

This was not without problems. During the hard years of the early 1980s, with the economy deteriorating and unemployment increasing, non-discriminatory immigration was challenged. In 1984 a prominent historian, Geoffrey Blainey, suggested that the level of Asian immigration might strain public acceptance and engender national fragmentation. Subsequently, the Opposition leader John Howard called for 'one Australia' and suggested slowing Asian immigration in the interests of social cohesion, though his challenge to the then bipartisan policy of multiculturalism cost him his party leadership and he soon recanted. In 1988 a significant report from a

³⁶ Laksiri Jayasuriya, 'Multiculturalism', in Galligan and Roberts (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian Politics*, p. 349.

committee to advise on Australia's immigration policies identified such levels of community concern, faltering support and lack of consensus that it recommended abandoning the term multiculturalism.

In 1992, responding to the problem of controlling asylum seekers and to populist appeals against 'illegal' entry, the Keating government introduced a policy of mandatory detention whereby anyone entering the country without a valid visa could be compulsorily detained until the validity of any refugee claim was determined, and then deported. When Howard won office in 1996, he endorsed diversity and pluralist policies, but he abolished the Office of Multicultural Affairs and the Bureau of Immigration, Multicultural and Population Research, and stressed what were implicitly Anglo-cultural 'core' values and national homogeneity. Multiculturalism had proved a useful means of meeting the needs of ethnic communities and of managing cultural diversity relatively peacefully, but when parties and leaders began to contest its elements and bipartisan commitment eroded, it lost broad popular support.³⁷ And it was always a provocation to those opposed to tolerance and pluralism, a group to whom Howard's reservations gave licence and whose stridency would become a potent catalyst for generalised anxiety.

Among those least advantaged by reform, there was a strong populist reaction, engendered by Pauline Hanson's 'anti-political' One Nation party. An endorsed Liberal candidate, Hanson had been disowned by that party during the 1996 federal campaign for railing against the attention paid to Indigenous people, but still won a seat in the House of Representatives. She then founded the One Nation party, which fostered anti-Indigenous and anti-immigrant sentiment, but in essence appealed to the anxieties of all who had lost control of their economic fortunes. It captured 22.7 per cent of the vote in the Queensland election of 1998, but could not translate its grievances into a program and lacked the sophistication and resources to survive.

Governments could not remain unconscious of these problems and they adopted measures to shore up the social fabric, the sense of community and civic connection. Some opportunities were provided by 'official' occasions such as the Australian Bicentenary in 1988. Others were manufactured: Keating initiated a debate about the desirability of a republic; Australia, in common with many western countries, promoted civics and citizenship programs in the 1990s; and Australian leaders made vigorous attempts to claim 'history' for their cause.

³⁷ James Jupp, From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Planning for the 1988 Bicentenary had a long lead-time. Historians, following a suggestion from Ken Inglis, began preparing a collective history in 1977. Fraser established a planning authority in 1980 to work with the States in coordinating a national program of celebrations. Preparation began for a World Expo: this was staged in Brisbane in 1988. A First Fleet re-enactment was undertaken as a private venture, leaving Portsmouth in May 1987, arriving in Botany Bay in January and entering Sydney Harbour on 26 January 1988. The Indigenous community also staged a march for 'Freedom, Justice and Hope' in Sydney on the Australia Day holiday. There were many celebratory events around Sydney Harbour, in other State capitals and in thousands of regional communities. This inaugurated a year-long program of celebrations, many with a determinedly multicultural flavour. The Queen opened Australia's new Parliament House in May 1988. The Hawke government benefitted from these commemorative occasions; 'expo tourism' brought in the dollars; the research and publication of histories and encyclopaedias was a boon; but the effects on promoting popular engagement in a community with shared aspirations and loyalties were less tangible.

Republicanism had been on the rise since the 1970s, especially after the dismissal of Whitlam in 1975 by the 'Queen's representative', Governor-General John Kerr. The Australian Republican Movement (ARM) was formed in 1991. This immediately provoked a vigorous opposition movement, Australians for a Constitutional Monarchy (ACM). Keating allied with the republican cause explicitly to encourage 'a renewed sense of national unity'.³⁸ After the 1993 election, he set up a committee of eminent Australians, led by the chair of the ARM, Malcolm Turnbull. The committee duly reported, and Keating proposed to take a minimalist model based on its recommendations to the 1996 election. The Coalition parties' response was to propose a people's convention to consider the issue. When Howard, an avowed monarchist, won the 1996 election, he proceeded with this plan. In late 1997 the convention recommended a republic – with parliamentary appointment, rather than direct election, of a head of state – to be put to the people at a referendum. The Yes campaign focused on arguments about maturity and independence; the No campaign mounted a simple but effective attack on the 'politicians' republic'. While polls had for the first time shown majority support for a republic in the early 1990s, divisions over its nature, especially the appointment of the head of state, quickly eroded support. The referendum failed.

38 Paul Keating, 'Securing Our Future', in Mark Ryan (ed.), Advancing Australia: The Speeches of Paul Keating, Prime Minister (Sydney: Big Picture Publications, 1995), p. 164.

In 1994 Keating established a Civics Expert Group (CEG) to 'recommend a non-partisan program to enable all Australians to participate more fully and effectively in the civic life of our country, and thereby to promote good citizenship'.39 The subsequent CEG report eschewed nationalist or cultural identity in favour of civic identity: citizenship arising from political negotiation rather than ancestry or heritage. The civic deficit was to be made good by recovering histories of such negotiation, and capacities could be developed by civics education programs. Keating responded that 'civics, properly taught, is no more political than maths or English or woodwork', highlighting the separation of civic from cultural knowledge so that it could represent no threat to multiculturalism or identity politics.⁴⁰ With the 1996 change of government, the CEG enterprise was reworked to give greater attention to the history of political institutions, the roles of leading public figures and recognition that 'civil society has been built around the family, voluntary associations...and small enterprises'.41 The stress on history and the way it gave rise to essential characteristics represented not only an appeal to tradition but a more traditional approach to the teaching of civics.

The CEG foreshadowed, in a minor key, themes that soon became known as 'the history wars'. Keating, in his third attempt at promoting a discourse of national unity, made bold historical claims about a people who had faced tribulations, endured betrayals (for example, by the British at Singapore), made grievous mistakes (especially in relation to the treatment of Indigenous Australians) but had won through and were now open to the world, tolerant of difference, and ready to engage with Asia. He was buying into a dispute that was already in train. Disquiet about critical history had reached the public domain in 1993 when Geoffrey Blainey took issue not only with an equally prominent scholar, Manning Clark, but also with a younger generation of historians for over-emphasising the sins of the settler society, accusing them of purveying 'black armband history'. Keating was setting himself against the 'old Australia' that Blainey defended. It was big picture politics, a history in accord with the Labor agenda. Howard (whom Keating had derided in passing as 'yesterday's man') detested it as an 'insidious attempt' to rewrite the past in a partisan cause, and immediately he was elected set out to right the balance.

³⁹ Civics Expert Group, 'Summary', Whereas the People...Civics and Citizenship Education (Canberra: AGPS, 1994), p. 2.

⁴⁰ Paul Keating, 'Civics Education', in Ryan (ed.), Advancing Australia, p. 105.

⁴¹ David Kemp, quoted in James Walter and Margaret MacLeod, *The Citizens' Bargain: A Documentary History of Australian Views since* 1890 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002), p. 268.

Howard challenged Keating's insistence that Australians must acknowledge not only the achievements of the past, but also the painful errors: 'I do not take the black armband view of Australian history', he said, borrowing Blainey's epithet, 'I believe that the balance sheet of Australian history is overwhelmingly a positive one'.42 Keating was pandering to the prejudices of elites within universities who were denigrating the achievements of 'the battlers' for whom Howard spoke. Howard would have none of this 'guilt industry'. Joining the battle was a number of historians, some from outside the academy, who challenged the approach and the accuracy of what they said was the dominance of the left and the black armband view in the academy. They were enthusiastically echoed by a coterie of op-ed writers for the pervasive Murdoch press, ensuring that their campaign to demolish large swathes of contemporary historical scholarship, and the reputations of a target group of 'progressives', gained wide dissemination. These critics concentrated on what they claimed to be misrepresentations of the destruction of Indigenous Australian society by the settler 'invasion'. There were substantial, detailed responses to these charges of misrepresentation and inaccuracy from those so accused, but they battled to gain equal time in the popular media and lost ground in the public agencies devoted to history and education. It was from the ranks of the insurgent historians that the Howard government appointed its nominees to boards, such as the National Museum, to educational consultancies, and to curriculum development agencies. Thus Howard effectively reversed the valencies of debate on a front that Keating had chosen.⁴³

On one front, however, Howard may have overplayed his hand by resisting the tenor of the debate on reconciliation with Indigenous people, and refusing to accept the demand that the government should say 'sorry' for past wrongs they had suffered. It was an extension of his insistence that Australia's settlement had mostly been benign and that there had been only sporadic 'problems' for which the current generation could hardly be held accountable. This was directly at odds with a speech given by Keating in Redfern, Sydney, in 1992 in which he had demanded that Australians recognise 'it was we who did the dispossessing...took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional ways of life...committed the murders...took the children from their mothers'.⁴⁴ More importantly, it was at odds with a significant

⁴² John Howard in Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 29 October 1996, p. 5976.

⁴³ Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, *The History Wars*, new edn (Melbourne University Press, 2004).

⁴⁴ Paul Keating, 'The Redfern Park Speech', 10 December 1992, in Ryan (ed.), Advancing Australia, p. 228.

recalibration of Australian understandings of the past consequent upon the High Court's *Mabo* decision of June 1992 that overturned the doctrine of *terra nullius*.⁴⁵ That doctrine held that Aboriginal people as nomads had not established possession, so the land was open to settler occupancy when Europeans arrived. The 1992 decision instead recognised that Indigenous Australians had legal rights, native title, if they could claim unbroken traditional and cultural links to land.

Following Mabo, the Keating government enacted legislation in 1993 to regulate native title claims. It set high thresholds for successful claims, making demonstration of traditional and unbroken links difficult, so that extinguishment of native title after long periods of settler occupation and use was the outcome in many cases. After a subsequent High Court decision in the Wik case (1996) found that native title persisted in areas of Cape York where pastoral leases coexisted, the Howard government amended the native title legislation again in 1998 to limit native title claims. Yet these cases, along with a controversial report, Bringing Them Home (1997) - also initially commissioned by Keating - into the systematic removal of Indigenous children from their families by successive Australian governments, began to change opinion.⁴⁶ In conjunction with these developments, a generation of controversial Indigenous activists, such as Noel Pearson, drew attention to the ruinous effects of welfare dependency on their communities and began to demand a devolution of democratic decision making to the community level, with a corresponding 'right to an economy'.47

By 2000, 'in the court of public opinion the reality of past ill-treatment was not significantly disputed', but opinion remained divided on what that should mean in practical terms.⁴⁸ One reading of the data showed that 'for Australians, reconciliation was largely about non-Indigenous Australians acknowledging the past and Indigenous Australians taking responsibility for their future'.⁴⁹ In refusing to accept the first of these propositions, Howard was increasingly out of step with public opinion. One of Kevin Rudd's first actions as prime minister after Howard's eventual defeat was a moving

- 45 Murray Goot and Tim Rowse (eds), *Make a Better Offer: The Politics of Mabo* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1994).
- 46 Anna Haebich, Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000 (Perth: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000).
- 47 Noel Pearson, *Our Right to Take Responsibility* (Cairns: Noel Pearson and Associates, 2000).
- 48 Murray Goot and Tim Rowse, Divided Nation? Indigenous Affairs and the Imagined Public (Melbourne University Press, 2007), pp. 3–6, 137–60.
- 49 Ibid., p. 150.

apology to Indigenous Australians, which came to be seen both as a repudiation of Howard's mean-spiritedness and a symbolic new beginning.

Outcomes

The key factor influencing most lives is the relationship between the world of work and of domestic circumstances. Labour market shifts and family transitions are good indicators not only of the way life is lived, but also of the impact of changes such as those discussed above: here we turn to the outcomes evident in ordinary lives.

How and where did people work? Rural and mining employment had declined throughout the century; to this was now added a decline in manufacturing. Growth was in the service sector: community and business services, finance, property, recreation and entertainment and personal services. The most pronounced shift was away from manual and trade work to professional and clerical employment. Employers were no longer willing to maintain large permanent workforces; casualisation, outsourcing and the emergence of labour hire companies were the result. The most significant change was the increasing participation of women in the workforce: from 25 per cent of the total workforce in 1960 to nearly 44 per cent in 2000. Casualisation and the increase of part-time work prompted more women to take paid employment, often because families needed two incomes to cope. Women occupied many of the service sector jobs created in the period. Female employment increased more than that of males in most years after the 1960s. A clear majority of the female population aged 15 to 64 was in paid employment in the last two decades of the twentieth century: 55 per cent in the 1980s, nearly 64 per cent in the 1990s. The dual-income family was common. The practice of outsourcing and contracting introduced even middle-class, white-collar employees to the reality of precarious employment. Though, as noted earlier, Australia had the best productivity performance among large economies in the 1990s, rewards were skewed: between 1982 and 1994, the top 10 per cent of income earners gained \$100 dollars a week, the bottom 10 per cent gained \$11, but the 80 per cent between the two ends of the spectrum suffered an actual decline.⁵⁰ Inequalities increased still further in the remaining years of the century.

⁵⁰ This paragraph draws on Glenn Withers, 'Living and Working in Australia', in Keith Hancock (ed.), *Australian Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 5–11; Tiffen and Gittins, *How Australia Compares*, pp. 65, 69; and Stuart Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, 3rd edn (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 153.

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It is not surprising that happiness was elusive. The new work patterns had implications for security, enduring relationships, financial pressure and gender expectations.⁵¹ For all the rhetoric of liberation, the two-income family regime was exhausting; changes in gender roles led to tension and conflict over allocation of responsibilities; women reported feeling guilt and frustration.⁵² The social researcher Hugh Mackay dubbed the 1990s the age of 'the big angst'; sociologist Michael Pusey found a people well aware that they were living in a risk society with stretched and hollowed-out incomes and with weakened social solidarity.⁵³ At lower levels still, rising housing and rental costs took a larger share of the earnings of those on less-than-average weekly incomes, and an underclass of people in newly precarious positions took to the road in search of 'opportunities'.⁵⁴ The roller-coaster trajectory of stocks and shares, with the uncritical validation of freewheeling entrepreneurs such as Alan Bond capitalising on the new latitude to borrow and invest abroad for mergers, acquisitions, high-risk share deals and outright fraud, engendered a cynicism that would not disappear. Such perceptions had feedback effects on politics.

Some did well in the new regime: for those who were educated, cosmopolitan, post-materialist in their aspirations and adept in capitalising on change, the possibilities offered by the 'clever country' were manifest. Others were less engaged by such possibilities than by the damage to what they held dear.⁵⁵ For those challenged rather than enlivened by change, continuous reform provided little certainty about the future. It was not only that some people were more exposed to the pain as jobs disappeared, or career structures dissolved, but also that they sensed diminishing opportunities for political traction in a policy process where expert opinion always seemed to have an edge.⁵⁶

- 51 Alan Hayes et al., *Families Then and Now*, 1980–2010 (Canberra: Australian Government and Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2010).
- 52 Hugh Mackay, *Reinventing Australia: The Mind and Mood of Australia in the* 90s (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1993), pp. 24–54.
- 53 Ibid., pp. 1–20; Michael Pusey, The Experience of Middle Australia: The Dark Side of Economic Reform (Cambridge University Press, 2003).
- 54 Cf. Leonie Sandercock, 'The Cities in the Eighties', in John McLaren (ed.), A Nation Apart: Essays in Honour of Andrew Fabinyi (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1983), pp. 67–84; Adele Horin et al., 'In Search of the Boom', in Robert Pullan (ed.), The Way We Are (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985), pp. 21–37.
- 55 See Pusey, The Experience of Middle Australia.
- 56 Cf. A.F. Davies, 'Politics in a Knowledgeable Society', in *Essays in Political Sociology* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1972), p. 3.

Howard's resort to 'middle-class welfare' may have stemmed the tide to some extent, but the consciousness of inequity would re-emerge. The move from direct to indirect taxation, with the introduction of a goods and services tax (GST) in 2000, for example, had regressive effects: it increased revenue and thus the capacity to invest in welfare and services, but as low-income families were obliged to spend a greater proportion of total income on necessities, the price increases caused by the tax eroded the benefits of direct payments.⁵⁷ Incentives to 'take responsibility' for health (in the form of a substantial rebate, commencing in 1999, for those taking up private health insurance), or to exercise choice in education (with a significant increase from 1998 in Commonwealth funding for private providers, at the cost of the public system), disproportionately rewarded the middle class.

In consequence, by 1998 the *Mackay Report* was detecting a 'turning inward' from political, social and economic issues.⁵⁸ Other social science research detected corresponding trends. By the late 1990s, 74 per cent of survey respondents had little confidence in federal government; 84 per cent distrusted both major parties; and there had been a 30 per cent drop in confidence in government over the preceding 13 years.⁵⁹ Michael Pusey's survey of 'middle Australia' showed that there was more consistent support for old economic institutions than for the new market-based and deregulated institutional arrangements advocated by political elites; and that, overall, reformers had not won consensus for 'the new consensus'.⁶⁰ Peter Saunders summarised an extensive survey of social attitudes by remarking on 'a sense of alienation and powerlessness in which a gulf has opened up between the values and priorities of ordinary Australians and those in positions of political power and influence'.⁶¹ Observers found the disparity between economic growth, which had resumed with increasing velocity after 1993, and broad

- 59 Elim Papadikis, 'Constituents of Confidence and Mistrust in Australian Institutions', Australian Journal of Political Science, 34, I (1999): 75–94; Ian Marsh and David Yencken, Into the Future: The Neglect of the Long Term in Australian Politics (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2004). See also Scott Brenton, 'Public Confidence in Australian Democracy', Democratic Audit of Australia (May 2005) < http://democratic.audit.anu.edu.au/categories/ngos_ partfrm.htm>, accessed 26 April 2012.
- 60 Pusey, The Experience of Middle Australia.
- 61 Peter Saunders, The Ends and Means of Welfare: Coping with Economic and Social Change in Australia (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁵⁷ McNamara et al., 'Prosperity for All?', p. 30.

⁵⁸ Hugh Mackay, The Wrap: A Distillation of Key Themes from 25 Years of the Mackay Report (Sydney: Mackay Research Pty Ltd, 2003).

expressions of angst difficult to credit. But such observers tended to come from the knowledge elite. The people had not forgotten the hard truths of the 1980s, and while they accepted that they were relatively better off in the 1990s, there was little need to tell them that Australia had arrived at 'the end of certainty': they were acutely conscious of living in a risk society.

The new millennium

8

MURRAY GOOT

'At the beginning of the last decade of the twentieth century', John Edwards, an economist and former adviser to Paul Keating observed two years before the global financial crisis (GFC), 'something happened in Australia that had never happened before'. What had happened and continued into the new century was 'an economic expansion so sustained, so deep and widespread in its impact, so novel in its characteristics, that the lives of Australians, their hopes and plans, their work and leisure, their wealth and incomes, the way they saw themselves and their country and the ways it related to other countries, even the way they thought about their past, began to be changed by it'.¹

Until its defeat in 2007, the Liberal–National Party Coalition government led by John Howard was buoyed by the boom. Elected in 1996, Howard's campaign was informed by research suggesting that Labor voters had come to feel that they had been ignored in favour of 'minorities'. Under Labor, it was the 'minorities' – not 'ordinary people' – who 'were being listened to and were the winners'. Those on 'welfare' were winners at 'the bottom' and those with 'lurks and perks' were winners at 'the top'. But winners, on this view, were also the new and apparently powerful social constituencies: among others, migrants, Indigenous people, feminists, gays and the Greens.²

Re-elected in 1998, despite its promise to introduce a goods and services tax (GST), the Coalition increased its majority in October 2001, thanks to the terrorist attacks in the United States on 9/11 and its attitude towards asylum seekers who arrived in September 2001. Its punitive policy on asylum seekers helped it take votes from Pauline Hanson's One Nation, a party of the radical right that in 1998 had won 8.4 per cent of the vote. In 2004 the Coalition increased its majority again and won a majority in the Senate; low interest

I John Edwards, Quiet Boom: How the Long Economic Upswing Is Changing Australia and Its Place in the World (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2006), p. 1.

² Paul Kelly, *The March of Patriots: The Struggle for Modern Australia* (Melbourne University Press, 2009), pp. 242–3.

rates, the threat of terrorism and the weakness of the Labor leadership all worked in its favour.³ But his Senate majority encouraged Howard to overreach on industrial relations and helped undo him.

Under Kevin Rudd, whose popularity in the opinion polls saw him replace Kim Beazley as Labor's leader in 2006, the Labor Party defeated the Coalition in November 2007; the economic boom could not save Howard, who lost his seat. In June 2010 the Labor caucus removed Rudd as prime minister; although his economic policies had helped shield Australia from global recession, his popularity with the public and among his close colleagues had plummeted. In 2010 Julia Gillard, Rudd's deputy, became Australia's first female prime minister. Gillard led Labor to an election in that year, which produced a minority government. In the Senate, the balance of power rested with the Greens who increased their vote from 7.7 per cent in 2004 to 13.1 per cent in 2010.

Economic growth, globalisation and the commodities boom

By the turn of the century the Australian economy had proved itself 'the miracle economy'. Between 1990 and 2005 the value of houses, the principal form of household wealth, had more than doubled, the average price of Australian shares had trebled, and the value of Australian companies listed on the stock exchange had increased sixfold. With over 2 million jobs created between 1991 and the GFC, the number of employees had grown by over a quarter; unemployment had dropped to a level not seen since the 1970s.⁴

The impact of the GFC was marked. In 2006 gross domestic product (GDP) grew at nearly 5 per cent and in 2007 at about 3 per cent, but in 2008 growth dropped to about 1 per cent. From 2009 annual growth averaged about 2 per cent. What helped Australia through was a decline in the value of the dollar, rising prices for commodities, and the Rudd government's stimulus package – including \$14.7 billion for school buildings, cash handouts costing \$12.7 billion, \$6.6 billion for public housing, \$2.7 billion for home

4 Edwards, Quiet Boom, pp. 6-8.

³ Murray Goot and Ian Watson, 'Explaining Howard's Success: Social Structure, Issue Agendas and Party Support, 1993–2004', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 42, 2 (2007): 264, 268–9.

insulation, and a first home buyers' grant – though the size of the package as well as its composition remained controversial.⁵

Australia's economic growth was generated, in part, by the resources boom in oil, gas, coal, iron ore, gold and other minerals. Energy and mining – especially coal and iron ore – accounted for 35 per cent of Australia's export earnings in 2000, but 55 per cent in 2010 as a result of big price increases. Nonetheless, the energy and mining sectors accounted directly for no more than 8.4 per cent of the national economy even at the height of the boom; in 2010 the finance industry accounted for 10.6 per cent of the economy, and manufacturing 9.3 per cent. Mining was one of the smallest job creators, generating just 1.7 per cent of total employment.⁶ Most of the after-tax profits from the mining industry went to shareholders outside Australia; in 2005 profits were four times greater than the wages paid.⁷ Exaggerating their contribution helped the mining companies mobilise public opinion against Labor's proposed Resources Super Profits Tax in 2010 and sealed Rudd's fate.⁸

World demand also pushed up the value of the Australian dollar. Though the rising dollar was often reported as if it indexed the nation's power and prestige, it disadvantaged local manufacturing, especially clothing and footwear, by making imports cheaper, and it hampered exporters other than miners because it made exports more expensive in price-sensitive markets. Rural producers, affected by drought from 2003 to 2009, were doubly disadvantaged. A high dollar, together with high wages and rents in the retail sector, made internet shopping more attractive.

The mining boom was widely believed to have produced a two-speed economy, with the resource-rich states of Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory growing more rapidly than the rest of the country. It also contributed to a general rise in incomes by increasing the demand for labour across the country.⁹ But Australia had a three-speed economy, the economist Max Corden argued: mining in the fast lane, manufacturing

⁵ Lenore Taylor and David Uren, *Shitstorm: Inside Labor's Darkest Days* (Melbourne University Press, 2010), pp. 78–9, 214–15, 247.

⁶ Peter Hartcher, *The Sweet Spot: How Australia Made Its Own Luck and Now Could Throw it All Away* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2011), pp. 7, 235.

⁷ Edwards, Quiet Boom, pp. 93-4.

⁸ Barrie Cassidy, *The Party Thieves: The Real Story of the 2010 Election* (Melbourne University Press, 2010), pp. 81–4.

⁹ Phil Garton, 'The Resources Boom and the Two-Speed Economy', *Economic Round-up*, 3 (2008) <http://www.treasury.gov.au/>, accessed 17 February 2012.

plus other export and import-competing industries in the slow lane, and the non-tradable sector in the middle lane. $^{\scriptscriptstyle 10}$

Exports and imports, one measure of 'globalisation', jointly accounted for about a third of GDP at the beginning of 'the long upswing'. In 2005 they accounted for 40 per cent, with China displacing the United States as Australia's second biggest export market after Japan. The main exports, apart from iron ore and coal – easily the two biggest – were gold, petroleum, natural gas, education and tourism. Foreign companies increased their investment in Australia and Australian companies lifted their investment overseas. From 1991 to 2005 foreign investment in Australia more than doubled while the value of Australian investment abroad increased fivefold. Australia also became much more indebted to the rest of the world as the value of the country's imports exceeded the value of its exports – an imbalance that long preceded the boom. Encouraging foreign investment in Australia helped contain this private debt and service it.¹¹

Government debt was a different story. Revenue grew so substantially – not least from corporate taxation – that in almost every year the Coalition government was able to run a surplus, some of which it transferred to a Future Fund to cover future liabilities for public service pensions, while cutting personal income tax and increasing transfer payments to house-holds. The Howard government's largesse included over s6t billion from its program of privatisation – Telstra, the communications giant, above all, but also the airports, the Commonwealth Bank, Qantas and properties such as the R.G. Casey Building that housed the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.¹² Such measures, initiated by Labor and continued by the Coalition, came at a cost: the government forewent the revenue from businesses it no longer owned, and now rented buildings it had sold.

When the GFC struck, the Rudd government went into debt to limit the impact. Net public debt as a proportion of GDP was low compared with the member countries of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).¹³ Nevertheless, the size of the public debt was becoming an index of the competence of governments. Labor and the Coalition

¹⁰ W. Max Corden, 'The Dutch Disease in Australia: Policy Options for a Three-Speed Economy' (2011) https://crawford.anu.edu.au/acde/publications/publish/papers/ wp2011/wp_Econ_2011_14.pdf>, accessed 6 April 2012.

¹¹ Edwards, Quiet Boom, pp. 8–10, 13, 15, 64–70, 88–91.

¹² Katrina Di Marco, Mitchell Pirie and Wilson Au-Yeung, A History of Public Debt in Australia (2009), p. 12 http://treasury.gov.au, accessed 16 February 2012.

¹³ Ibid., p. 5; Ian McLean, Why Australia Prospered: The Shifting Sources of Economic Growth (Princeton University Press, 2013), p. 243.

vied with each other in promising budgets that would minimise debt. While government debt fell, household debt rose – though not nearly as rapidly as the value of household assets. Taking advantage of interest rates that were relatively low for much of the period, householders allowed their borrowing to increase. With the 'suburban castle' (homes of four or more bedrooms) accounting for 60 per cent of the 1.2 million homes and apartments built between 1994–95 and 2003–04, 'McMansions' were 'the defining structure of the Howard years'.¹⁴ Booming house prices allowed households to borrow, mainly to buy 'bigger, newer and more opulently equipped' houses, but also 'bigger and better cars, television sets and refrigerators' as well as 'broadband access, mobile phones, iPods, home computers, and home theatres'.¹⁵ From 2004, as the dollar rose, overseas travel took off; in 2009 outbound tourism exceeded inbound tourism and the gap continued to grow; inbound tourism, boosted briefly by Sydney's hosting of the 2000 Olympics, declined from 2006. Nonetheless, in the aftermath of the GFC, savings increased sharply and the proportion of households owning shares (34 per cent in 2010) fell. Housing prices also fell, though not sharply.

Claiming it would encourage choice, the federal government subsidised private expenditure on child care, schools and health. For every dollar the Howard government spent on government schools, it spent two on private schools. Between 1999 and 2009 enrolments in non-government schools – mostly low-fee – grew by 21.3 per cent; government schools grew by just 1.2 per cent.¹⁶ An increasingly segregated system hardly enhanced the education of the majority of students, those attending comprehensive state schools. In 2004 Labor had alarmed 'aspirational' voters by declaring rich schools unworthy of public subsidy and they retained their government payments. In 2010 the Gillard government commissioned the businessman David Gonski to report on funding. Though his terms of reference protected wealthy schools, the non-government sector insisted that funding continue to be indexed at a rate higher than inflation. The cost of funding disadvantaged schools adequately, a subject of negotiation with the States, also helped stall the implementation of Gonski's recommendations.

Public subsidies for those on middle and upper incomes had been built into health policy when the Howard government introduced a non-means tested 30 per cent tax rebate on health insurance premiums and a tax surcharge on

¹⁴ George Megalogenis, The Longest Decade, rev. edn (Melbourne: Scribe, 2008), p. 297.

¹⁵ Edwards, Quiet Boom, pp. 56-8.

¹⁶ Marilyn Harrington, 'Australian Government Funding for Schools Explained', *Background Note* (Canberra: Parliamentary Library, 2011), pp. 18–19.

higher income earners not privately insured. As a result, the proportion of Australians covered by private health insurance increased from 34 per cent to 44 per cent.¹⁷ In 2012 the Gillard government persuaded the parliament to means-test the tax rebate while maintaining the tax penalty for those who failed to insure. It also increased the contribution to aged care accommodation required from the better off. At the turn of the century, those most dependent on physical health and disability services – people aged 65 or more – were the fastest growing age group; in the first decade their number grew by over 500,000, a substantial proportion being over 85. Problems of mental health, more evenly spread, attracted national attention as well. For the first time, national governments promised substantial funds for both disability and mental health programs. Obesity also emerged as a potential health priority; in the 2007–08 National Health Survey 61 per cent of adults were deemed overweight or obese.¹⁸

Income, wealth and welfare

Australia ranked fifteenth for income equality among the 30 OECD members early in the century, but tenth worst for the proportion living in relative poverty.¹⁹ Compared with 1995, every quintile had increased its income but the top quintile, which enjoyed real incomes two-thirds higher than in the mid-1990s, improved its position more than the rest. Inequality increased most in the mineral-rich State of Western Australia; as a country, Western Australia would have been almost as unequal as the United States while Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory would have been among the most equal in the OECD. Inequality increased sharply among Australians aged 65 or more prior to the GFC, mainly due to rapidly increasing incomes from investments, property and shares. And inequality was more marked among those who lived on their own – now about a quarter of the population.²⁰

¹⁷ John Howard, Lazarus Rising: A Personal and Political Biography, rev. edn (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2011), p. 487; Private Health Insurance Administration Council, 'Membership and Coverage' (June 2012) http://www.phiac.gov.au/resources/file/ membershipdata/MC%20Jun12.pdf>, accessed 6 November 2012.

¹⁸ *Australia's Health 2010* (Canberra: Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, 2010), pp. 21, 31, 34, 114.

¹⁹ Growing Unequal? Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries (Paris: OECD, 2008), pp. 25, 285.

²⁰ Ibid. pp. 27–9; Peter Whiteford, 'Are the Rich Getting Richer and the Poor Getting Poorer?', *Inside Story*, 28 September 2011 http://inside.org.au, accessed 10 December 2011.

The disproportionate increase in the income of the top decile focused public attention on the ways that senior executive incomes are determined. In the early 1980s the top 10 per cent of income earners received about one-quarter of national income. Between 1995 and 2008 the average annual improvement in these people's income was half as big again (4.5 per cent) as the increases enjoyed by those in the bottom decile (3.0 per cent). The top 1 per cent earned about 10 per cent of national income before the GFC, a higher proportion that at any time since 1951; the GFC reduced their share to 8.6 per cent. For those earning \$197,000 or more in 2007 – overwhelmingly men – non-salary income accounted for more of their earnings than income from salaries.²¹ Executive packages generated some disquiet; bankers, in particular, came in for regular censure. Beyond that, calls for greater equality were muted.

Closer integration of Australian business with the global economy and rapid technological change increased demand for the highly skilled – including English-speaking CEOs – and lifted their earnings. The growth in direct investment from overseas and the outsourcing by local and transnational corporations to sites overseas is likely to have reduced the demand for those with low skills.²² Greater inequality of income may have been caused by employers' sponsoring overseas workers in large numbers to fill skilled positions on a renewable basis. Inequality of wages and salaries was also affected by the growth in part-time employment, as the decline in annual hours worked was much greater in the bottom quintile than at the top.²³

Tax cuts benefitted high-salary earners and they benefitted from the halving of the capital gains tax in 1999; as income was converted into capital gains, half the benefits went to the top 5 per cent of income earners.²⁴ Labor, in Opposition, supported this move, though under Hawke Labor had introduced the capital gains tax on the principle that all income should taxed in the same way regardless of its source. Again, top income earners benefitted disproportionately from negative gearing on rental properties – a policy that also reduced housing for owner-occupiers – as deductions for maintaining houses and apartments greatly exceeded income from rents.²⁵ And top income

25 Megalogenis, The Longest Decade, p. 296.

²¹ Andrew Leigh, 'Mind the Gap', *Inside Story*, 13 May 2011 <http://inside.org.au>, accessed 10 December 2011; OECD, *Growing Income Inequality in OECD Countries: What Drives it and How Can Policy Tackle it?* (Paris: OECD, 2011), p. 5 <http://www.oecd.org>, accessed 24 November 2011; Anthony B. Atkinson and Andrew Leigh, 'The Distribution of Top Incomes in Australia', *Economic Record*, 83, 262 (2007): 247–61.

²² OECD, Growing Income Inequality in OECD Countries, pp. 8–10.

²³ Ibid., pp. 6-7.

²⁴ John Garnaut, 'Howard's Crackpot Capital Gains Tax Reforms Fail', Sydney Morning Herald, 6 September 2004.

earners benefitted from the introduction of concessional tax levels for contributions to superannuation. These concessions reduced revenue by \$24 billion in 2008–09, almost as much as the government spent on the old age pension. Under Gillard the Superannuation Guarantee, designed to reduce the increasing cost of the old age pension, was legislated to increase incrementally from 9 to 12 per cent by 2020. This extended the advantage enjoyed by full-time employees, predominantly men.

The distribution of wealth became increasingly unequal as well. In 2003– 04 the top 20 per cent of households by income held 2.4 times the net wealth of the lowest 20 per cent by income. By 2009–10 this ratio had jumped to 3.2. At the end of the decade, home ownership – 'the great "equaliser'' of wealth in Australia – was less of an equaliser than it was at the beginning.²⁶

Australia's social security system remained the most targeted in the OECD. Cash transfers reduced inequality significantly. For those of working age the poorest 20 per cent of households received 15 times as much as the richest 20 per cent of households, a ratio more than six times the OECD average and more than twice as high as the next ranked country (New Zealand).²⁷ Taking into account not only benefits (direct and indirect) but also taxes (direct and indirect), the overall welfare system remained highly redistributive. In 2003–04 households in the lowest 20 per cent of equivalent disposable income gained on average \$437 per week more than they paid in taxes, while those in the highest quintile lost on average \$628 per week net. Those in the second and third quintiles from the bottom gained \$354 and \$51 respectively, while those in the second quintile from the top lost \$188.²⁸

Pensioners with no private income fared best. Labor's 'massive redistribution to the poor' in the 2009–10 budget, under which aged pensions increased by 12 per cent in real terms for couples and by nearly twice as much for singles, was the largest single increase in real terms for single pensioners since the old-age pension had been introduced in 1908.²⁹

²⁶ Whiteford, 'Are the Rich Getting Richer and the Poor Getting Poorer?', p. 7

²⁷ Peter Whiteford, Gerry Redmond and Elisabeth Adamson, 'Middle Class Welfare in Australia: How Has the Distribution of Cash Benefits Changed since the 1980s?' *Australian Journal of Labour Economics*, 14, 2 (2011): 81, 85.

²⁸ Ann Harding, Quoc Ngu Vu and Alicia Payne, 'A Rising Tide? Income Inequality, the Social Safety Net and the Labour Market in Australia', in Jenny Corbett et al. (eds), Laggards and Leaders in Labour Market Reform: Comparing Japan and Australia (London: Routledge, 2009), p. 135.

²⁹ Peter Whiteford, ⁷Social Welfare and Class Warfare: The Give and Take of Budget Balancing', *Inside Story*, 10 May 2012 http://inside.org.au, accessed 10 May 2012.

Jobs, the unemployed and trade unions

Unemployment, as officially measured, was over 6 per cent in 2000 - well above average levels in the 1960s (1.7 per cent) and 1970s (3.7 per cent), but lower than average levels in the 1980s (7.6 per cent) and the early 1990s (9.2 per cent). It dropped to 4.2 per cent in the last months of the Howard years. Thereafter, it hovered at around 5 per cent. But these figures tell only part of the story.

Pleading a tight labour market, employers persuaded governments to boost their access, through immigration, to skilled workers; from an intake of 92,270 in 1999–2000, immigration reached 157,000 in 2005–06 and climbed slightly higher after Howard lost office. In addition, a growing proportion entered the country as 'temporary' workers. The '457 visas', introduced by the Howard government in 1996, allowed employers to sponsor skilled migrants without having to show there was any shortage; in 2007-08 the annual intake reached 110,000 before slipping to 101,000 in 2008–09 with the GFC. While the majority occupied managerial and professional positions, a large minority occupied less skilled positions. Even larger numbers of lower skilled labour entered on working holidays: backpackers wanted for agricultural harvesting, and overseas students for the hospitality and cleaning industries; in 2008–09 the number reached 188,000.30

Meanwhile, the long-term unemployed - those unemployed for two years or more - grew to over 300,000: from 16 per cent in 1990 (5 per cent unemployed for more than five years) to 43 per cent in 2009 (23 per cent for more than five years). By 2010 those unable to work and on the Disability Support Pension (800,000) outnumbered those on unemployment benefits.³¹ As unemployment fell, the unemployed were increasingly the most disadvantaged: 'Indigenous people, people of mature age, people with disabilities, and people with social barriers such as homelessness, addictions or mental illness'.³² Increasingly, welfare as a citizen's right was challenged by welfare as an act of 'mutual obligation'. Both the long-term unemployed and those on the disability pension came under renewed scrutiny. The return of a

³⁰ Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Population Flows: Immigration Aspects, 2008-2009 Edition, pp. 58, 64, http://www.immi.gov.au/media/publications/ statistics/popflows2008-09/pop-flows.pdf>, accessed 7 November 2012; Ian Watson, 'Bridges, Traps & Half-Way Houses: Casualisation and Labour Market Transitions in Australia' (2011), p. 22 < http://ianwatson.com.au/pubs>, accessed 10 January 2012. 31 Ibid.

³² Peter Davidson, 'Did "Work First" Work? The Role of Employment Assistance Programs in Reducing Long-Term Unemployment in Australia (1990-2008)', Australian Bulletin of Labour, 37, 1 (2011): 55-96.

'moralistic paternalism', displaced in the early post-war years by the welfare state, was reinforced by the threat of a 'demographic time bomb' that would see a growing proportion of the population dependent for their welfare on an ever-diminishing workforce.³³

In the new century roughly half the new jobs were part-time; of these, about a third were casual. The post-war pattern of full-time employment for male breadwinners had come to an end. Apart from a few industries suffering labour shortages – notably mining – the Australian workforce was vulnerable to insecurity of employment. Most part-time and casual jobs were poorly paid and made little provision for career advancement.³⁴ The level of underemployment – people employed for fewer hours than they wanted – was one symptom of this; underemployment was roughly twice the official level of unemployment. Another symptom of underemployment was the high proportion (by comparison with other OECD nations) of women in full-time domestic labour.³⁵ In addition, while 4 per cent of employers reported that their employees' skills were below what their organisation required, 37 per cent said their workers had skill levels *greater* than they required; over 30 per cent of those with university degrees were in jobs not requiring university qualifications.³⁶

The Australian government's approach to education – which saw the rise of league tables based on narrow-gauge testing, the dependence on fee-paying overseas students in universities, and competition from private providers plus income-contingent loans – failed to meet the core objectives of education and training. In 2006, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, only 54 per cent of Australians aged 15 to 74 whose first language was English had 'prose literacy' (for example, the ability to 'read' newspapers), only 53 per cent had 'document literacy' (such as the ability to read bus schedules) and only 47 per cent had 'numeracy and problem solving skills'.³⁷

Outside the mining sector, the availability of overseas workers and of casualised labour inhibited wage rises.³⁸ The wages share of GDP dropped

- 34 Ian Watson, 'Bridges or Traps? Casualisation and Labour Market Transitions in Australia', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 55, 1 (2013): 6–37; Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Labour Market Statistics*, July 2012, cat. 6105.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2012).
- 35 Ibid., p. 24; OECD Family Database (Paris: OECD, 2011) <www.oecd.org/social/family/ database>, accessed 20 February 2012.
- 36 Ian Watson, Skills in Use: Labour Market and Workplace Trends in Skills Use in Australia (Sydney: New South Wales Department of Education and Training, 2008), p. ix.
- 37 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, Summary Results, Australia, 2006, cat. no. 4228.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2007).
- 38 Watson, Skills in Use, p. 24.

³³ Watson, 'Bridges, Traps & Half-Way Houses', p. 23.

from around 56 per cent in 1999 to about 52 per cent in 2009. There was a corresponding increase in the share going to profits. The reduction of support for the unemployed, by both Coalition and Labor governments, was striking. At the turn of the century the unemployment allowance represented 46 per cent of median equivalent income (50 per cent being a common poverty line); by 2009 it had dropped to 36 per cent, as a proportion of average earnings the lowest in the OECD.³⁹ In 2012 a payment of \$35 a day, intended to force the unemployed into work, was derided by both business and welfare groups as inhumane and ineffective.⁴⁰ The unemployed were unable to organise effectively and aroused little sympathy in marginal electorates. Their interests were sacrificed by governments determined to produce a budget surplus.

Since unionised employees – especially women, the low-waged and the young – tend to earn more,⁴¹ the fall in the proportion of employees in unions also helped contain wages. Union density started to decline in the early 1980s; in 2011 it was 18 per cent, higher in the public sector (43 per cent) than in the private sector (13 per cent), and higher among permanent employees than among casuals.⁴² Membership declined not because of a fall in union sympathy – polls in the 1980s showed increased support for trade unions – but because of structural changes, including the decline in blue-collar work, the growth of freeriding (the proportion benefitting from union agreements grew to be twice as great as the number of union members), inadequate union organisation and the determination of employers to keep unions out.⁴³ In 1997 the Howard government strengthened the hands of employers by introducing individual contracts. These could be inconsistent with some of the minimum standards set out in awards provided they were consistent in net terms. The government also greatly expanded non-union collective agreements, outlawed

³⁹ Peter Whiteford, Submission to Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Inquiry into the Adequacy of the Allowance Payment System for Jobseekers and Others, the Appropriateness of the Allowance Payment System as a Support into Work and the Impact of the Changing Nature of the Labour Market http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/ Senate_Committees?url=eet_ctte/newstart_allowance/submissions.htm>, accessed 31 October 2012.

⁴⁰ Ross Gittins, 'PM Gillard: Hard Worker, Hard-Nosed, Hard to Read', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 December 2011.

⁴¹ David Peetz, Brave New Workplace: How Individual Contracts Are Changing Our Jobs (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2006), p. 89.

⁴² David Peetz, Unions in a Contrary World: The Future of the Australian Trade Union Movement (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 25–30; Australian Bureau of Statistics, Employee Earnings, Benefits and Trade Union Membership, Australia, August 2011, cat. no. 6310.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2012).

⁴³ Peetz, Brave New Workplace, pp. 31, 35-6, 89.

compulsory unionism, restricted lawful industrial action, increased sanctions for unions breaching industrial laws, and reduced the list of matters that could be covered by awards or arbitrated by tribunals.⁴⁴

The new industrial relations system introduced by the Howard government, known as 'WorkChoices', took this much further. Legislated in December 2005, it introduced additional restrictions and imposed heavier penalties on unions taking industrial action, limited union officials' right to enter workplaces, reduced the powers of independent tribunals even further and attempted to make State jurisdictions redundant. Above all, it removed protections against unfair dismissal for workers in firms with up to 100 employees, and where employers could claim that their dismissal was for 'operational reasons'. Individual contracts could ignore minimum provisions for penalty rates, overtime pay and other protected conditions. Within the OECD, the extent of the intervention on the side of employers was unprecedented.⁴⁵

In response, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) mobilised its members and used various media to reach beyond its union base. The 'Your Rights at Work' (YR@W) campaign – emphasising the impact of *WorkChoices* on individual, vulnerable employees and 'working families' rather than on unions or their members – ran for nearly two years, cost around \$30 million and shifted votes.⁴⁶

Foreign affairs, trade and global warming

For students of Australian foreign policy the new millennium dates not from 2000 but from 11 September 2001. Visiting Washington when the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were attacked, Howard committed Australia to 'provide all support that might be requested of us by the United States in relation to any action that might be taken'.⁴⁷ Characteristically, Liberal– National Party governments do not simply meet the requests of Australia's most important ally; they take the lead in ensuring that the USA remains committed to Australia's 'region' and to the country's security.

⁴⁴ David Peetz and Janis Bailey, 'Neo-Liberal Evolution and Union Responses in Australia', in Gregor Gall, Adrian Wilkinson and Richard Hurd (eds), *The International Handbook of Labour Unions: Responses to Neo-Liberalism* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011), p. 71.
45 Ibid., pp. 72–3.

⁴⁶ Murray Goot and Ian Watson, 'WorkChoices: An Electoral Issue and Its Social, Political and Attitudinal Cleavages', in Juliet Pietsch and Haydn Aarons (eds), *Australia: Identity, Fear and Governance in the 21st Century* (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2012), pp. 145–6.

⁴⁷ Howard, Lazarus Rising, p. 385.

One immediate outcome of Australia's recharged relationship with the United States was its engagement in the 'war on terror'. In October 2001 the government agreed to send military personnel to Afghanistan; crucial were the 150 members of Special Air Service (SAS) unit. Designed to root out al-Qaeda and remove the Taliban, the American-led 'Operation Enduring Freedom' was endorsed by Labor, since the intervention was backed by the United Nations, and supported in the opinion polls. By mid-November the Taliban had been driven from power, but stability in Afghanistan had not been restored. Asked about its limited contribution to the war, the government pointed to the Australian Defence Force deployment of peacekeepers in Timor-Leste and its Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands; peacekeepers were also deployed in Egypt, Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus and the Sudan. Labor continued such deployments.

In March 2003 Australia joined the 'coalition of the willing' for the invasion of Iraq. The attack on the Sari Nightclub in Bali, in October 2002, which killed 202 people, 88 of them Australian, confirmed the threat posed by the new terrorism and strengthened Australia's support for US action against Iraq, which was thought to possess 'weapons of mass destruction'. Even so, Labor opposed the commitment since the war lacked UN approval, and because there were reasonable doubts about the quality of the United States' security assessment. Committed to the invasion of Iraq but not to its occupation, Australia withdrew half its force after 'Operation Shock and Awe'. A year later, however, Australia sent more troops. Polled support, which had risen shortly after the invasion, fell away. The war cost the Howard government votes at the 2004 election not because of the number of Australian dead – no Australian troops died at the hands of the enemy – nor because of a desire for what the government derided as 'cut and run', but because of a growing sense that the war was unjustified and that the allies were not winning.48 After the 2007 election, Labor promised to bring all combat troops home by mid-2008. Thereafter, only personnel safeguarding Australian embassy staff remained

SAS troops returned to Afghanistan in August 2005. In 2009 Rudd announced that the force of 1,100 built up under the Howard government, the largest non-NATO element in the coalition, would be augmented with an additional deployment of 450. Australia incurred casualties in Afghanistan: 39 dead and 242 wounded by November 2012. Although the challenges of

⁴⁸ Murray Goot and Benjamin E. Goldsmith, 'Australia', in Richard Sobel, Peter Furia and Bethany Barratt (eds), *Public Opinion & International Intervention: Lessons from the Iraq War* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2012), pp. 59–66.

Afghanistan seemed increasingly insurmountable, and public opinion in support of the commitment declined, the major parties' continuing support for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) effort limited its salience as an electoral issue. By 2012 it appeared that, in concert with the Americans, most Australian personnel would be withdrawn by late 2013.

Another outcome of the newly invigorated American alliance was the signing in 2004 of an Australia–United States Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA) covering goods, services, investments and intellectual property. Australia's imports from the USA include aircraft, vehicles, engines, engineering equipment, pharmaceuticals, business services, travel, intellectual property, capital (much of it invested in electronics), agrifood and energy (especially after electricity distribution and transmission were privatised). Australia's exports include minerals, meat, auto parts, wine, business services and travel, as well as capital invested in property, transport, natural resources, media and other industries. Australia's decision to press for a trade treaty with the USA preceded 9/11. The results of negotiations were controversial. Americans refused Australia greater access to the US sugar market and dragged their feet on access to the beef and dairy markets; they gave ground on Australian investment and service industries while winning concessions in relation to Australian quarantine laws, Australian intellectual property laws and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, which provides Australians with medicines at costs below those desired by US pharmaceutical companies.49 Strong nationalists decried the AUSFTA as a sell-out of Australian interests. Internationalists expressed their dismay that Australia and the United States were signing a bilateral agreement, arguing that this diminished the prospects for multilateral agreements. After securing some modifications, Labor supported the agreement. In 2001, when Howard first raised it, US exports to Australia were worth around \$US11 billion while imports from Australia were worth about \$US6.5 billion. Ten years later, these numbers had doubled.⁵⁰ If few Australian benefits could be attributed to the Agreement, its consequences were much less dire than its critics predicted.

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⁴⁹ James Cotton, 'Australia-America 2006–2010: Waiting for Obama', in James Cotton and John Ravenhill (eds), Middle Power Dreaming: Australia in World Affairs 2006–2010 (Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 64–6; Ann Capling, All the Way with the USA: Australia, the US and Free Trade (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005), ch. 4; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, An Australia–United States Free Trade Agreement: Issues and Implications (Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra: 2001), ch. 2; 'United States: Fact Sheet', <http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/fs/usa.pdf>, accessed 6 November 2012.

⁵⁰ United States Census Bureau, 'Trade in Goods with Australia'.

As well as giving Australia greater access to some American markets, the Bush administration gave Australia greater access to military equipment and intelligence. This led to some concern that Australia's military was being armed for battles alongside the USA rather than for independent action. However, with Australia spending less than 2 per cent of its GDP on defence, and expenditure declining, a more autonomous foreign policy would have required outlays Australians might have been reluctant to make. In 2011 Australia cautiously agreed to the stationing of US troops in Darwin. Welcomed as a sign of Australia's increasing importance to the United States, the news also occasioned worry that the agreement might encourage the USA in its 'pivot' to Asia to confront rather than accommodate China.

One criticism of the AUSFTA was that it would damage relations with Asia. Howard's trade agreements with Singapore and Thailand went some way to countering these concerns and to forestalling the possibility that Australia would be excluded from any East Asian trading bloc, should one emerge. Moreover, Howard sought to assure Asian leaders that he was not out to lecture them on human rights or democracy. Australia's approach was based on 'mutual respect and shared interests', he declared, with every country entitled to its own way of managing its affairs.⁵¹ Relations with Asia had been strained by Howard's refusal to repudiate Pauline Hanson immediately, by his threat to strike pre-emptively against countries harbouring terrorists (two-thirds of the world's Muslims lived in Asia, with more Muslims in Indonesia than in any other country in the world), and by a continuing sense that Howard was not interested in Asia or comfortable with it. Yet Australia and Indonesia cooperated closely after the Bali bombing, relations with Malaysia improved markedly, and Australia became a member of every regional grouping it sought to join. Howard insisted that Australia did not have to choose between 'its history and its geography'. The diplomatic record, together with the figures on trade, investment, education and tourism, suggest that he did better than his critics allowed.⁵²

Australia's relations with China, in particular, improved after a shaky start. By October 2003, when Chinese President Hu Jintao addressed a joint sitting of the Australian parliament, Hu could rightly declare that 'China-Australia

⁵¹ Michael Wesley, 'Foreign Policy in Asia', in Keith Windschuttle, David Martin Jones and Ray Evans (eds), *The Howard Era* (Sydney: Quadrant Books, 2009), pp. 335–6, 341–2, 345–6.

⁵² Michael Wesley, *The Howard Paradox* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2007), pp. 9–10, 12; Wesley, 'Foreign Policy in Asia', pp. 335–6, 347–9.

co-operation' was 'going deeper and broader'.⁵³ Rudd started rather differently, but eventually he adopted a position similar to Howard's. Speaking in Mandarin on his first visit to China, Rudd promised in the spirit of 'true friendship' to express himself about Tibet and similar matters. But with the Chinese taking unkindly to this, he backed off. By 2009–10 China was Australia's biggest trading partner in goods, especially iron ore and coal, as well as in services, especially education and tourism. Rudd shared US concerns about China's rising strategic and military influence. He also acknowledged America's declining capacity to act in Asia. In a 2009 Defence White Paper the government foreshadowed the biggest increase in defence spending since World War 2. Although China was named 'as the main source of threat', Australia and China continued their bilateral engagement on security and defence.⁵⁴

As two of the world's biggest polluters, China and the United States were also central to the global politics of anthropogenic climate change. In 2002, Australia, a high per capita contributor to greenhouse emissions, joined the USA, a high contributor both per capita and in total, in declaring it would not ratify the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. Howard justified his government's position in three ways: ratification would place Australia at a competitive disadvantage; it would discourage long-term investment in resource-based industries; and it would be ineffective since China and India, large emitters in total, were not ratifying. Nonetheless, Australia remained committed to its Kyoto target under which it would limit its 2008–12 emissions to 108 per cent of its 1990 emissions. Given Australia's immigration-driven population growth, this was a more ambitious target than it might have seemed. Ahead of the 2007 election, with climate change a looming issue, the Howard government announced it would implement a carbon-trading scheme by 2012. Urged on by the resources industry, it also floated the idea of uranium exports and nuclear power as 'practical' contributions to reducing fossil-fuel emissions.⁵⁵

To act against climate change by putting a price on carbon emissions was the stated commitment of both major parties in the 2007 election. Having declared climate change to be 'the great moral challenge of our generation',

⁵³ Jian Zhang, 'Australia and China: Towards a Strategic Partnership?', in James Cotton and John Ravenhill (eds), *Trading on Alliance Security: Australia in World Affairs 2001–2005* (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 89; Wesley, 'Foreign Policy in Asia', p. 347.

⁵⁴ Zhang, 'Australia and China', pp. 87-91.

⁵⁵ Lorraine Elliott, 'Pragmatism, Prosperity, and Environmental Challenges in Australia's Foreign Policy', in Cotton and Ravenhill (eds), *Trading on Alliance Security*, pp. 218–25; 'Plus ça Change? The Coalition, Labor and the Challenges of Environmental Foreign Policy', in Cotton and Ravenhill (eds), *Middle Power Dreaming*, p. 216.

Rudd's first act as prime minister was to ratify the Protocol. Labor's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme, the details of which Rudd negotiated in 2009 with Malcolm Turnbull, the leader of the Liberal Party, was similar to Howard's: 2020 would see a 5 per cent cut on the emissions levels of 2000, subsequent reductions being dependent on those made by other countries. But after Turnbull lost the Liberal leadership over the deal to Tony Abbott, a climate-change sceptic, the Greens and the Coalition - with contrasting rationales - combined in the Senate to defeat Labor's legislation. Returning from the United Nation's climate conference in Copenhagen later in December 2009 without an international agreement, Rudd abandoned the legislation. Public opinion, in turn, abandoned Rudd, and in the 2010 election the Labor Party lost votes to the Greens. After the election, Rudd's successor, Gillard, went back on her undertaking not to introduce a carbon tax. In 2011 the government's Clean Energy Bill, not dissimilar to the carbon scheme the Greens had earlier rejected, passed the Senate.⁵⁶ But the broken promise left her government badly damaged.

Neither the Coalition nor Labor offered much practical assistance to countries in Asia or the Pacific most likely to be affected by climate change. In a rerun of an old story, dislocations of this kind were more likely to be seen as a threat to Australia's security, from which its distance and sea borders would not save it, rather than an obligation requiring humanitarian intervention.

Border protection

The more immediate 'threat' was asylum seekers brought to Australia by 'people smugglers' from Indonesia, mostly to nearby Christmas Island and Ashmore Reef. In 1999, as more asylum seekers arrived from Afghanistan, Iraq and later Sri Lanka, the government opened a detention centre in the remote interior of South Australia at Woomera; in 2003 this was replaced by the Baxter detention centre near the South Australian regional centre of Port Augusta. Under mandatory detention asylum seekers were detained until their claims – and appeals – were processed. For 'unauthorised arrivals' deemed to be genuine refugees – and most eventually were – the Howard government replaced permanent visas with temporary ones.

In September 2001 a boat of asylum seekers was rescued by a Norwegian container ship, MV *Tampa*, but the government refused permission for the *Tampa* to offload them on Australian territory. In what Howard called

56 Ibid., pp. 213–19.

'a truly Pacific solution',⁵⁷ the asylum seekers were disembarked at Nauru and Manus Island; Christmas Island, Ashmore Reef and Cocos Island were removed from Australia's 'migration zone' – those parts of Australia where a non-citizen must hold a visa to enter legally and remain. Hunger strikes and incidents of self-harm followed. In 2003 few boats arrived, although the extent to which this was because they were dissuaded by the Pacific Solution or less oppressed in their home territories remained a matter of dispute.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, in 2006 the whole of Australia was deemed to be outside the migration zone for unauthorised arrivals. Australia's management of asylum seekers became something of a model among those, especially in Britain and Europe, wanting the United Nations Refugee Convention of 1951 revised and asylum seekers turned away.⁵⁹

From 1999 to 2001, and again after 2009, the number of asylum seekers arriving each year rose from a few hundred to over 3,000.⁶⁰ The concern generated by 'illegal immigrants', as they were sometimes called, was considerable. With the Coalition threatened electorally by the rise of Pauline Hanson's One Nation, Howard not only adopted some of her policies on refugees; he used these concerns to help win the 2001 election. 'We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come' became the rallying call for the Liberal Party's 2001 campaign, launched just weeks after the *Tampa* stand-off. In 2004, as in 2001, concerns about immigration boosted the Coalition's vote.⁶¹ Support for One Nation collapsed.

When Labor returned to office in November 2007 boat arrivals were down to a trickle and Labor promised more humane practices. Many of Howard's policies would remain: the redefined migration zone, military interception of boats, processing offshore, and mandatory detention. But processing would be expedited; Nauru would not be used, boat people would have additional legal rights and temporary protection visas would be abolished. In 2009, when boats started arriving in greater numbers, relations with Indonesia were strained; the Opposition promised to introduce harsher policies, and voter anxieties were heightened. 'Stop the boats we must, stop the boats we will', said Abbott repeatedly during the 2010

- 60 Crock and Ghezelbash, 'Do Loose Lips Bring Ships?', fig. 2.
- 61 Goot and Watson, 'Explaining Howard's Success', p. 264.

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⁵⁷ Quoted in Julian Burnside, Watching Brief: Reflections on Human Rights, Law and Justice (Melbourne: Scribe, 2008), p. 58.

⁵⁸ See Mary Crock and Daniel Ghezelbash, 'Do Loose Lips Bring Ships? The Role of Policy, Politics and Human Rights in Managing Unauthorised Boat Arrivals', *Griffith Law Review*, 19, 2 (2010): 238–87.

⁵⁹ James Jupp, From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration, 2nd edn (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 192, 200.

campaign. After the election the government's invective against 'people smugglers' increased. The number of detention sites grew, as did the number of detainees. During the campaign Gillard had proposed a processing centre in Timor-Leste, but Timor-Leste rejected it. Dependent on the Greens in the Senate and either the Independents or the Opposition in the House of Representatives, Gillard now offered to raise the humanitarian intake under the immigration program from 13,000 to 18,000 as part of a deal under which some asylum seekers would be processed in Malaysia. But even before the High Court declared the proposal illegal (Malaysia had not signed the United Nations Refugee Convention), she was rebuffed by both the Greens and the Coalition. A year later, in line with the recommendations of an expert committee led by former Defence chief Angus Houston, detention centres were reopened in Nauru (Labor had closed them in 2008) and on Manus Island (scrapped under Howard in 2004) in Papua New Guinea. In October 2012 the whole of Australia was excised from the migration zone for unauthorised arrivals; recommended by the committee, this was a policy Howard had tried to introduce in 2006 against Labor and internal Liberal Party opposition.

Identity, race and populism

Since much of his economic reform agenda and the war in Iraq unsettled voters, Howard sought to secure the government's hold on office not only with tax cuts, increases in family payments and spending in vulnerable seats, but also by demonstrating his conservatism on immigration, national identity and Indigenous affairs. Much of this involved dismantling the legacy of Labor prime ministers Whitlam, Hawke and Keating, and of the Coalition's prime minister from 1975 to 1983, Malcolm Fraser.

Immigration policies under Howard did not discriminate directly on the basis of colour: the proportion of immigrants from South Asia rose from 8 per cent in 1996–97 to 20 per cent in 2007–08, with Asian students studying in Australia recruited as part of the skilled intake.⁶² Administratively, however, immigrant selection favoured Christians over Muslims (as had earlier governments), awarded extra points in the skilled category for English speakers, and reduced the proportion of family reunions (largely from non-English speaking families).

⁶² Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *Report on Migration Program 2007–08*, p. 6 http://www.immi.gov.au/media/statistics/pdf/report-on-migration-program-2007-08, pdf>, accessed.11 January 2012.

In addition, asylum seekers, mostly from the Middle East, were subjected to treatment difficult to imagine had they been 'white'. 6_3

Howard wanted migrants to sign up to what he considered to be key Australian values. A cultural pluralism in which certain values (opposition to female circumcision, for instance) or institutions (such as the rule of law) were regarded as non-negotiable was not sufficient. He wanted immigrants – only 17.7 per cent of whom, by 2007–08, were from Britain⁶⁴ – to subscribe to a range of other values as well. These included 'mateship', the 'fair go', and a relatively recent addition to conceptions of 'the Australian way of life' - 'the equality of men and women'.⁶⁵ What united Australians, Howard emphasised, was more important than what divided them. He abhorred the idea of 'hyphenated Australians', as in 'Greek Australians'.66 Insofar as he accepted cultural diversity, he thought government should have little part in promoting it; a notable exception was his schools policy under which religious schools – Muslim schools most notably – multiplied and flourished. At the same time, he saw 'multiculturalism' as antithetical to migrants' 'assimilating' and becoming 'Australians'. He abolished the Office of Multicultural Affairs, banished multicultural policy from the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and eventually replaced the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. Citizenship tests were introduced; originally conceived as a way of getting women of non-English speaking background to learn English,⁶⁷ they became a way of checking whether immigrants had the 'right values'. In addition, more stringent requirements for naturalisation were applied. Under Labor, the tests were retained but modified.

Howard had a keen eye for voters – potential One Nation supporters, in particular – who could be won over by appeals to their feelings of xenophobia (the 'race card') or concerns about law and order ('illegal

⁶³ James Jupp, 'Immigration and Multiculturalism', in Chris Aulich and Roger Wettenhall (eds), *Howard's Second and Third Governments: Australian Commonwealth Administration* 1998–2004 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005), p. 175.

⁶⁴ Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Report on Migration Program 2007-08, p. 5.

⁶⁵ Lloyd Cox, 'The Value of Values? Debating Identity, Citizenship and Multiculturalism in Contemporary Australia', in Christina Slade and Martina Möllering (eds), From Migrant to Citizen: Testing Language, Testing Culture (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 83.

⁶⁶ Carol Johnson, *Governing Change: From Keating to Howard*, 2nd edn (Perth: API Network, 2007), p. 165.

⁶⁷ Andrew Robb, *Black Dog Daze: Public Life, Private Demons* (Melbourne University Press, 2011), pp. 144–5.

immigrants', 'queue jumpers', 'people smugglers'). The tabloid press and talkback radio were conduits and allies; in December 2005 the radio personality Alan Jones, a Howard favourite, helped foment a riot in the Sydney beachside suburb of Cronulla principally directed against men of Lebanese origin. Some interpreted the Hanson vote as a protest by those left behind by globalisation. This explanation fitted an old narrative in which Australian politics is equated with the politics of material advantage. But the nativist slogan – 'We grew here, you flew here!'– by which Cronulla is best remembered, and the sobering evidence from surveys, point to racial concerns.⁶⁸

The prime minister extended his notion of 'unity' over 'diversity' to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. When the High Court's 1996 *Wik* judgment seemed to threaten the interests of pastoral leaseholders (a popular misunderstanding of the judgment), the Howard government amended the *Native Title Act* to strengthen the government's powers to extinguish native title. The government could here rely on the rhetoric of 'equality': native title was misunderstood as privileging Indigenous people over other Australians. And when the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, which the Keating government had set up in 1991, recommended an 'agreement' or a 'treaty' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, he rejected it. A treaty might settle differences between nations, but it had no place in the settling of differences within nations, he insisted.

Howard drew a sharp distinction between 'practical' and 'symbolic' reconciliation. 'Practical reconciliation' described 'the totality of policies in individual areas designed to help Indigenous people'.⁶⁹ He used the phrase 'symbolic reconciliation' to refer dismissively to demands by Indigenous leaders that the government recognise certain collective rights – to land, to self-representation and to self-determination – held by Indigenous Australians as colonised people. At the climax of the reconciliation' across the Sydney Harbour Bridge. In 1997, after the report requested by Labor on 'the stolen generations', *Bringing Them Home*, found that governments in the past had committed acts of genocide, he rejected the idea of the government issuing an apology to the 'stolen generations'; while he felt sorry for what had happened, he couldn't apologise for something his government had not

⁶⁸ Murray Goot and Ian Watson, 'One Nation's Electoral Support: Where Does it Come From, What Makes it Different and How Does it Fit?', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 47, 2 (2001): 159–91.

⁶⁹ Howard, Lazarus Rising, p. 273.

done.⁷⁰ The one apology he did offer was for losing his temper after members of an audience he was addressing on reconciliation turned their backs.⁷¹ For someone who emphasised the symbolic significance of the Queen, Gallipoli and the flag, the symbolism of the audience's action had some force.

In Howard's view, the government's responsibility towards Indigenous Australians was to assist them to be equal to other Australians as measured by official statistics on education, health, employment and housing.⁷² Along with a growing number of policy intellectuals, he regarded as mistaken the policies that had enabled those living on remote outstations to continue many features of a 'traditional' life. He warmed to Indigenous leaders such as Noel Pearson when they criticised the campaign for Indigenous 'rights' for its neglect of Indigenous 'responsibilities'. The insistence on rights, including rights to welfare payments, seemed to him to have undermined practical outcomes.

The Howard government's most dramatic and controversial pursuit of practical reconciliation came in June 2007, following the report on the abuse of Indigenous children in the Territory, Little Children Are Sacred, commissioned by the Northern Territory government. In a response, which the co-chairs of the report said 'missed the central point' - the need for 'genuine consultation' with Indigenous communities, not a solution from above – Howard declared a national emergency.73 In the name of creating safe and healthy environments in which Indigenous children might thrive, the Northern Territory Emergency Response involved, among other things, restrictions on alcohol and pornography, food vouchers in place of welfare payments, compulsory school attendance and forced health checks. The enabling legislation suspended the Race Discrimination Act, allowing the government to convert a portion of cash welfare payments to individuals in certain communities into purchasing entitlements at approved retailers. The government extinguished the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) in many communities. CDEP had been criticised by some for encouraging welfare dependence while applauded by others as a form of Indigenous self-determination; the government's priority here was to change

⁷⁰ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (Sydney: HREOC, 1997); Howard, Lazarus Rising, p. 278–9.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 277. 72 Ibid., p. 271.

⁷² IDIG., p. 2/1.

⁷³ Rex Wild, 'Unforeseen Circumstances', in Jon Altman and Melinda Hinkson (eds), *Coercive Reconciliation: Stabilise, Normalise, Exit Aboriginal Australia* (Melbourne: Arena Publications, 2007), p. 119.

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the fiscal base of remote community municipal government and to promote more conventional bases of remote region employment, at the expense of CDEP's procedures for local control. Consistent with this derogation of self-determination, the legislation empowered the Northern Territory government to lease certain Indigenous land for economic development. The government's stated intent was to 'stabilise, normalise and exit'; critics commented that normalisation anticipated the end of governments assisting Indigenous Australians to live in culturally distinct ways.⁷⁴ The Intervention thus intensified debate about the political and cultural costs to remote Indigenous people of making socio-economic 'equality' a goal of public policy.

The Intervention divided Indigenous Australians as it divided non-Indigenous Australians. Professor Larissa Behrendt of the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology, Sydney, was among those who trenchantly denounced the Intervention as paternalistic and racially discriminatory. Noel Pearson, the director of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership, whose views on 'passive welfare', economic incentives and education made him an increasingly important Indigenous influence on the Coalition's policy making, questioned whether policy towards Indigenous people living in remote areas should be determined by such appeals to rights. While he doubted that the Intervention could be successfully implemented, he supported measures that were designed to foster social responsibility in communities that had become 'dysfunctional'.⁷⁹

In February 2008 the Australian parliament presented two apologies to the Stolen Generations: one by Prime Minister Rudd, the other – equivocal – by the Opposition leader, Brendan Nelson. Labor also distinguished itself from the Coalition by endowing a National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, an incorporated body designed by Indigenous leaders to replace the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, which had been established by the Hawke government but abolished in 2004 by Howard with Labor's concurrence.⁷⁶ In addition, the Rudd government attempted to develop an effective housing strategy for remote communities.⁷⁷ Under Gillard an

77 Will Sanders and Janet Hunt, 'Sorry, But the Indigenous Affairs Revolution Continues', in Chris Aulich and Mark Evans (eds), *The Rudd Government: Australian Commonwealth Administration* 2007–2010 (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2010), p. 224.

⁷⁴ Melinda Hinkson, 'Introduction: In the Name of the Child', in ibid., pp. 1–2, 5.

⁷⁵ Noel Pearson, 'The Intervention', in *Up from the Mission: Selected Writings* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2009), pp. 301–12; Larissa Behrendt, 'The Emergency We Had to Have', in Altman and Hinkson (eds), *Coercive Reconciliation*, pp. 15–20.

⁷⁶ Will Sanders, 'Never Even Adequate: Reconciliation and Indigenous Affairs', in Aulich and Wettenhall (eds), *Howard's Second and Third Governments*, pp. 153–66.

Expert Panel reported on how the parliament might pursue recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Australian Constitution, but the government would not commit to adopt its recommendations.⁷⁸

Policy towards Indigenous Australians continued to be bipartisan in its fundamental commitment to 'closing the gap' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in education, employment and life expectancy -Howard's 'practical reconciliation'. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG), using data compiled by the Productivity Commission biennially since 2003, continued to present a policy of social justice as a series of programs aimed at overcoming measurable Indigenous disadvantage. Using the six targets Rudd had set for it, COAG issued a mixed report in 2011: 'improvement' in Indigenous mortality; 'significant' improvement in relation to young child mortality and in reading; little or no change in writing, numeracy, Year 12 attainment or employment. On early childhood education there were insufficient data. The report covered changes across varying periods, from the early 1990s to the mid-2000s.79 Labor maintained the Intervention in the Northern Territory. Convinced of its benefits to women and children, it extended the management of welfare payments in the Territory and to parts of Western Australia. CDEP continued in a revised and reduced form. The last act of the Rudd government was to extend income management to selected Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups; the suspension of the Race Discrimination Act was now redundant.80

Much of the politics of the Howard years around identity and race was driven by populism – not populist in the sense of popular, though many of his policies were widely supported, or in the sense of poll-driven, though market research was increasingly important; but populist in the sense of positing a sharp distinction between the 'self-serving' agendas, opinions or interests of an 'elite' or series of 'elites' and those of an undifferentiated 'people'. In this discourse, the elite was powerful and the people weak; the leader or party, a talkback host or a newspaper presented as the people's protector. Howard presented himself as understanding what 'ordinary' people were feeling; he claimed to govern for the 'mainstream'. Whatever a 'self-deluded political elite' might think, he welcomed the 'great' change that meant 'people' like Hanson

⁷⁸ Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Constitution: Report of the Expert Panel (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2012), p. 3.

⁷⁹ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators* 2011 <www.pc.gov.au/gsp>, accessed 5 February 2012.

⁸⁰ Sanders and Hunt, 'Sorry, But the Indigenous Affairs Revolution Continues', pp. 226-8.

The new millennium

felt 'able to speak more freely and a little more openly' about what they felt.⁸¹ Central to his declared position in 'the history wars' that were waged during his years in office was the thesis that Australia's history was overwhelmingly a record of achievement; the treatment of Indigenous Australians was a blemish, not a terrible stain.⁸²

In the new century, Australia's economic record was enviable. Of the world's 34 rich countries, Australia was the only one to have experienced 20 years of uninterrupted economic growth. On the OECD's Better Life Index, covering health, education and income as well as personal security, working hours and community connections, Australia's living conditions ranked ahead of any other country.⁸³ But a bleaker set of comparisons could also be made, in terms of the level of inequality, part-time employment and the affordability of homes. Moreover, Australia ranked poorly in terms of trade union membership, public funding of universities – registering the steepest decline among advanced democracies – costs of child care, the proportion of people overweight, Indigenous imprisonment rates, the treatment of asylum seekers, the level of foreign aid and the size of its ecological footprint.⁸⁴

'The Australian model', as outlined by Edwards, includes much that might be celebrated; so, too, descriptions of the 'sweet spot' or 'the Australian moment' said to encapsulate Australia in the second decade of the new millennium.⁸⁵ But such accounts leave out or downplay much that might give pause. Constituencies for parties as diverse as One Nation and the Greens are signs of something other than self-congratulation.

83 Hartcher, The Sweet Spot, pp. 3-5, 223.

⁸¹ Kelly, The March of Patriots, pp. 286, 368.

⁸² Howard, Lazarus Rising, p. 233.

⁸⁴ Rodney Tiffen and Ross Gittins, *How Australia Compares*, 2nd edn (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁸⁵ Edwards, *Quiet Boom*, p. 1; Hartcher, *The Sweet Spot*; George Megalogenis, *The Australian Moment: How We Were Made For These Times* (Melbourne: Viking, 2012).

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PART II

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9 Religion

GRAEME DAVISON

'God wanted Australia to be a nation', writes the historian John Hirst.¹ The making of the Commonwealth, its makers believed, was a holy enterprise guided by a divine hand. 'If anything ought to be styled providential it is the extraordinary combination of circumstances, persons, and their most intricate interrelations of which the Commonwealth is about to become the crown', Alfred Deakin believed.² Other public men shared his conviction. By bringing unity out of division, Federation presaged an ecumenical union of people within the Empire and beyond. Tasmanian Anglican Bishop Henry Montgomery considered it a 'deeply religious question', the beginning of a 'Federation, more and more complete with our own race everywhere'.³ God wanted Australia to be British and white, as well as Christian.

Even so, Australians were divided about His place in their national life. Delegates to the 1898 federal convention in Adelaide passed two seemingly contradictory resolutions: one inserting the words 'humbly relying on the blessing of Almighty God' in the preamble to the Constitution, and another, inspired by the Constitution of the United States, guaranteeing a separation of church and state. 'The Commonwealth', read section 116 of the Constitution, 'shall not make any law for establishing any religion, or for imposing any religious observance, or for prohibiting the free exercise of any religion, and no religious test shall be required as a qualification for any office or public trust under the Commonwealth'. The churches had campaigned hard for the first resolution and would later secure a measure to begin sessions of the Commonwealth parliament with the saying of the Lord's Prayer.

I John Hirst, The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth (Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 4.

² Alfred Deakin, *The Federal Story: The Inner History of the Federal Cause* 1880–1900, ed. J.A. La Nauze (Melbourne University Press, 1963), p. 173.

³ Robert S.M. Withycombe, 'Australian Anglicans and Imperial Identity, 1900–1914', *Journal* of *Religious History*, 25, 3 (2001): 288.

Christians determined to prevent the state interfering with religious liberty often supported the separation of church and state as strongly as secularists determined to prevent the churches imposing their dogmas on the state.⁴

Patrick McMahon Glynn, an Irish-born South Australian politician, had proposed the recognition of 'Almighty God' as a 'simple and unsectarian' statement of belief common to all faiths. A practising Catholic – he went to mass every Sunday – Glynn's faith had been shaken by the scientific and biblical controversies of the day. In reply to an inquiry about his religious opinions, he admitted that 'I am gradually losing any that I ever had'. 'A man', he decided, 'might really be more Christian by going to Church less'. Churchgoing, after all, was no measure of true belief. 'Faith, somewhat attenuated or indecisive, sympathy, gregariousness, respectability, fashion, the nervous disinclination to abandon old ways and hopes, all make up the mixed motives that move people churchwards.'⁵

Glynn illustrates how the personal, social and political were interwoven in the religious lives of individuals, as well as the nation. Personal faith might or might not produce outward religious practice; formal observances might or might not signify private belief. Believers and unbelievers alike supported the separation of church and state, either because it guaranteed religious freedom or freedom from religion altogether. If there was a national consensus, it was not anti-religious, but anti-sectarian – an agreement that religious opinions should not be permitted to fracture national unity.

Many people, Protestants especially, regarded religion as a private matter. The contemporary American philosopher William James defined it as 'the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude...in relation to whatever they may consider the divine'.⁶ Deakin, a public man with an intense interior life, read James' classic *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) with approval.⁷ But to others, especially Catholics, religion was much more than solitary communion with the divine: it involved morality, ceremony, sacrament, community – and perhaps politics. The word could even be extended to some seemingly secular pursuits. 'Trades unionism is a new and grand religion', the radical writer Henry Lawson had declared.⁸ It did

⁴ Richard Ely, Unto God and Caesar: Religious Issues in the Emerging Commonwealth, 1891–1906 (Melbourne University Press, 1976), ch. 11.

⁵ Gerald O'Collins, Patrick McMahon Glynn: A Founder of Australian Federation (Melbourne University Press, 1965), pp. 142, 190.

⁶ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* [1902] (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 31.

⁷ Al Gabay, The Mystic Life of Alfred Deakin (Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 182-4.

⁸ Henry Lawson, 'The New Religion' (1890), in Autobiographical and Other Writings, 1887– 1922, ed. Colin Roderick (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1972), p. 16.

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not usually extend far enough, however, to embrace the beliefs of the first Australians. When the Aborigines' Protection Association vowed to 'spread religion among the aborigines', it confidently assumed that they had none.⁹

Just a few Australians thought otherwise. In 1902 the Alice Springs post and telegraph master and part-time anthropologist Frank Gillen asked his friend Professor Baldwin Spencer a profound question. In their book, *The Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899), the first to describe the clans, totems and ceremonies of the Arrernte people, Spencer and Gillen categorised their beliefs as magic rather than religion. But Gillen, a questioning Catholic, had begun to doubt that view. In describing Arrernte spirituality, he reached for Christian analogies – journeys in the wilderness, sacramental wafers, and miraculous appearances. Religion, he had recently read, was 'man's belief in a power or powers beyond his control on which he feels dependent'. If that was so, he asked Spencer, surely the Arrernte were religious too?¹⁰

Spencer's reply has not survived, but one of their most attentive readers, the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, a secular Jew living in a Catholic country, soon answered Gillen's question with a resounding yes. 'Religion is something eminently social', he wrote in his *Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1911). Totemism, the system of symbols, sacred sites and ceremonies that connected Aboriginal people to each other and to their land, was the most essential form of religion. Religion was not an inferior kind of knowledge, as sceptics assumed, but a fundamental aspect of the human condition.^{II} A nation of migrants with a God who travelled with them had difficulty in understanding such a conception of religion. It would take a hundred years before many had changed their minds.

The tribes of white Australia

In 1901 the religious landscape of white Australia was almost as tribal as that of the first Australians. More than 95 per cent of Australians identified themselves as Christians, but their denominational allegiances were shaped

^{9 (}Sydney) Town and Country Journal, 11 July 1896, p. 35.

¹⁰ John Mulvaney, Howard Morphy and Alison Petch (eds), 'My Dear Spencer': The Letters of F.J. Gillen to Baldwin Spencer (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1997), p. 368; see also Morphy, 'Gillen – Man of Science', in ibid., pp. 30–40, and compare with D.J. Mulvaney and J.H. Calaby, 'So Much That Is New': Baldwin Spencer, 1860–1929, A Biography (Melbourne University Press, 1985), pp. 201–21.

¹¹ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* [1912] (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1915), pp. 10, 47, 427; Steven Lukes, *Emile Durkheim: His Life and Work* (London: Allen Lane, 1973), pp. 237–44.

by the colonial migrations of English, Scots and Irish settlers.¹² Four in ten Australians adhered to the Church of England. As in England, Anglicans were overrepresented both among the elite and the working class, including the many indifferent people for whom 'C of E' was simply a religious flag of convenience. One in five Australians was a Roman Catholic, a similar proportion to those of Irish descent. Next to the Salvation Army, Catholicism was the most working-class religion, with its male adherents overrepresented among the lowest paid workers. Presbyterianism, the religion of most Scots, claimed about one in ten Australians, while Methodists (14 per cent) and a host of smaller Protestant denominations made up most of the rest. The most prosperous tribes were Jews, Congregationalists and Presbyterians, followed by Methodists and Baptists, but the link between class and religion was loose.¹³ Anglicans and Catholics were strongest in the old-established former colonies of New South Wales and Queensland, and Presbyterians in regions pioneered by Scots pastoralists such as Western Victoria and New England, while South Australia, the 'Paradise of Dissent', and the goldfields of Victoria attracted Methodists, Baptists and Congregationalists. Jews, comprising fewer than 20,000, were the only significant non-Christian minority. A small number objected to state their beliefs and an even tinier minority (less than 2 per cent) said that they had 'no religion' at all.

Newcomers regarded Australia as a secular country, an opinion echoed by many later historians.¹⁴ It lacked both the ostentatious public piety and restless innovation of Christianity in the United States and the depth of religious tradition in Britain. Harold Harding, a newly arrived English immigrant and devout Methodist, was struck by the absence of the 'once-familiar church and churchyard with its wonderful history'.¹⁵ The average Australian, he thought, was 'not too religious', although, with about 40 per cent of adults

- 12 Walter Phillips, 'Religious Profession and Practice in New South Wales, 1850–1901: The Statistical Evidence', *Historical Studies*, 15, 59 (1972): 378–400; Walter Phillips, 'Religion', in Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians: Historical Statistics* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987), pp. 418–35; compare with Hugh McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1974), pp. 23–41, 299–300.
- 13 Census of the Commonwealth of Australia, 30 June 1933, vol. II, pp. xvi, 1071, and compare with Judith Brett, Australian Liberalism and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard (Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 35–40.
- 14 Patrick O'Farrell, 'Writing the General History of Australian Religion', Journal of Religious History, 9, 1 (1976): 65–73; compare with David Hilliard, 'Australia: Towards Secularisation and One Step Back', in Callum G. Brown and Michael Snape (eds), Secularisation in the Christian World: Essays in Honour of Hugh McLeod (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 75–91.
- 15 Harold Harding, 'Greetings from "Down Under', 1 January 1914, article in Birmingham Sunday School Magazine in possession of author.

regularly attending church, Australia was probably about as observant as his homeland. $^{\scriptscriptstyle 16}$

Australian democracy (or was it complacency?) tended to soften the sharp edges of religious discord. Christians welcomed Federation as evidence of an ecumenical spirit that would one day transcend religious, as well as political, divisions. After two decades of debate the several branches of Methodism – Wesleyan, Primitive, Bible Christian and Calvinist – resolved in 1900 to form the Methodist Church of Australia.¹⁷ The newly federated Presbyterian Church of Australia looked forward to a wider union of Protestant churches, embracing Methodists, Presbyterians, Congregationalists and perhaps Baptists and Anglicans.¹⁸ A few ardent Anglicans, seeking to rid their church of its colonial associations, proposed to take the name 'Church of Australia', although it took another 60 years before the Anglican Church of Australia got its own Prayer Book.¹⁹

Denominational loyalties shaped education, recreation, sociability and marriage, as well as worship. As late as the 1930s, John Button, son of a Presbyterian minister, could grow up attending a Presbyterian school, playing sport in a Presbyterian cricket team, going to Presbyterian socials and attending his father's church while his mother shopped almost exclusively in the businesses of fellow Presbyterians.²⁰ The typical local church hosted football and tennis teams, Scout and Guide troops, choirs and debating societies, kindergartens and crèches, youth fellowships and missionary auxiliaries. One could live just about a whole life within the bosom of the church. Within Protestantism the doctrinal divisions that mattered were increasingly horizontal rather than vertical, dividing liberals and evangelicals, ritualists and low churchmen, within denominations as well as between them.

These differences were slight, however, compared with the chasm between Catholics and Protestants, a fault-line infected with four centuries of hostility between Irish and English. In the 1860s and 1870s, Catholic resistance to the 'free, compulsory and secular' state education acts ensured that Australia's children would grow up in one of two cultural worlds, Catholic or Protestant. By herding many pagans into the camp labelled Protestant, it reinforced the tribal characteristics of Australian religious life. Calls for Christian unity met

¹⁶ Phillips, 'Religious Profession and Practice in New South Wales, 1850-1901'.

¹⁷ Richard Broome, Treasure in Earthen Vessels: Protestant Christianity in New South Wales 1900–1914 (Brisbane: UQP, 1980), ch. 5.

¹⁸ Aeneas Macdonald, *One Hundred Years of Presbyterianism in Victoria* (Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1937), pp. 149–56.

¹⁹ West Australian, 22 January 1900; (Melbourne) Argus, 16 February 1901.

²⁰ John Button, As It Happened (Melbourne: Text, 1998), pp. 11-48.

a wary response from Catholic bishops, fearful lest their followers succumb to the liberal heresy that 'one religion is as good as another'. 'This prevailing idea about faith and religion is a danger – an ever present danger – for every Australian Catholic', Father Patrick Dowling warned in 1909.²¹

The private battleground of sectarianism was the mixed marriage. Since the mid-nineteenth century, when Irish servant girls were recruited to provide domestic labour, and eventually brides, for Protestant colonists, at least a quarter of Catholic brides married non-Catholic men.²² The price of domestic peace in many Australian households was a kind of informal secularism, an agreement to keep religion in the background. Catholic priests and bishops once took a tolerant attitude to such unions, believing that marrying a heretic was better than living in sin. But in 1908 the papal decree Ne Temere declared marriages performed by Protestant ministers or civil celebrants invalid in the eyes of the church. Knowing the grief it could cause, some bishops hesitated to promulgate the decree in their own dioceses, but by 1911 it had become church law across Australia.²³ Protestant clergy disliked mixed marriages almost as much as Catholics but they did not penalise Catholics by denying them marriage before the altar, extracting a pledge to educate children in their faith, or insisting they receive instruction in their church's doctrines. The grief and anger the papal decree generated among ordinary Australians rankled almost a century later.24

The challenge of secularisation

Although the churches remained a powerful force in Australian life, they faced an uncertain future. Cardinal Patrick Moran anticipated that, after a century of adversity, his church would enjoy a new season of prosperity. 'We may rest assured that in the coming century her fruitfulness of piety shall not grow less, nor shall her triumphs be less brilliant over the errors and fallacies that may be marshalled against her', he told delegates to the

²¹ Proceedings of the Third Australasian Catholic Congress (Sydney: St Mary's Cathedral, 1909), p. 113.

²² Hans Mol, 'Mixed Marriages in Australia', Journal of Marriage and the Family, 32, 2 (1970): 293–300.

²³ H.R. Jackson, *Churches and People in Australia and New Zealand* 1860–1930 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 90–1; Philip Ayres, *Prince of the Church: Patrick Francis Moran*, 1830–1911 (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2007), pp. 251–2.

²⁴ Anne O'Brien, God's Willing Workers: Women and Religion in Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005), pp. 37–9; Siobhan McHugh, 'Not in Front of the Altar: Mixed Marriages and Sectarian Tensions between Catholics and Protestants in Pre-Multicultural Australia', History Australia, 6, 2 (2009), 42.1–22.

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First Australasian Catholic Congress in 1900.²⁵ Among Protestants, however, the mood was more sombre. 'The tendency in all human things is to deterioration, and this has been seen in the church as elsewhere', the New South Wales *Methodist* lamented.²⁶ Freethinkers, such as the *Bulletin*'s A.G. Stephens, were convinced that history was on their side. 'Our fathers, or their fathers, or some of them, had the kernel of religion; we in Australia have little more than the husk, and we shall have less and less as the years go by.'²⁷

Stephens' forecast ('less and less [religion] as the years go by') was what the philosopher Charles Taylor, in his book A Secular Age, calls a 'subtraction story'.28 It presented the decline of belief as irresistible, a dynamo of disenchantment installed in the engine room of modern society. As knowledge increased and the fog of superstition lifted, it said, the world would be revealed as it really was - without God. But secularisation was a more complex historical process than this, not so much a negation of religion as a transformation of its place in the world. It represented a gradual uncoupling of relationships between personal belief, social practice and political order that were once tightly bound together. The most formidable challenges to traditional faith were moral and political, rather than intellectual. While some individuals were suddenly converted from belief to unbelief (just as others moved suddenly in the other direction), many others hesitated somewhere between the two. Australia ultimately became more secular, not just because private doubts undermined religious observance, but because the decay of religious institutions jeopardised the generational renewal of belief. And although Christian orthodoxy may have waned, religion in the Durkheimian sense often flourished in diverse new forms.

Christians worried about how to respond to secularisation. Should they embrace modern science and philosophy by renovating their creeds, forms and worship? Or should they resist the spirit of the age, and revive faith by returning to its source? 'Modernism', as its enemies called it, was a strong current in the Protestant churches, where theologians influenced by 'higher criticism' of the Bible and the Social Gospel sought to realise the Kingdom of God on earth. 'Fellow Christians, let us seek to be children of Progress, advancing ever into a larger Human Life', Charles Strong, minister of the

²⁵ Proceedings of the First Australasian Catholic Congress (Sydney: St Mary's Cathedral, 1900), p. 29.

²⁶ Methodist, 30 May 1903, quoted in Broome, Treasure in Earthen Vessels, p. 2.

²⁷ A.G. Stephens, 'For Australians' (1899), in Leon Cantrell (ed.), A.G. Stephens: Selected Writings (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1977), p. 395.

²⁸ Charles Taylor, A Secular Age (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), pp. 26-9, 530-9.

Australian Church, exhorted his followers.²⁹ Like his friend Alfred Deakin, he was an enthusiast for irrigation, a national cause that combined faith in scientific progress with the biblical promise to 'make the desert blossom as the rose'.³⁰ John Flynn, founder of the Australian Inland Mission, used motor cars, aeroplanes and pedal-radios to spread a protective 'mantle of safety' over the women and children of the outback. By making the inland safe for European settlers, he was not only spreading the Social Gospel, but also advancing the cause of white Australia. Unless Australia settled its 'Empty North', he warned, 'the European would surely be called upon to render an account of our stewardship'.31 The call of the Social Gospel rang loudest in the ears of educated young Australians. 'The first duty of Christian students...is to study the application of Christ's law and Christ's ideal to the actual facts of contemporary life', the English visitor William Temple exhorted the infant Australian Student Christian Union in 1910.32 Many of Australia's political leaders, from Robert Menzies and H.V. Evatt to Gough Whitlam and Bob Hawke, were the sons of devout liberal Protestant families who had joined the Student Christian Movement (SCM), as it became known, during their university years. While few remained Christians in more than name, the Social Gospel continued, as Janet McCalman notes, to offer 'a moral structure for young secular radicals'.33

Onward Christian soldiers

Traditionalists regarded modernism as merely a way station on the road to unbelief. The call to Christians, they believed, was to resist, not to absorb, the spirit of modern thought. They were warriors engaged in a battle with sin and error. Only by returning to the sources of the faith and reviving the Christianity of the Bible (so Protestants believed) or the traditions of the Apostles (according to Catholics) could the church meet the challenges of the age. In 1910 conservative Protestants in the United States issued a manifesto, *Fundamentals: A Testimony of Truth*, against the Modernists. By the

- 29 Charles Strong, Christianity Re-interpreted and Other Sermons (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1894), pp. 54–5.
- 30 Melissa Bellanta, 'Engineering the Kingdom of God: Irrigation, Science and the Social Christian Millennium, 1880–1914', *Journal of Religious History*, 32, 1 (2008): 1–15.
- 31 Quoted in Brigid Hains, *The Ice and the Inland: Mawson, Flynn and the Myth of the Frontier* (Melbourne University Press, 2002), pp. 146–7.
- 32 Renate Howe, A Century of Influence: The Australian Student Christian Movement 1896– 1996 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), p. 117.
- 33 Janet McCalman, Journeyings: The Biography of a Middle-Class Generation 1920–1990 (Melbourne University Press, 1993), p. 106.

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1920s the word 'fundamentalism' had appeared in Australian newspapers and in 1932 the Australasian Fundamentals Association was formed in Adelaide 'to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints and to carry out an aggressive evangelistic campaign'.³⁴ Fundamentalism was orthodoxy's antidote to the rise of immorality and unbelief. Its foes comprised a modern catalogue of errors: moral (drunkenness, gambling, sexual immorality, 'race suicide'), spiritual (scepticism, indifference, laxity) and ideological (Darwinism, Modernism, Communism).

A cavalcade of visiting evangelists, often Americans renovating the techniques of their countrymen Charles Finney and Dwight Moody, roused Australia from its spiritual lethargy. Only God, they insisted, could inspire a genuine revival. From the 1890s, however, when the Irishman George Grubb visited Melbourne and Sydney, revivalist effort in Australia followed a curve of ever-increasing organisational scale and sophistication. 'A modern revival is essentially artificial', the YMCA newspaper Men of Melbourne observed in 1909, when the Americans J. Wilbur Chapman and Charles Alexander were drawing large crowds across the continent. Through careful preparation, skilful publicity and persuasive preaching, including emotional hymns and decision calls, the evangelists transformed the revival from a spontaneous happening into a kind of religious marketing campaign.35 More than 80,000 converts signed cards signifying a 'decision' in response to Gipsy Smith's 1926 campaign, and church membership figures briefly surged. Many of the 'converts' were respectable church folk stirred to renewed faith, rather than the 'unchurched'. Like the St Patrick's Day marches and eucharistic congresses that mobilised Catholics in the inter-war period, revivals strengthened the conviction that God's soldiers were indeed marching onward.

Marching as to war

In 1914 the British Empire was threatened by Germany, a nation of fellow Christians propagandists soon portrayed as godless Huns. Protestants immediately pledged themselves to Britain's aid. Clergymen defended the war from their pulpits, urged young men to enlist, volunteered as military chaplains and broke the sad news of casualties to grieving families.

^{34 (}Adelaide) Advertiser, 2 May 1932.

³⁵ Quoted in Stephen Judd and Kenneth Cable, *Sydney Anglicans: A History of the Diocese* [1987] (Sydney: Anglican Information Office, 2000), pp. 150–2; Mark Hutchinson and Stuart Piggin (eds), *Reviving Australia: Revival and Revivalism in Australian Christianity* (Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1994), pp. 185–99.

The war, they proclaimed, was a holy war. 'A new religion is coming into being, it is the religion of the State', observed Charles Strong, one of the few to question the identification of God with Country. 'In this new religion patriotism is the virtue which takes the place of Christian brotherhood.'³⁶ Roman Catholics baulked at supporting an Empire that oppressed Mother Ireland. 'Many people seemed to think that the State and the State only had authority', warned Melbourne's fiery Archbishop Daniel Mannix, the leading opponent of military conscription.³⁷

In linking God with Country, Protestants had unwittingly imperilled the faith of their flocks. As the human cost of the conflict mounted, belief in the cause, and in the God in whose name it was being fought, sometimes foundered. 'There were thousands of non-church members who were still in spiritual revolution as a result of the war', the Congregationalist Sydney Cox reported in 1919. 'They had fixed their minds on the wreckage in Belgium, France, and England and had ceased to pray.'³⁸ The crisis challenged popular attitudes to death and the afterlife. Losing so many young men on the other side of the world, without any possibility of a funeral, left an aching void in the lives of many families. There was an upsurge in spiritualism, as grief-stricken families sought contact with their sons beyond the veil. Staunch Protestants agonised over how to console those seeking prayers for the dead.³⁹ In Memoriam notices to dead soldiers in the daily press evoked a silent unquenchable sorrow, rather than a triumphant entry to another life.⁴⁰

Army padres had been shocked to discover the depth of religious indifference among serving men.⁴¹ The commonest attitude, according to a Presbyterian chaplain, Kenneth Henderson, was of fatalism rather than faith. The war had injected 'a new realism' into Australian society. The churches, he believed, must shed the dead chrysalis of colonialism in order to reflect a national outlook that was 'personal and experimental, not corporate and

- 37 (Melbourne) Argus, 24 July 1917.
- 38 Sydney Morning Herald, 1 April 1919; Don Wright and Eric G. Clancy, The Methodists: A History of Methodism in New South Wales (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993), pp. 135–6.
- 39 Judd and Cable, Sydney Anglicans, p. 187.
- 40 Pat Jalland, Changing Ways of Death in Twentieth Century Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005); see also Tanja Luckins, The Gates of Memory: Australian People's Experiences and Memories of Loss in the Great War (Perth: Curtin University Books, 2004), p. 154.
- 41 Kenneth Henderson, *Khaki and Cassock* (Melbourne: Melville and Mullens, 1919), pp. 74–6; Michael McKernan, *Australian Churches at War: Attitudes and Activities of the Major Churches*, 1914–1918 (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1980), ch. 8.

³⁶ C.R. Badger, *The Reverend Charles Strong and the Australian Church* (Melbourne: Abacada, 1971), p. 147.

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traditional'.⁴² As the first director of religious broadcasts for the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), Henderson would later promote a practical, non-sectarian religion, 'Plain Christianity', shaped by this reading of Australian character.⁴³

While unsettling personal faith, the war had actually intensified sectarianism. When the Labor Party split over conscription in 1916, most Protestants followed Billy Hughes into the Nationalist Party, while most Catholics stayed with the Australian Labor Party (ALP). By the 1920s the distinction between Liberal and Labor was as much a matter of religion, or sect, as class. Deakin's son-in-law Herbert Brookes, a liberal in religion, backed the virulently anti-Catholic Protestant Federation against what he saw as the illiberal and disloyal features of Romanism. At the heart of the conflict were contrasting views of the world: while Liberals leaned to Protestant individualism, Labor absorbed something of the communal outlook of Irish Catholicism.⁴⁴

Men first

Well before the war, churchmen noticed the alienation of many Australian men from formal Christianity. 'It was a heart-breaking job...to stir up any enthusiasm amongst the men in church matters', an Anglican clergyman observed. 'Men prefer to loll about and smoke and read on a Sunday morning', another noted. They had little idea about how to stimulate male interest. Church teaching needed to be simpler and more definite, said some. 'The clergy should be men first and clergy next', said another.⁴⁵ Wartime comradeship often surpassed anything many men had known at church. Clergymen played a part in the first Anzac commemorations but by the 1920s the ceremonies had assumed a secular form based on classical, rather than Christian, traditions.⁴⁶ Stoic silence rather than stirring song, solemn

- 42 Kenneth T. Henderson, *Christian Tradition and Australian Outlook* (Melbourne: Australian Student Christian Movement, 1923), pp. 11–12.
- 43 K.S. Inglis, *This Is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Commission*, 1932–1983 (Melbourne University Press, 1983), pp. 175–6.
- 44 Michael Hogan, The Sectarian Strand: Religion in Australian History (Melbourne: Penguin, 1987), ch. 7; Brett, Australian Liberalism and the Moral Middle Class, ch. 3; Rohan Rivett, Australian Citizen: Herbert Brookes 1867–1963 (Melbourne University Press, 1965), pp. 71–3.
- 45 Sydney Morning Herald, 2 May 1904; Jackson, Churches and People in Australia and New Zealand 1860–1930, p. 117.
- 46 John Moses, 'Anzac Day as Religious Revivalism: The Politics of Faith in Brisbane, 1916–1939', in Hutchinson and Piggin (eds), *Reviving Australia*, pp. 170–84; K.S. Inglis, *Sacred Places: War Memorials in the Australian Landscape* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 1998), ch. 5.

remembrance rather than patriotic celebration, were its hallmarks. Civil religion – the binding rituals of the nation – had begun a slow separation from British Christianity.

Fraternal organisations such as Boy Scouts, Rotary and Freemasonry offered male comradeship, ethical uplift and esoteric ritual without the strictures of Christian orthodoxy. Between 1920 and 1954, when the Australian population grew by two-thirds, the number of Masonic lodges almost trebled, peaking at 330,000 members.⁴⁷ Masons were pro-British, anti-Catholic, respectable and loyal to their brethren in the craft. In business and politics the Masonic handshake opened doors and discreetly shut them too. About half the first federal parliament and most non-Labor leaders from Barton to McMahon were 'grippers'.⁴⁸ Catholics reacted to their exclusion by creating a freemasonry of their own, the Knights of the Southern Cross (founded 1919). Protestant churches also created their own brotherhoods, such as the Anglican Boys' Brigade, the Men's Brotherhood and the Methodist Order of Knights.⁴⁹

By contrast, the religious disposition of women was largely taken for granted. Their primary role was to be mothers, to prepare themselves for motherhood, or to extend the maternal role in works of charity. 'The crowning grace of motherhood', the Methodist Rev. S.J. Hoban affirmed, 'is self-sacrifice', a path in which they followed Christ himself.⁵⁰ Yet while religion might seem to subjugate women, it could also emancipate them. The Christian mother was not just a good mother to her own children but to others in need of maternal protection. The Church of England Mother's Union, introduced into New South Wales in the 1890s to support Christian marriage, promoted women's education and sex education, defended censorship and opposed the liberalisation of divorce. Protestant churches developed a vigorous female subculture of missionary auxiliaries devoted to raising funds for overseas missions and other charitable causes. Christian women, expanding the maternal role, defended the rights of Aboriginal and other indigenous people. Many single women without formal qualifications

50 O'Brien, God's Willing Workers, p. 45.

⁴⁷ Jessica L. Harland-Jacobs, *Builders of Empire: Freemasons and British Imperialism*, 1717–1927 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p. 244.

⁴⁸ Peter Lazar (ed.), It's No Secret Real Men Wear Aprons: The Story of Freemasonry in Australia (Sydney: Museum of Freemasonry Foundation, 2000), pp. 67–8; James Franklin, 'Catholics versus Masons', Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society, 20 (1999): 1–15.

⁴⁹ Anne O'Brien, "A church full of men": Masculinism and the Church in Australian History', *Australian Historical Studies*, 25, 100 (1993): 437–57.

found opportunities for independent leadership and service as missionaries. More heroic still was the sacrifice of the thousands (11,245 in 1950) of unpaid, unmarried women, often from poor farming families, who prayed, taught, nursed and served in the kitchens and laundries of Catholic religious orders.⁵¹

The decline of religious tribalism

The sectarian divisions of World War 1 were largely absent from the second world war. Protestants at first recoiled from the fervent barracking for God, King and Country that had sent so many young churchmen to their deaths. Some translated Christ's injunction 'Blessed are the peacemakers' into pacifism. During the late 1930s, as the spectre of war loomed ever larger, young men's bible classes and fellowships debated whether to disarm or prepare once again to shoulder arms.⁵² Once war came, however, and Australia was under attack, Christians threw themselves into the struggle to defend a 'godly Commonwealth' against a Japanese enemy that was neither Christian nor white. 'Let every Australian become a spiritual Anzac, protected by prayer and fighting as a good soldier in a crusade for righteousness', Rev. C.B. Crockett urged.⁵³ Prime Minister John Curtin, a freethinker of Irish-Catholic descent, dedicated 15 March 1942 as a day of prayer 'to seek divine guidance and blessing on the efforts of our country and our allies'.⁵⁴ The Battle of the Coral Sea, however, might have been the last hallelujah of civic Protestantism. In 1951, when national leaders, including representatives of the four main churches, issued 'A Call to the People of Australia' to arm themselves against the threat of Communism and 'the terrible deterioration of the moral fibre of our people as a nation', they spoke in the language of moral uplift, not of Christian prophecy.55

When peace returned, a generation reared in Depression and war threw itself into the tasks of home building and child rearing with gusto. The 1950s was a decade of modest affluence, suburban expansion and political quiescence. The tide of secularisation apparently ebbed, as the churches rode the wave of suburban expansion. Every new suburb had a suite of newly built

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 165.

⁵² Wright and Clancy, The Methodists, pp. 180–15.

⁵³ Sydney Morning Herald, 23 February 1942.

⁵⁴ Richard Ely, 'The Forgotten Nationalism: Australian Civic Protestantism in the Second World War', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 11, 20 (1987): 62–3.

⁵⁵ David Hilliard, 'Church, Family and Sexuality in the 1950s', *Australian Historical Studies*, 28, 109 (1997): 133–4.

churches, often financed through the fashionable American Wells stewardship campaigns. Church attendances increased modestly while the baby boom swelled Sunday school enrolments.⁵⁶ The churches prospered because they were so well attuned to the values of the age: the desire for social stability, the focus on home and family, the fear of moral breakdown and international catastrophe.⁵⁷ In retrospect, churchmen would come to regret what one American observer dubbed 'the suburban captivity of the churches'.⁵⁸

The peak came in 1959 with a three-month 'crusade' by the American evangelist Billy Graham. Other campaigns, including the Methodist Alan Walker's 1954 Mission to the Nation, which combined an appeal to individual salvation with the Social Gospel, had prepared his way. Like his American predecessors, Graham built his campaign upon prayer, meticulous preparation, cooperation with local churches and fervent, but seldom hell-fire, preaching. By its end, when a record crowd of 143,000 packed into the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the crusade had attracted more than 3 million people, of whom 130,000 made 'decisions for Christ'. Just as Gipsy Smith inspired the young Alan Walker to become a Methodist minister, so Billy Graham kindled the faith of 16-year-old Sydney schoolboy and future Anglican archbishop Peter Jensen.⁵⁹

The suburban affluence that had prospered the churches gradually undermined them. The attractions of the Sunday afternoon drive soon eclipsed those of the Sunday school. Between the mid-1960s and the mid-1970s, Sunday school enrolments were halved.⁶⁰ The early 1960s remained a prosperous time for religious youth organisations, now generally organised along mixed, rather than single-sex, lines, but by the 1970s they too had begun a steep decline. The Student Christian Movement, still attracting hundreds to its annual conferences in the early 1960s, had all but collapsed a decade later.⁶¹ The decline of the Sunday school was the first domino in a sequence

- 56 Phillips, 'Religion', pp. 432-5.
- 57 David Hilliard, 'God in the Suburbs: The Religious Culture of Australian Cities in the 1950s', *Australian Historical Studies*, 24, 97 (1991): 399–419; David Hilliard, 'Church, Family and Sexuality in the 1950s', pp. 133–46; Wright and Clancy, *The Methodists*, p. 220.
- 58 Gibson Winter, The Suburban Captivity of the Churches (New York: Macmillan, 1966).
- 59 Stuart Piggin, Evangelical Christianity in Australia (Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 154–71; Wright and Clancy, The Methodists, pp. 208–18; Samantha Frappell, 'Post-War Revivalism in Australia: The Mission to the Nation, 1953–1957', in Hutchinson and Piggin (eds), Reviving Australia, pp. 249–61.
- 60 Graeme Davison, Car Wars: How the Car Won Our Hearts and Conquered Our Cities (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2004), pp. 51-2.
- 61 Howe, A Century of Influence, chs 12-13.

of changes that gradually loosened the connection between personal belief and parochial Christianity.

The once-formidable moral influence of the Protestant churches was waning. Liberal theologians recognised the social, as well as political, limitations of the attempt to enforce public morality through legislation on drinking hours, gambling, Sabbath-breaking and sexual immorality. During the 1950s the Methodist Church fought (sometimes half-heartedly) and lost the last battles for the maintenance of six o'clock closing of hotels, the banning of public lotteries and the prohibition of Sunday sport.⁶² For decades wowsers had campaigned against the evils of the 'Continental Sunday', but by the late 1950s it had arrived anyway in the form of thousands of migrants from northern, eastern and southern Europe.

Immigration pluralised and subtly transformed Australian religion. Poles, Germans, Italians, Croatians and Vietnamese broke down the monolithic Irish character of Australian Catholicism. Greeks, Serbians, Macedonians and Russians planted new Orthodox churches: by the end of the century Orthodox Christians were the fifth largest religious denomination in the country. Buddhism and Islam were the fastest growing faiths, reflecting strong flows of migrants from Asia and the Middle East respectively, although significantly different in their public profile and reception. Buddhism, an undogmatic religion based on renunciation and meditation, eased quietly into the interstices of Australian society. Islam, by contrast, announced its arrival more conspicuously, through the obligatory observance of distinctive traditions of public prayer, dress, diet, fasting, funerary rituals and pilgrimage. That many Muslims came carrying the psychic wounds of political religious strife in their homelands, and at a time when political terrorism was on the rise, compounded the clash of cultures. In the short run, immigration reinforced religious observance, as newcomers found social and spiritual support among their fellow countrymen. Marriage within the Catholic faith was twice as high among first-generation migrants as it was among the third generation.⁶³ In the long run, however, religious pluralism, like ethnic pluralism, wore away at sectarian prejudice, if not at religious belief itself.

'The Church in Australia lies sorely divided, bearing witness (albeit falteringly) to traditions formulated in other lands for other days', a Joint Commission on Church Union, comprising Methodists, Presbyterians

⁶² Wright and Clancy, The Methodists, pp. 193-201.

⁶³ Genevieve Heard, Sieu-Ean Khoo and Bob Birrell, 'Intermarriage by Religion in Australia', *People and Place*, 17, 2 (2009): 43–55.

and Congregationalists, observed in 1959.⁶⁴ Inspired by the World Council of Churches, it vowed to unite the main Protestant denominations into a distinctively Australian church. In small towns and outlying suburbs it was becoming harder to support the full range of denominations: merging was also a way of staving off decline. Not all churchmen heeded its call. Objecting to the proposed Basis of Union, conservative Presbyterians – about one-third of the denomination – elected to continue alone.⁶⁵ The Uniting Church in Australia – the present continuous verb 'uniting' anticipated the eventual inclusion of other denominations, especially Anglicans – was inaugurated in 1977, becoming the third largest and the most liberal of Australia's mainstream churches. The hope that amalgamation would revive the church died hard: after 25 years, historians of the Uniting Church acknowledged 'disappointments', 'mistakes' and 'some decline'.⁶⁶

In barely a generation, the high walls that once divided Catholics and Protestants collapsed. Post-war prosperity drew working-class Catholics from inner-city cottages to white-collar jobs and comfortable suburbs. Many began a political journey from the Labor Party via the Democratic Labor Party to the home of their former adversaries, the Liberal Party.⁶⁷ The ban on religious intermarriage was gradually relaxed. In 1962 the *Australian Women's Weekly* described the dilemma of a young Protestant woman whose boyfriend insisted on being married in a Catholic church: 'Religion can be a wonderful thing...but don't let it stand in the way of your happiness', one reader replied. A Catholic urged her to give way for her boyfriend's sake but others urged her to stick to her guns. 'If you go to your own church, don't give it up for marriage.'⁶⁸ In the 1970s three-quarters of Catholics still married other Catholics, but by 2006 the proportion had fallen to two-thirds.⁶⁹

The 1960s and 1970s brought an avalanche of changes – the Second Vatican Council, the Vietnam War, the Beatles, the contraceptive pill, the publication of Bishop John Robinson's *Honest to God* and Germaine Greer's *The Female*

- 68 Australian Women's Weekly, 23 May 1962, p. 36.
- 69 Heard, Khoo and Birrell, 'Intermarriage by Religion in Australia'.

⁶⁴ The Faith of the Church: Report of a Joint Commission on Church Union Set Up by the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, the Methodist Church of Australasia and the Presbyterian Church of Australia (Melbourne: Joint Board of Graded Lessons of Australia and New Zealand, 1959).

⁶⁵ Andrew Dutney, *Manifesto for Renewal* (Melbourne: Uniting Church Press, 1986), pp. 16–29; Peter Bentley and Philip J. Hughes, *The Uniting Church in Australia* (Canberra: AGPS, 1996).

⁶⁶ William Emilsen and Susan Emilsen (eds), *The Uniting Church in Australia: The First* 25 Years (Melbourne: Circa, 2003), p. 1.

⁶⁷ Don Aitkin, Stability and Change in Australian Politics (Canberra: ANU Press, 1977), pp. 161–79; Brett, Australian Liberalism and the Moral Middle Class, pp. 131–2.

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Eunuch – each with profound implications for the churches.⁷⁰ 'The Age of Authenticity' marked a seismic shift in western culture. Radical theologians attempted to distil a 'secular gospel' ('religion-less Christianity') from the obsolescent traditions of the church.⁷¹ A new ethic – 'doing your own thing', 'being true to yourself' – challenged the old ethic of duty and responsibility.⁷² Forty years later, baby boomers remained markedly less religious than previous generations.⁷³

The reforms of the Second Vatican Council were both emancipating and frightening. Priests now said the mass in English facing the congregation, instead of in Latin facing the altar. Nuns discarded their traditional habit for 'simple and modest' skirts and blouses. Lay people were encouraged to study the Bible and discuss their faith. Yet the new freedom also brought a sense of loss. The beauty and mystery of the Latin mass, the deep sense of vocation symbolised by the veil and habit, the consolation of living within a firm system of authority: all were now thrown into question.⁷⁴ 'It was like an epidemic', one woman recalled. 'It was inevitable...that when the floodgates were opened, so many things were swept away.'⁷⁵

The gates no sooner opened than they suddenly swung shut. In 1968 the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* declared the contraceptive pill contrary to divine and natural law. Many Catholics who had hoped the spirit of *aggiornamento* might extend to this intimate part of their lives were devastated. In Sydney and Melbourne meetings of Catholic intellectuals voted to reject the Pope's authority. 'People stopped going to confession', one woman recalled. 'If you believed that taking the Pill was wrong, you couldn't go along and say "I'm not going to do it again" when you already had the next month's supply.'⁷⁶ Most Catholics, especially young married couples, and some priests, simply ignored the Pope's decree.⁷⁷

B.A. Santamaria, leader of the traditionalist National Civic Council, feared that trendy liberal theologians had capitulated to the Protestant heresy of

- 70 David Hilliard, 'The Religious Crisis of the 1960s: The Experience of the Australian Churches', *Journal of Religious History*, 21, 2 (1997): 209–27.
- 71 Howe, A Century of Influence, pp. 354-60.
- 72 Taylor, A Secular Age, pp. 473-504.
- 73 Philip Hughes, 'Dropping Out of Church', *Pointers*, 21, 4 (2011): 19–20; compare with Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010), pp. 91–133, and Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 170–92.
- 74 Quoted in Mary Ryllis Clark, Loreto in Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), pp. 217-19.
- 75 Quoted in McCalman, Journeyings, p. 256.
- 76 Quoted in Ibid., p. 258.
- 77 Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community in Australia* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1977), pp. 413–14, Hilliard, 'The Religious Crisis of the 1960s', pp. 218–19.

'private judgement'. 'Christianity was witnessing the transference to the field of religion of the principles of the Romantic revolution', he insisted.⁷⁸ Everything that ensued – the steep decline in attendances at mass, the rejection of papal teaching on faith and morals, the decline in religious vocations, the weakened political influence of the church – flowed from this revolt against apostolic authority. The challenge was not to Catholics alone for once 'identity' and' authenticity' became benchmarks of belief, the entire superstructure of ecclesiastical authority began to shake.

First to be challenged was the male authority structure of the church. In October 1983 members of the Movement for the Ordination of Women nailed '12 Theses', Luther-like, to the chapterhouse door of Sydney's Anglican Cathedral. 'While spiritual and political distinction between men and women continues to be taught and practised within the Church, the spiritual life of the whole body of Christ is being suppressed', their manifesto declared.⁷⁹ Like their charismatic leader, former medical missionary Patricia Brennan, they were devout daughters of Sydney's Evangelical tradition. Most Protestant churches and a majority of Anglicans elsewhere supported their cause. Yet Sydney - the largest and richest diocese in Australia - stood fast against women's ordination. Relying on a literal interpretation of scripture, it insisted that 'headship' belonged exclusively to (heterosexual) males.⁸⁰ By the 1990s the ordination of women and homosexuals had polarised attitudes between those who sought 'dialogue' with contemporary culture and those who rejected it. 'We are not living in an even nominally Christian culture', Archbishop Peter Jensen insisted.⁸¹ In Australia's most hedonistic city, home of the Andersonian 'Push' and the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras, Jensen and Catholic Cardinal George Pell joined forces in a rearguard offensive against relativism, libertarianism and secularism.⁸²

The religions that prospered in this new environment, such as the New Age and Pentecostalism, favoured the personal over the social, the emotional over the intellectual, and experience over tradition. Pentecostals believe that the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as prophecy, healing and ecstatic utterance

- 78 B.A. Santamaria, Against the Tide (Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 337.
- 79 Mavis Rose, Freedom from Sanctified Sexism (Brisbane: Allira Publications, 1996), pp. 170-4.
- 80 David Hilliard, 'Australian Anglicans and Homosexuality: A Tale of Two Cities', *St Mark's Review*, 163 (1995): 12–20.
- 81 Rev. Dr Peter Jensen, speech given to Anglican Church League, Synod Dinner, Sydney,
 9 October 2000 http://acl.asn.au/old/pfj_dinner2000.html>, accessed 19 February 2012.
- 82 Chris McGillion, The Chosen Ones: The Politics of Salvation in the Anglican Church (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005), pp. 74–6; Muriel Porter, The New Puritans: The Rise of Fundamentalism in the Anglican Church (Melbourne University Press, 2006), pp. 51–3.

('speaking in tongues'), were not confined to the world of the New Testament but were a dispensation for all times. The largest Pentecostal church in Australia until the 1960s had begun in 1916 in a timber hall in Sunshine, an industrial suburb of Melbourne, under the leadership of a 25-year-old local tradesman, Charles Greenwood. Small in stature but endowed with abundant drive and energy, Greenwood was a clear, vivid and persuasive preacher. Later he was joined by a visiting American, A.C. Valdez, and by the end of the 1920s they had moved to a former theatre in the inner suburbs, the Richmond Temple. The Pentecostals spoke plainly, travelled lightly and offered their followers a faith that was 'personal and experimental' in ways that Henderson may not have anticipated.⁸³

In 1961 they numbered approximately 16,000, about half in Queensland. Over the following two decades, they increased sixfold to 72,000. Soon they overtook the Uniting Church and by the early twentieth century they had more active participants than any Christian denomination except Catholics.⁸⁴ Pentecostals were younger, more working class, more likely to come from the country or the outer suburbs than the mainstream churches: a reverse image of the other fast-growing demographic, secular, tertiary-educated inner-city Greens. In the 1970s Pentecostals often met in shops, warehouses, and school assembly halls. Twenty years later they flocked to mega-churches, such as Sydney's Hillsong. The message of the mega-churches was as old as the Bible, but the packaging - with its slick sales presentation, catchy electronic music, corporate-style giving programs and week-round program of social activity - was as modern as today. At the dawn of the twentieth century, many Christians anticipated that their religion would have to discard old dogmas to embrace new scientific truths. A hundred years later the most successful churches were those that modernised the medium but not the message.

The collapse

For most of the twentieth century levels of religious observance in Australia hardly changed.⁸⁵ There were periods, such as the 1950s, when church

⁸³ Barry Chant, Heart of Fire (Adelaide: Luke Publications, 1973), pp. 87-99.

⁸⁴ Philip Hughes, *The Pentecostals in Australia* (Canberra: AGPS, 1996); Mark Hutchinson, 'Pentecostals' and 'The Assemblies of God in Australia', in James Jupp (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion in Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 157–62, 516–23.

⁸⁵ Peter Kaldor et al., Build My Church (Sydney: Open Book, 1999), p. 22.

attendance even rose slightly. Only in the past 40 years has the barometer begun a steep and apparently irreversible decline. In the 1960s about one-third of Australians attended church at least monthly; by the 1980s it was about one-quarter; today it is about one-sixth (16 per cent). The decline began among mainstream Protestants, where churchgoing was already weak, and spread rapidly to Catholics, whose attendance at mass fell steeply from the 1970s.⁸⁶

Despite the fall in churchgoing, almost all Australians continued to profess a belief in God. 'Believing without belonging' became the norm.⁸⁷ Churchgoing fell along with other forms of voluntary activity and for much the same reasons: individualism, consumerism, more flexible and diverse patterns of work and leisure, growing female participation in the workforce and the dissolution of locally based patterns of sociability. In a consumer society, many of the needs once fulfilled by church membership – for education, sociability, charity, even for a sense of celebration and transcendence – were met by other institutions: schools, universities, cafés, concert halls, sports stadiums, art galleries.

Once they stopped going to church, people became less likely to call themselves 'religious'. Between 1993 and 2009 the proportion of people professing to have 'no religion' increased from 27 per cent to 43 per cent.⁸⁸ 'Religion', a word that had once had positive connotations, was getting a bad name. The rise of religious fundamentalism, whether in the form of the 'religious Right' or militant Islam, was an unexpected, often unwelcome, symptom of post-modernity. Revelations of clerical abuse, some going back decades, began to surface in Australia, as well as internationally. Child migrants told of the abuse meted out on the farms run by Christian Brothers. Indigenous groups blamed church welfare agencies for their complicity in the suffering of the 'stolen generations'. (Religion often polarised activists, inspiring some, such as Lowitja O'Donoghue, while alienating others, such as Gary Foley, who saw the churches as complicit in black oppression.) By 2012 almost 150 Catholic priests had been charged by police with sexual offences against young children.⁸⁹ Clerical abuse outranked the attacks of militant atheists

⁸⁶ Claire Pickering, 'Factors in Declining Church Attendance', *Christian Research Association Bulletin*, 20, 2 (2010): 6.

⁸⁷ Grace Davie, Religion in Britain since 1945 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), pp. 74-85.

⁸⁸ Pickering, 'Factors in Declining Church Attendance', p. 6; Peter Bentley, Tricia Blombery and Philip Hughes, *Faith Without the Church* (Melbourne: Christian Research Association, 1992), pp. 44–7.

⁸⁹ Estimate by the victim support group Broken Rites, http://brokenrites.alphalink. com.au/nletter/bccrime.html>, accessed 19 February 2012.

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among the reasons for disowning religion.⁹⁰ In 2003 Governor-General Peter Hollingworth was forced to resign because of his failure, in his former role as Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane, to punish a brother bishop accused of sexual impropriety.

In rejecting 'religion' – the institutions of belief – Australians were not necessarily rejecting belief itself. 'I'm spiritual but not religious' became the credo of a generation estranged from the churches but still seeking transcendence. In 1966, 72 per cent of Australians professed a belief in God, either absolutely or with doubts, and only 2 per cent were professed unbelievers. By 2009, 47 per cent were believers, while unbelievers had grown to 16 per cent, still fewer than those who believed in an impersonal 'higher power' (20 per cent). The 'spirituality revolution', according to its leading Australian interpreter, David Tacey, was grounded in a new relationship between private and public life. 'The national psyche', he argued, 'is split between two levels of reality, and the spiritual level is encountered only in individual and private experience; it is never engaged at the social or public level'.⁹¹

Although small in number, atheists became more vocal on issues ranging from euthanasia and sexuality to religious education in state schools. In 2010 Julia Gillard became Australia's first avowed atheist prime minister. The separation of church and state, designed to prevent the state favouring any particular religious denomination, was increasingly seen to require the exclusion from the public sphere of any religious activity at all. Prayers before parliament, tax relief for religious denominations, and state funding for church schools were among the targets.

But if Christian orthodoxy had waned, had Australia ceased to be a religious country? While a growing number of people said they had no religion, many more continued to say that they had. Churches still had more members than trade unions, charitable organisations or political parties and belief in God remained high by international standards.⁹² 'There is something eternal in religion which is destined to survive all the particular symbols in which religious thought has successively enveloped itself', Durkheim had predicted.⁹³ In an age when the market ruled, religion had become essentially a matter

93 Durkheim, Elementary Forms of the Religious Life, p. 427.

⁹⁰ John Bellamy et al., Why People Don't Go to Church (Adelaide: Open Book, 2002), p. 65.

⁹¹ David Tacey, Re-enchantment: The New Australian Spirituality (Sydney: HarperCollins, 1999), p. 239.

⁹² Rodney Tiffen and Ross Gittins, *How Australia Compares* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 246; Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 90.

of choice. While 'spirituality' may have become a private matter, however, Australians still reached for a sense of community and transcendence in their public life as well. Anzac had been quietly transformed from an austere ceremony of mourning by veterans into a civil religion with an elaborate liturgy of prayers, hymns and sermons. When a Christian prime minister, Kevin Rudd, apologised to the 'stolen generations', seeking to remove a stain on the national soul, he reached into the subconscious of a nation formed by the Christian hope of peace and reconciliation. Ironically perhaps, in a post-Christian age, many Australians now found spiritual inspiration where Durkheim had found it, in the religion of the first Australians. While outback fringe dwellers embraced Pentecostalism, city-based followers of the New Age and eco-spiritualism made pilgrimage to Uluru.⁹⁴ A century after it became a nation, Australia was no longer uniformly British, white or Christian, but it was too soon to declare it no longer religious.

⁹⁴ Julie Marcus, 'The Journey Out to the Centre: The Cultural Appropriation of Ayers Rock', in Anna Rutherford (ed.), *Aboriginal Culture Today* (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1988), pp. 254–74.

¹⁰ Culture and media

DAVID CARTER AND BRIDGET GRIFFEN-FOLEY

The dynamics shaping culture and media in Australia across the twentieth century emerged in a context defined by both urban concentration and widely dispersed regions: tensions between localism and national integration of production and markets; persistent calls for a national culture or cultural industries; domination by a few large national or multinational operators; and intervention by public institutions in the commercial marketplace. Underpinning all are the complexities of Australia's place in transnational cultural networks. The domestic market was not large enough to sustain major production industries but it was sufficiently large to be a target for cultural exports such as Hollywood movies and British books. In the early twentieth century, as in the early twenty-first, Australian culture was inevitably a hybridisation of local and external influences, prompting recurrent debates over national values, modernity and 'Americanisation'.¹ Modernity and nationhood had arrived together, generating anxieties that the nation was both too modern, with no deep traditions of its own, and not modern enough, always lagging behind the great metropolitan centres. Yet even as the 'true Australia' was located in the image of a pre-modern bush landscape, Australians were busily engaging with the new modern cultures. The British imperial connection was not merely a conservative force but a means of accessing the new.

Modernity at home

In April 1922 the Sydney *Triad* announced its latest issue as 'a Mary Pickford number'. The Hollywood star featured on the magazine's cover and in an adoring article. In a published letter to the editors, Pickford claimed she

I Richard Waterhouse, 'Cultural Transmissions', in Hsu-Ming Teo and Richard White (eds), *Cultural History in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), p. 117.

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never missed an issue. This episode could be taken as evidence of the lack of a vigorous, independent Australian culture in the decades after Federation. For the pioneering cultural historian Geoffrey Serle, the 1920s were 'a scurvy period, when Australians seemed content to accept second-rateness'. Following the 'nationalist surge' of the 1880s and 1890s, the early twentieth century was marked by 'a perpetuation of colonial dependence and a curious hesitation in development towards nationhood'.²

Serle's is a nationalist viewpoint, tracing and seeking the evolution of a distinctive culture. More recent cultural histories have been interested instead in charting Australia's participation in transnational modernity and the new forms of popular culture that were its glamorous symbols.³ The appearance of a Hollywood star in a Sydney arts magazine might then be taken as a sign of Australia's 'up-to-dateness' rather than its 'second-rateness'. The full impact of modernity was registered in the 1920s through new forms of entertainment and consumption. To some, cinema, radio, the gramophone and cheaper print forms offered means for the wider diffusion of civilising values or the creation of a new national culture; to others they appeared the very antithesis of such aspirations.

Australian writers and readers were part of a busy print culture of local and imported publications. The periodical market boomed in the 1920s, ranging from popular papers such as the *Bulletin* (1880–2008) and *Smith's Weekly* (1919–50) to sophisticated 'lifestyle' magazines such as *The Home* (1920–42). Increased stock market activity and bank lending allowed newspaper companies to expand, until in Sydney alone by 1928 there were six dailies and five Sunday papers. But the trend was towards concentration, with undercapitalised papers closing down or merging around the time of the Depression.⁴ Two of Australia's greatest media dynasties emerged in the 1920s: Keith Murdoch's in Melbourne and the Packer family's in Sydney.

Beyond the world of print, live theatre and music flourished despite the advances of cinema and radio. Opera, vaudeville, melodramas and 'legitimate' repertory plays offered a wide array of choices, with contemporary hits from London and New York often appearing within a year on the Australian stage. A small group of vigorous entrepreneurs – J.C. Williamson, the

² Geoffrey Serle, From Deserts the Prophets Come: The Creative Spirit in Australia 1788–1972 (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1973), pp. 89, 148.

³ Jill Julius Matthews, Dance Hall & Picture Palace: Sydney's Romance with Modernity (Sydney: Currency, 2005); Robert Dixon and Veronica Kelly (eds), Impact of the Modern: Vernacular Modernities in Australia 18705–1960s (Sydney University Press, 2008).

⁴ R.B. Walker, Yesterday's News: A History of the Newspaper Press in New South Wales from 1920 to 1945 (Sydney University Press, 1980), chs 1–2.

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Taits and the Fullers – toured world-famous opera singers, musicians, actors, vaudeville stars and indeed whole companies. Anna Pavlova's 1929 tour opened in Townsville, before working its way to Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, with more than 120 performances. Dame Nellie Melba's 1928 company had 33 principal singers, most from La Scala, and a repertoire of 26 operas. Although tours declined in the 1930s, those by the modernist Ballets Russes (1936–40) had an impact probably greater even than Pavlova's. Sidney Nolan was commissioned to design sets and costumes for their ballet *Icare* in 1940.⁵

Local performers could also benefit through being incorporated in touring companies or talent-spotted. Melba, Australia's most famous export, was especially active in encouraging young Australian performers to travel to Europe for further training, often leading to international success. For others, such as Gladys Moncrieff in musical theatre or vaudeville comedian Roy Rene, the vitality of the live sector meant national stardom, aided by the new media.

Australian broadcasting officially commenced in 1923 with a system that *Wireless Weekly* hoped would penetrate this 'land of magnificent distances'.⁶ Wireless champions believed it would unite city and outback into one national family, and mother country and Dominions into one imperial family.⁷ By the end of the 1920s, a broadcasting model evolved that combined both British (public service) and American (commercial) precedents. 'A' class stations were maintained by revenue from listeners' licence fees; in 1932 they were nationalised into the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC), based on the British Broadcasting Corporation. 'B' class stations, initially a residual category, were to operate privately, with lower transmitter power.⁸

Devoting just over half its airtime to music, the ABC had two networks for capital cities, 14 regional stations and a permanent orchestra in every State but Queensland by 1936. Although commercial stations were accused of being 'lowbrow', many also played classical music (while the ABC played jazz). Radio helped to make cricket the most popular sport in interwar Australia through coverage of the Ashes.⁹ For many listeners the great

8 Griffen-Foley, Changing Stations, pp. 7-13.

⁵ Katharine Brisbane (ed.), *Entertaining Australia: An Illustrated History* (Sydney: Currency, 1991), pp. 203–11, 234–5, 249.

⁶ Bridget Griffen-Foley, Changing Stations: The Story of Australian Commercial Radio (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), pp. 4–8.

⁷ Mick Counihan, 'The Formation of a Broadcasting Audience: Australian Radio in the Twenties', *Meanjin*, 41, 2 (1982): 201.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 284–7.

fascination of wireless lay in bringing the wider world into the privacy of the home, but radio soon learned to evoke the domestic world itself. Most stations had 'Uncles' and 'Aunts' – homely personalities who appealed to adults as well as children. Serials such as *Fred and Maggie Everybody* reflected radio's preoccupation with ordinary domestic lives.¹⁰

In the 1930s commercial stations secured a significant share of advertising and began forming networks. There were stations aligned with political interests, both labour and conservative. Religious stations complemented a lively and diverse religious press, and were frequently as sectarian. Advertising agencies, particularly George Patterson and the Australian arm of the American company J. Walter Thompson, became increasingly influential as programmers, forming their own production units. In 1937 the one-millionth listener's radio licence was issued, meaning that two out of every three Australian homes had a radio set.¹¹ Radio stood for modernity and progress. The first World Radio Convention was held in Sydney in 1938, and in 1939 the AWA Tower, a skyscraper functioning as a vast advertisement for broadcasting, opened in Sydney. In 1942 came the first 'local content' requirement, when the new *Broadcasting Act* stipulated that at least 2.5 per cent of radio time be devoted to the work of Australian composers.¹²

Even more than radio, cinema symbolised modernity. Its stories were mostly familiar; what was new and glamorous was the medium itself and the phenomenon of moviegoing. Together with the craze for 'jazzing' encouraged by dance halls, recordings and radio, moviegoing promoted new forms of heterosexual modernity.¹³ By the late 1920s feature films were the primary cinematic form and spectacular cinemas were purpose-built in the capitals and large towns. Sydney's State Theatre boasted 'a Gothic-style entry, an Empire-style lobby, a Louis XIV rotunda and a Louis XV auditorium'.¹⁴ In some towns radios were installed in foyers so that patrons were entertained by both sound and pictures.¹⁵

American films dominated the box office, just as American business practices came to dominate the industry. Hollywood supplied more than 90 per cent of

- 10 Lesley Johnson, The Unseen Voice: A Cultural Study of Early Australian Radio (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 96, 98.
- 11 Griffen-Foley, Changing Stations, chs 1, 4.
- 12 Ibid., pp. 30, 34–5, 39–40, 206–15.
- 13 Matthews, Dance Hall & Picture Palace, p. 15; Richard Waterhouse, Private Pleasures, Public Leisure: A History of Australian Popular Culture since 1788 (Melbourne: Longman, 1995), p. 177.
- 14 Brisbane (ed.), Entertaining Australia, pp. 208-9.
- 15 Richard Waterhouse, *The Vision Splendid: A Social and Cultural History of Rural Australia* (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2005), pp. 241, 248.

feature films screened in the 1920s, while in most years Australia imported more American films than any other country.¹⁶ Despite concerns over Americanisation, cinema was enormously popular, with 110 million viewers in 1928.¹⁷ Australians could watch the same films at the same time – though not necessarily in the same way – as their contemporaries worldwide, fashioning their own modernity in the process.

Australia itself had a lively film industry. Demand for films was high and it was relatively easy for independent producers, most with a theatrical background, to enter the business. Local production peaked in 1910–12, with more than 100 feature-length films, although the new medium seldom explored new genres. Films followed the theatrical habit of restaging iconic Australian stories.¹⁸ Bushranger melodramas dominated, from *The Story of the Kelly* Gang (1906), often claimed as the world's first feature-length film, to Captain Starlight, Captain Moonlite and Captain Midnight (all 1911). Production was only stopped by the New South Wales government's 1912 ban on the genre for its negative portrayals of authority. Others drew on colonial texts or theatrical adaptations: Robbery Under Arms (1907, 1920), For the Term of his Natural Life (1908) and The Man from Snowy River (1920). Rustic comedies were popularised by Beaumont Smith's Hayseeds series from 1917, and Raymond Longford's version of Steele Rudd's short stories, On Our Selection (1920), already a theatrical favourite. Generally considered the most distinguished director of the silent era, Longford and wife Lottie Lyell also made The Sentimental Bloke in 1919, based on C.J. Dennis' enormously successful vernacular verse narrative of 1915.19 The popularity of these films indicates that even when 90 per cent of their moviegoing was American, audiences maintained an enthusiasm for Australian stories, however limited the repertoire.

Nonetheless, the number of Australian films almost halved from the 1910s to the 1920s and then again in the 1930s. As the American studio system developed, Australian films suffered by comparison, despite attempts at modern stories such as *Should a Girl Propose*? (1926), which opened 'with couples gaily jazzing in their swimming costumes'.²⁰ More immediately, exhibition and

- 16 John Tulloch, Australian Cinema: Industry, Narrative and Meaning (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), p. 34.
- 17 Waterhouse, Private Pleasures, Public Leisure, p. 176.
- 18 Brisbane (ed.), Entertaining Australia, p. 160; Peter Fitzpatrick, 'Australian Drama, 1850– 1950', in Peter Pierce (ed.), The Cambridge History of Australian Literature (Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 191–2; Elizabeth Jacka, 'Film', in Stuart Cunningham and Graeme Turner (eds), The Media in Australia: Industries, Texts, Audiences, 2nd edn (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), pp. 72–5.
- 19 Waterhouse, The Vision Splendid, pp. 254-5.
- 20 Waterhouse, Private Pleasures, Public Leisure, p. 178.

distribution were consolidated into two dominant networks, Union Theatres and Hoyts, both Australian-owned but linked to American suppliers. The result was an enduring form of vertical integration that made it difficult for Australian films to achieve cinema release, difficulties compounded by the arrival of the 'talkies', which were more costly to produce and which normalised the American accent in film.

The major exception was Union Theatres' Cinesound Studios, where Ken G. Hall directed 16 features between 1932 and 1937. The most significant independent director was Charles Chauvel, who made 15 features in 30 years, many focused on formative moments in the nation's history.²¹ In the Wake of the Bounty (1933) starred Errol Flynn, one of a number of Australian actors successful in Hollywood in what is now a familiar pattern, while Forty Thousand Horsemen (1940) launched the career of Chips Rafferty, who in numerous films embodied the laconic, resourceful Australian male, a role later assumed by actors such as Jack Thompson, Bryan Brown and Paul Hogan. Jedda (1955), Australia's first colour feature, remains a powerful film about conflicts between Indigenous and white laws despite its racist underpinnings.

Culture for the nation

Despite evidence of a lively modernising culture, Serle's pessimistic account cannot simply be dismissed. Conservatism still dominated many artistic fields, although probably no more so in Australia than elsewhere. It remained difficult to establish enduring institutions for local cultural production outside newspapers, magazines and radio. Public museums, libraries and galleries were small; training in art, acting and voice was limited; publishing was dominated by the British book trade; and attempts to establish repertory theatres, permanent opera companies and symphony orchestras remained precarious. This was less the result of colonial deference than of a small domestic market, limited state or philanthropic investment, and the sheer availability of British and American culture.

In the theatre, numerous attempts were made to establish repertory companies as an alternative to the commercial mainstream. Gregan McMahon founded the Melbourne Repertory Theatre in 1911, offering Shaw, Chekhov and Ibsen, plus Australian plays including Louis Esson's *The Time Is Not Yet Ripe*. Even greater challenges faced those committed to a national theatre. In 1922 Esson helped to form The Pioneer Players in Melbourne, modelled

21 Jacka, 'Film', p. 75.

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on the Irish National Theatre. Despite struggling to find suitable material, it presented Australian plays over two seasons, often using the same bush settings as popular melodrama but with a democratic twist, a new psychological intensity and greater realism.²² Those seeking to produce Australian stories were both constrained and inspired by their subordinate position within the larger global system, engaged in a dialectic between imitation and authenticity, between playing down or playing up 'Australianness'. Local productions were concentrated in a small number of 'national' genres – the bushranger melodramas and rustic comedies – but to intellectuals such as Vance Palmer and Esson, these represented a travesty of the real Australian values on which a contemporary cultural tradition might be formed.

In 1936 the essayist Nettie Palmer complained of 'the inconsecutive nature of our literary life in Australia'.²³ Despite the busy print marketplace, there were few institutions - publishing houses, literary journals or writers' groups - to enable local literature to play its full part in the cultural life of the nation. Literary output itself was 'inconsecutive'. Joseph Furphy's Such Is Life, the demanding poetry of Christopher Brennan, and John Shaw Nielsen's lyric verse were scarcely known in Australia. Major authors such as Henry Handel Richardson pursued careers in England, as did genre writers like Fergus Hume. While the British domination of the local book trade benefitted Australian booksellers and readers,²⁴ for Palmer Australians were too 'content to be consumers, returning nothing to the world from which we import so freely'.²⁵ An informal agreement between British and American publishers divided the world into two copyright territories, allowing British publishers to control distribution throughout the colonies and Dominions.²⁶ Without 'the machinery for publishing' locally, Vance Palmer argued, there was little hope that the writer would have 'a public in his own country'.²⁷

Australia remained the largest market for British book exports until well after World War 2. Australian publishing was a difficult proposition in all

- 22 Brisbane (ed.), Entertaining Australia, pp. 159, 194; Fitzpatrick, 'Australian Drama, 1850–1950', pp. 180–6.
- 23 Vivian Smith (ed.), Letters of Vance and Nettie Palmer, 1915–1963 (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1977), p. 138.
- 24 Richard Nile and David Walker, "The "Paternoster Row Machine" and the Australian Book Trade, 1890–1945', in Martyn Lyons and John Arnold (eds), A History of the Book in Australia 1891–1945: A National Culture in a Colonised Market (Brisbane: UQP, 2001), pp. 3–18.
- 25 Palmer quoted in Robert Dixon, 'Australian Fiction and the World Republic of Letters, 1890–1950', in Pierce (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, p. 227.
- 26 Martin Lyons, 'Britain's Largest Export Market', in Lyons and Arnold (eds), A History of the Book in Australia 1891–1945, pp. 19–26.
- 27 Vance Palmer, 'Fiction for Export', Bulletin, 1 June 1922.

but a few areas, such as children's and school books. The exception was A.C. Rowlandson's New South Wales Bookstall Company, which sold 3 million of its shilling paperback novels between 1910 and 1920. Rudd was its most popular author, mining the vein of rustic comedy discovered in *On Our Selection* and reinforced by theatrical and film adaptations.²⁸ Ironically these national comedies of rural life became enormously popular through the new international media of urban culture. In 1937 a successful radio version, *Dad and Dave*, was launched – sponsored by Wrigley's to promote chewing gum, often considered a dirty American habit.²⁹

The Bulletin remained the most significant forum for Australian literature, but it had lost much of its originality as a force in national cultural life. Nonetheless, the magazine market remained buoyant. The Australian Women's Weekly (1933-) was designed as a national newspaper for women. It combined topical features and sophisticated cartoons and fashion illustrations with the traditional contents of women's magazines such as recipes and patterns. Vigorously promoted on radio, it made other women's publications look staid. Until then magazines had generally been ancillary components of publishing chains, but the Women's Weekly was to form the bedrock of Frank Packer's Consolidated Press.³⁰ Another innovation, Walkabout (1934-74), a quality illustrated travel and geographical magazine, brought Australia and the Pacific to suburban readers. From 1936 to 1974, it was joined by Man, inspired by the American Esquire. Featuring popular Australiana, serious articles, risqué cartoons, and modernist photographs, Man created the image of a 'sophisticated, modern and urbanised Australian male'; a sexualised male, too, in contrast to more familiar stereotypes of national manhood.³¹

Beyond the commercial mainstream, there were repeated attempts to establish modernist 'little magazines'.³² Their existence reveals the emergence in the 1930s of a modern intelligentsia, defined by the impact of artistic modernism, and by the sequence of international political events from World War I and the Russian Revolution to the Depression and the Spanish Civil War, which together seemed evidence of a civilisation in crisis. Cultural

29 John Potts, Radio in Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1989), pp. 52-60.

²⁸ Richard Nile and David Walker, 'The Mystery of the Missing Bestseller', in Lyons and Arnold (eds), A History of the Book in Australia 1891–1945, pp. 238–40.

³⁰ Bridget Griffen-Foley, *The House of Packer: The Making of a Media Empire* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999), ch. 2.

³¹ Richard White, 'The Importance of Being Man', in Peter Spearritt and David Walker (eds), Australian Popular Culture (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1979), pp. 145–68.

³² David Carter, 'Paris, Moscow, Melbourne: Some Avant-Garde Australian Little Magazines', *Australian Literary Studies*, 16, 1 (1993): 57–66.

nationalism was one response. There was a broad consensus that Australia's national character derived from the bush and from the newly minted spirit of Anzac. Popular historical novels and frontier or outback travel books by authors such as Ion Idriess, Frank Clune and Ernestine Hill were bestsellers from the 1930s.³³ But the militant nationalism of, say, the Palmers or P.R. Stephensen, author of the polemical *Foundations of Culture in Australia* (1936), was a minority position, an intellectual program articulated through critiques of colonial deference and the commercialisation of culture. Although they shared with conservatives a belief in Australia's essential vitality, their nationalism was defined by their sense of a crisis in modern democracy. It was internationalist in spirit, in the belief that new vernacular cultures would underwrite emerging democratic societies worldwide.³⁴

The engagement with new political and artistic ideas demanded a level of debate above ephemeral, journalistic book chat (although the essayist Walter Murdoch made that a distinguished art form in its own right). The Fellowship of Australian Writers, founded in 1928, became more politicised from 1935, supporting the republican cause during the Spanish Civil War and campaigning against Australia's stringent censorship regime.³⁵ The political turmoil of the inter-war period inspired the creation of university student newspapers in Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane.

Many felt that the novel was the art form best suited to the intellectual and political challenges of the 1930s and 1940s. A sequence of innovative novels, many by women – including Katharine Susannah Prichard, Eleanor Dark, M. Barnard Eldershaw and Christina Stead – interpreted the effects of social crisis in individual lives through broad historical and political perspectives.³⁶ Kenneth Slessor emerged as the period's major poet. Philip Mead argues that the modernity of Slessor's greatest poem, 'Five Bells' (1939), was the product of his deep engagement with cinema as a professional journalist.³⁷

Another dimension of inter-war nationalism was the Jindyworobak movement, the Aboriginal word meaning 'to annex, to join'. In *Conditional*

- 33 Nile and Walker, 'The Mystery of the Missing Bestseller', pp. 248-52.
- 34 David Carter, 'Critics, Writers, Intellectuals: Australian Literature and Its Criticism', in Elizabeth Webby (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Australian Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 268–9.
- 35 Drusilla Modjeska, Exiles at Home: Australian Women Writers 1925–1945 (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1984), pp. 102–5.
- 36 Ibid., ch. 9; Ian Reid, Fiction and the Great Depression: Australia and New Zealand 1930–1950 (Melbourne: Edward Arnold, 1979).
- 37 Philip Mead, Networked Language: Culture & History in Australian Poetry (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), p. 35.

Culture, Rex Ingamells set out the Jindyworobak aim: to 'free Australian art from whatever alien influences trammel it'.³⁸ This meant a new language for landscape, informed by the 'laws, the customs, and the art of the Australian Aborigines'. While this aim was consistent with the belief that Indigenous people were doomed to extinction, it also expressed the possibility of a radical originality in Australian culture with Aboriginality at its centre – a possibility with which Australian culture is still engaged. The link between Aboriginality and modernity recurred throughout the period. Artist Margaret Preston declared her interest in the formal elements of Aboriginal design, which had the same clarifying effects as cubism. Hans Heysen turned to the 'Aboriginal' landscapes of the Flinders Ranges. John Antill composed the ballet score Corroboree.³⁹ Poet Mary Gilmore celebrated the ancient connection between Aboriginal language and the environment. In Coonardoo, Prichard sought to understand Aboriginality partly through psychoanalytic language. A new quarterly, Meanjin (1940-), took its name from the Aboriginal word for the bend in the river where Brisbane was established.

White Australia discovered the vitality of Indigenous culture as the aesthetic dimension of objects collected for anthropological purposes became better appreciated. The best-known Indigenous art was Arnhem Land bark painting, with its distinctive earth colours and cross-hatching. The best known artist, however, was Albert Namatjira from Hermannsburg in Central Australia. From 1935, having learned watercolour techniques from the Melbourne artist Rex Battarbee, Namatjira produced striking landscapes. His work was soon in demand and by the 1950s his prints – sometimes criticised as imitative – appeared in many Australian homes. More recent commentators have emphasised his painting's innovation *and* its traditional association with the artist's country.⁴⁰

Nationalism in the visual arts was largely conservative. By the end of the 1920s the landscapes of the Heidelberg School were taken to define what was essentially Australian about Australian painting. Pastoral landscapes presented a settled, distinctively Australian countryside, transforming recent colonisation into deep history. Prominent figures in the art establishment such as Lionel Lindsay and J.S. McDonald argued that Australian landscape painting was a vital element in national cultural hygiene. Australia's very provincialism was protection against the shock of the new. Streeton's canvasses

³⁸ Rex Ingamell and Ian Tillbrook, Conditional Culture (Adelaide: F.W. Preece, 1938), pp. 4, 17.

³⁹ Brisbane (ed.), Entertaining Australia, pp. 258, 269.

⁴⁰ Andrew Sayers, Australian Art (Oxford University Press, 2001), ch. 8.

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showed how life should be lived in Australia, 'with the maximum of flocks and the minimum of factories', in McDonald's memorable phrase.⁴¹

Nonetheless, Australian artists were active in modernist circles in Europe, while at home modernism emerged variously in different parts of the country, with women artists prominent.⁴² Much of the early modernist presence was 'design driven', one reason that some of the most stunning images appeared in photography, especially in Max Dupain's now iconic photographs of industrial sites, nudes and beachgoers. There was significant exchange between painting, craft, design and advertising, often within individual careers, something shared with European modernist groups such as the Bauhaus.⁴³ If modernism was at first acceptable only in decoration or advertising, its principles of form would, by the mid-1930s, increasingly challenge the naturalism of the pastoral tradition. It would enable artists to celebrate the Sydney Harbour Bridge as a modern icon.

A Contemporary Group was founded in Sydney in 1926, and in 1932 painter Dorrit Black established a Modern Art Centre. More militant was the Contemporary Art Society (CAS), formed in Melbourne in 1938 in opposition to the Australian Academy of Art, recently founded with the support of the attorney-general, R.G. Menzies, to uphold traditional principles. The intellectual and political dimensions of modernism were manifested in splits within the CAS, in what has been called 'The Angry Decade' and 'The Revolutionary Years'.⁴⁴ Three groups emerged: a post-impressionist group; a more radical group influenced by surrealism, expressionism and modernist poetry, including Nolan and Albert Tucker; and a social-realist group led by Noel Counihan.⁴⁵ In 1939 Keith Murdoch's *Herald* organised a landmark touring exhibition of modern British and French art that helped legitimise the experiments of local artists.⁴⁶

That same year, Murdoch approved a memo suggesting his group commission and publish its own public opinion polls. Born in part out of

- 41 Art in Australia, 40 (October 1931): 22.
- 42 Helen Topliss, Modernism and Feminism: Australian Women Artists 1900–1940 (Sydney: Craftsman House, 1996).
- 43 Ann Stephen, Philip Goad and Andrew McNamara (eds), *Modern Times: The Untold Story of Modernism in Australia* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2008).
- 44 Robert Hughes, *The Art of Australia*, rev. edn (Melbourne: Penguin, 1970); Richard Haese, *Rebels and Precursors: The Revolutionary Years of Australian Art* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1981).
- 45 Christopher Allen, Art in Australia: From Colonization to Postmodernism (London: Thames & Hudson, 1997), pp. 114–20.
- 46 Eileen Chanin and Steven Miller (eds), *Degenerates and Perverts: The 1939 Herald Exhibition of French and British Contemporary Art* (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2005).

an earnest wartime desire to provide 'the evidence on which those with the responsibility of leadership base their estimate of public reaction', the Roy Morgan and Herald and Weekly Times partnership monopolised Australian public opinion polling for the next 30 years.⁴⁷

Post-war liberalism

The crises of the inter-war years, so productive for Australian culture, reached their climax in 1942 with the threat of Japanese invasion. In *Meanjin*'s 'Crisis Issue', Vance Palmer wrote: 'The next few months may decide not only whether we are to survive as a nation, but whether we deserve to survive. As yet none of our achievements prove it.'⁴⁸ *Meanjin* had been joined by Adelaide's *Angry Penguins* (1940–46), which embraced surrealism, psychoanalysis and Indigenous art. In 1944 editor Max Harris published the works of 'Ern Malley', a great undiscovered modernist poet. But Malley was a hoax, contrived by young poets Harold Stewart and James McAuley to expose modernist pretention. If the immediate effect was to license anti-modernist scorn, Harris' argument that the poems were more meaningful than the hoaxers knew has been justified by their ongoing interest to readers and critics.⁴⁹ Modernism continued to present challenges, but it no longer carried the shock of the new. The problem of 'Australian civilisation' loomed larger.⁵⁰

Post-war reconstruction was a time of cultural optimism. In early 1945 *Meanjin* editor C.B. Christesen wrote: 'No Australian concerned with literature and art can fail to feel that something new is stirring throughout the country.'⁵¹ But such hopes were largely disappointed. By 1948 the demise of 'some eighteen literary and semi-literary journals' was, Christesen believed, 'a measure of the condition of culture'.⁵² A.A. Phillips diagnosed an ongoing 'cultural cringe', the term becoming part of Australia's language of self-analysis.⁵³ Commonwealth censorship remained strict, while State obscenity laws led to prosecutions of publishers, booksellers and authors.⁵⁴

- 47 Stephen Mills, 'Polling, Politics and the Press, 1941–1996', in Ann Curthoys and Julianne Schultz (eds), *Journalism: Print, Politics and Popular Culture* (Brisbane: UQP, 1999), p. 205.
- 48 Vance Palmer, 'Battle', Meanjin, 1, 8 (1942): 5-6.
- 49 Michael Heyward, The Ern Malley Affair (Brisbane: UQP, 1993); Mead, Networked Language, ch. 2.
- 50 Peter Coleman (ed.), Australian Civilization: A Symposium (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1962).
- 51 Editorial, Meanjin, 4, 1 (1945): 1.
- 52 'Trailer', Meanjin, 7, 4 (1948): 276.
- 53 A.A. Phillips, 'The Cultural Cringe', Meanjin, 9, 4 (1950): 299-302.
- 54 Nicole Moore, The Censor's Library (Brisbane: UQP, 2012).

Conservative government and Cold War anti-liberalism seemed to confirm a trend towards cultural insularity. Australia was arguably *more* isolated from cultural and intellectual developments in Europe and the United States than it had been before the war.

One reaction from writers and artists was expatriation.⁵⁵ Another was a new questioning of Australian identity and social mores, both domestically and abroad. A liberal public affairs journalism appeared with *Nation* (1958–72) and the *Observer* (1958–61). When the latter merged with the *Bulletin* in 1961, editor Donald Horne removed 'Australia for the White Man' from the *Bulletin*'s masthead, where it had stood since 1908. On April Fool's Day 1963 came *OZ*, a satirical magazine – part of a 'satire boom' – edited by *enfants terribles* Richard Neville and Richard Walsh, with cartoons by Martin Sharp.⁵⁶ The first issue was successfully prosecuted for obscenity, and a 1964 issue became the subject of a protracted obscenity case. The stars of the satirical television comedy *The Mavis Bramston Show* (1964–69), for which Walsh wrote, helped to raise funds for the editors' legal costs.

In fiction, 'Nino Culotta's' best-selling They're a Weird Mob (1957) assimilated migrant 'new Australians' into a vernacular suburban culture; George Johnston's My Brother Jack (1964) unsettled national masculine and suburban ideals; and Patrick White's novels forced a reassessment of the whole literary tradition. In drama, Ray Lawler's Summer of the Seventeenth Doll (1955), another questioning of old ideals of masculinity, was declared 'the best play ever written about Australia - purely Australian but in quality to be compared with the work of Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and Sean O'Casey'; similarly, Alan Seymour's The One Day of the Year (1960) confronted Anzac myths and was 'a turning point in the post-war movement in the theatre away from British gentility towards a more realistic examination of the knotty working-class roots of Australian life'.⁵⁷ Barry Humphries began performing his suburban monsters Edna Everage and Sandy Stone in 1955-56. Major books critical of Australian life and leadership appeared for a new market of educated general readers, including Robin Boyd's The Australian Ugliness (1960) and Horne's The Lucky Country (1964). These works refocused questions about Australian civilisation onto suburban rather than bush life

⁵⁵ Stephen Alomes, When London Calls: The Expatriation of Australian Creative Artists to Britain (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

⁵⁶ Michelle Arrow, Friday on Our Minds: Popular Culture in Australia since 1945 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), pp. 96–7.

⁵⁷ Brisbane (ed.), Entertaining Australia, pp. 280, 295.

Australia's first national daily newspapers appeared, in an industry traditionally hamstrung by the vast distances between urban centres. The *Australian Financial Review*, launched by John Fairfax Ltd in 1951, became a daily in 1963. A newspaper with a wider brief – simply but tellingly entitled the *Australian* – was launched by Keith Murdoch's son, Rupert, in 1964. It set new standards of national reportage in politics, finance, sport and the arts, underpinned by a liberal humanist creed.⁵⁸ The potential of the suburban newspaper market, once the province of independent publishers, was recognised by major metropolitan publishers. Murdoch commenced his drive into Sydney with the £1 million purchase of the suburban chain Cumberland Newspapers in 1960; Fairfax and Packer retaliated by forming Suburban Publications.⁵⁹

Immigration also nourished the foreign-language press. Local bulletins servicing Greek, Italian and other communities became mass circulation, and in some cases national, newspapers.⁶⁰ From the 1950s an increasing number of commercial radio stations presented foreign-language programs, although they were required to provide English translations.⁶¹

The Sydney-based publishing, bookselling and printing conglomerate Angus & Robertson dominated the local book industry, but the late 1950s also saw the beginnings of expansion through independents such as Cheshire and Ure Smith and the Australian offices of British firms such as Nelson and Penguin. Mainstream fiction titles published locally increased from 39 in 1956 to 235 in 1965, while the value of Australian publishing doubled between 1961 and 1965. Local pulp fiction publishers like Horwitz produced multiple titles from authors such as crime writer Carter Brown, which sold globally.⁶²

From the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s, innovation appeared in poetry rather than fiction. McAuley, Judith Wright, Rosemary Dobson, Francis Webb, A.D. Hope, Douglas Stewart and David Campbell all published major volumes. Poets grasped the themes of early exploration and pioneering to re-examine national meanings. Although traditional in form, all showed the influence of modern intellectual movements in questioning the meanings of Australian

59 Griffen-Foley, The House of Packer, p. 246.

61 Griffen-Foley, Changing Stations, p. 80.

⁵⁸ Denis Cryle, Murdoch's Flagship: The First Twenty-Five Years of the Australian Newspaper (Melbourne University Press, 2008), pp. ix, 68–96.

⁶⁰ Miriam Gilson and Jerzy Zubrzycki, *The Foreign-Language Press in Australia, 1848–1964* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1967), ch. 2.

⁶² David Carter, 'Publishing, Patronage and Cultural Politics: Institutional Changes in the Field of Australian Literature from 1950', in Pierce (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature*, pp. 371–3.

civilisation, most memorably in Hope's 'Australia' (1943), 'Where second-hand Europeans pullulate/Timidly on the edge of alien shores'. Famously, at this point, Hope changes tack, turning 'gladly home/From the lush jungle of modern thought', hoping that 'still from the deserts prophets come', free from 'the chatter of cultured apes/Which is called civilisation over there'. This idea of a radical Australian originality links Hope unexpectedly to the Jindyworobaks and forward to a poet such as Les Murray.

One prophet to emerge was Patrick White, who left Australia in 1932 but returned permanently in 1948. His major impact came with his two great novels, *The Tree of Man* (1955) and *Voss* (1957). Both took 'classic' Australian stories – pioneer farming and exploration – but gave them a mythical, late-modernist treatment. White sought to 'discover the extraordinary behind the ordinary, the mystery and the poetry' in the lives of his characters.⁶³ Despite suspicion among some nationalists, the novels were generally well received. The spectacular exception, ironically, was Hope's review of *The Tree of Man*, which described White's prose as 'pretentious and illiterate verbal sludge'.⁶⁴

The idea that the Australian tradition was essentially democratic received full articulation in the 1950s in a series of major books: Palmer's *The Legend of the Nineties* (1954), Phillips' *The Australian Tradition* (1958) and Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend* (1958). By the end of the decade, Australian literature had entered the academy with poet-critics such as Hope, McAuley and Vincent Buckley, and scholars such as G.A. Wilkes (Australia's first professor of Australian literature, at the University of Sydney, from 1963). The nationalist tradition was re-evaluated and a new canon propounded. A major tradition culminating in White was traced through authors previously neglected, often because of their 'European' influences. For H.P. Heseltine, White's *Voss* 'fuse[d] almost all those aspects of Australia's literary heritage which define both its modernity and its Australianness'.⁶⁵ This was a powerful argument that subsumed and disarmed the nationalist tradition.

These critical debates occurred in the context of a 'peculiarly Australian intellectual cold war': the professionalisation of criticism was tangled with its politicisation.⁶⁶ The cultural influence of the Communist Party peaked with the *succès de scandale* of Frank Hardy's exposé novel *Power Without Glory*

⁶³ Patrick White, 'The Prodigal Son', Australian Letters, 1, 3 (1958): 35-7.

^{64 &#}x27;The Bunyip Stages a Comeback', Sydney Morning Herald, 16 June 1956.

⁶⁵ H.P. Heseltine, 'The Literary Heritage', *Meanjin*, 21, 1 (1962): 47; Carter, 'Critics, Writers, Intellectuals', pp. 270–8.

⁶⁶ Vincent Buckley, 'Unequal Twins: A Discontinuous Analysis', Meanjin, 40, 1 (1981): 9.

(1950), prompting parliamentary attacks on communist and left-liberal writers and on the supposed bias of the Commonwealth Literary Fund (CLF).⁶⁷ The 'radical nationalist' tradition was challenged both by the new liberalism and, in McAuley's *Quadrant*, by anti-liberal conservatism. Across the 1960s the balance of power shifted decisively away from radical nationalism, although bush mythology would live on in popular culture.

White's fiction was often linked to Nolan's art via their shared interest in the mythic dimensions of Australian stories. For painters such as Nolan, Arthur Boyd and Russell Drysdale, the Australian landscape was a site of estrangement but also renewal, and the outback tour became as significant for artists as the tour to Europe. Following his first Ned Kelly sequence (1945-47), Nolan explored the links between land and identity in subsequent series around Eliza Fraser (who had lived among Aboriginal people after being shipwrecked in 1836 – a story White drew on for A Fringe of Leaves), Burke and Wills, Gallipoli and Central Australia.68 The question of nationalism – or 'provincialism' – was posed again by the rise of international abstraction in the 1950s and 1960s. If art was to be abstract, what became of Australian art? Resistance to abstraction was expressed in 'The Antipodean Manifesto', produced in Melbourne in 1959, but alignments were often blurred.⁶⁹ John Olsen and Fred Williams, among the most distinctive artists to emerge in the period, brought abstraction to bear on the problem of representing Australian landscapes.

Television and popular music

The most significant cultural change in the post-war decades was the introduction of television. As with radio, a dual system of private and public ownership was introduced after lengthy debate. The effect again 'was to skew the Australian system towards the commercial sector'.⁷⁰ Advertising revenue meant that commercial stations could purchase well-made American dramas and comedies, and also invest more in local variety and game shows. The

⁶⁷ John McLaren, Writing in Hope and Fear: Literature as Politics in Postwar Australia (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

⁶⁸ Allen, Art in Australia, pp. 125-30, 147-54.

⁶⁹ Ibid., ch. 5; Sayers, Australian Art, ch. 10; Bernard Smith, 'The Antipodean Manifesto', in *The Death of the Artist as Hero: Essays in History and Culture* (Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 194–7.

⁷⁰ Stuart Cunningham, 'Television', in Cunningham and Turner (eds), The Media in Australia, p. 94.

ABC depended upon government funding and was shaped by its public service ethos. $^{\mbox{\tiny 71}}$

Broadcasting began in Sydney and Melbourne in 1956 to coincide with the Melbourne Olympic Games, with one ABC and two commercial stations. It spread to other cities and regional centres over the next decade. Commercial licences were granted to serve local interests but de facto networks soon developed, driven by economies of scale; the first owners were large press and cinema proprietors attuned to maximising audience reach.⁷² As there was virtually no local production industry, early broadcasting was dominated by imported programs, especially in expensive areas such as drama. Nonetheless, locally made programs developed a strong presence through cheaper live forms such as music and quiz shows ('radio with pictures'). Australian television 'developed a deliberate programming mix between overseas drama and local variety', which continues with variations to the present.⁷³

Local content regulations were introduced in 1960, requiring that 40 per cent of programming on commercial television be Australian and that all advertisements be Australian-made. The content requirement was largely ineffective as it could be met with fillers such as sport, but in 1966 a drama quota was introduced, requiring stations to broadcast 30 minutes of locally produced drama each week. The advertising requirement mean-while was critical in underwriting a local production industry for television and cinema. Perhaps the most significant development was the success of Australian drama series in a field dominated by American imports. Crawford Productions' police series *Homicide* (1964–77), unapologetically local in setting and accent, became the highest rating program within a year of its release.⁷⁴ With its success, locally produced drama became a permanent feature of Australian television while it all but disappeared from radio, although the ABC's rural soap opera *Blue Hills* ran continuously from 1949 to 1976. *Skippy* (1966–70), a family drama about a kangaroo, achieved sales in over 100

- 72 Cunningham, 'Television', pp. 95–6; Nick Herd, Networking: Commercial Television in Australia (Sydney: Currency House, 2012), chs 2–3.
- 73 Albert Moran, 'Three Stages of Australian Television', in John Tulloch and Graeme Turner (eds), *Australian Television: Programs, Pleasures and Politics* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989), pp. 1, 5.
- 74 Alan McKee, 'Prime-Time Drama: 77 Sunset Strip to SeaChange', in Turner and Cunningham (eds), The Australian TV Book, pp. 143-5.

⁷¹ Elizabeth Jacka, 'Public Service TV: An Endangered Species?', in Graeme Turner and Stuart Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000), pp. 52–7.

overseas markets, initiating a pattern of television exports. By 1969 eight of the twelve most popular programs were Australian.⁷⁵

If cinema and radio symbolised new patterns of consumption between the wars, television did the same in the post-war decades. This second wave of consumerism was linked less to glamour and fashion than to family-oriented domestic space. As with early radio, the television set was itself a modern consumer item, focusing leisure and entertainment within the home, and transforming family life in the process; but consumerism also segmented the marketplace in identifying a distinct teenage or youth market.⁷⁶ The Top 40 format, imported from the United States in 1958, came to dominate commercial radio, especially once transistors made music more portable, private and cheaper; transistors and car radios were promoted by the industry as it sought to compete with television.77 Other technological changes reinforced the identification between youth and popular music: the 'single-play 45 was on its way to becoming one of the most marketable items in history'.78 Rock'n'roll reignited debates over Americanisation and its effects on young Australians, alongside campaigns against American television, comics and magazines. Ironically, one form of American-derived popular culture, country music, would become celebrated as distinctively Australian.79

Television responded to pop radio with programs including *Bandstand* (1958–72) and *Six O'Clock Rock* (1959–62). These shows allowed local artists, such as Johnny O'Keefe, to become better known, even though they were mostly covering others' hits. The same struggle between derivativeness and local expression that shaped art and literature occurred in popular music. While early rock was inevitably derivative, live performance and television did produce original variations. 'Surfies' in Sydney and Brisbane produced a variant of surfing rock and even a new dance (the Stomp). Bands such as The Easybeats followed the Beatles in performing and recording mostly original material; by the 1970s this was the norm. They built local fan bases before touring overseas, anticipating later bands such as AC/DC. ABC television's long-running pop music program *Countdown* (1974–87) featured many Australian acts and helped create a national audience for local music alongside British and American. As in publishing, despite the dominance

⁷⁵ Australian Television: A Ratings History, 1956–1998 (Sydney: A.C. Nielsen, 1999), p. 25.

⁷⁶ Arrow, Friday on Our Minds, pp. 29-33, 42-43, 62-71.

⁷⁷ Griffen-Foley, Changing Stations, pp. 54-6, 264-5, 303.

⁷⁸ Brisbane (ed.), Entertaining Australia, p. 288.

⁷⁹ Philip Bell and Roger Bell (eds), Americanization and Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1998); David Carter, Dispossession, Dreams and Diversity: Issues in Australian Studies (Sydney: Pearson, 2006), ch. 11; Brisbane (ed.), Entertaining Australia, pp. 259, 274, 316.

of multinational record companies local independents such as Mushroom Records found an audience for Australian music. By the 1980s commentators talked confidently of 'Oz Rock'.⁸⁰

Government and culture

Although the post-war decades have been viewed as a period of conservatism and parochialism, major changes were initiated in popular entertainment, intellectual and artistic innovation, and institution building. The CLF expanded its support for Australian writers and publishers, while dreams of a National Theatre re-emerged with the formation of the Australian Elizabethan Theatre Trust in 1954. Its prime mover was H.C. Coombs, former head of Post-War Reconstruction, who mobilised support from Australia's business elite.⁸¹ The Trust supported productions of Australian plays and helped establish the Australian Opera Company (later Opera Australia) in 1956, the National Institute of Dramatic Art in 1959, and the Australian Ballet in 1962. State governments also began to increase investment in the arts. The Perth Festival began in 1953, followed by the Adelaide Festival of the Arts in 1960. A new National Gallery of Victoria was commissioned in 1959, the year construction began on Jørn Utzon's challenging design for the Sydney Opera House (officially opened in 1973). Permanent theatre companies were established in most capital cities. A new era of government patronage was initiated in 1968 when the Gorton Coalition government established the Australian Council for the Arts, with a \$1.7 million budget.⁸²

In 1975 the Whitlam Labor government established the Australia Council, still the Commonwealth's central arts funding agency. Earlier, Whitlam had appointed an interim Council with seven boards – Aboriginal Arts, Crafts, Literature, Music, Visual Arts, Theatre, and Film and Television – and a \$14 million budget.⁸³ Whereas the Trust's mission was to bring civilisation to where it was lacking, the Council was based on the assumption that there was an Australian culture. Whitlam was also closely linked to the National Gallery's controversial purchase of Jackson Pollock's *Blue Poles* for \$1.3 million in 1973. This was the same year construction of the Gallery in Canberra

83 Macdonnell, Arts, Minister?, p. 105.

⁸⁰ Arrow, Friday on Our Minds, pp. 85-6, 127-8, 168-9.

⁸¹ Tim Rowse, Nugget Coombs: A Reforming Life (Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 192–7, 268–81.

⁸² Justin Macdonnell, Arts, Minister? Government Policy and the Arts (Sydney: Currency, 1992), p. 26. See also Deborah Stevenson, Art and Organisation: Making Australian Cultural Policy (Brisbane: UQP, 2000).

commenced and Patrick White won the Nobel Prize for Literature, the first and to date only such award to an Australian.

This new level of government support was underscored by significant new developments in literature, theatre, art, film, television, dance and music. By 1985 over 1,000 writers had received grants and over 1,000 books, particularly fiction and poetry, had been subsidised by the Literature Board.⁸⁴ New independent publishers flourished in the 1970s and 1980s, while multinationals such as Penguin developed significant Australian lists. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, first books of fiction appeared from major writers including Peter Carey, David Malouf, Murray Bail, Rodney Hall, Louis Nowra, Elizabeth Jolley, Helen Garner, Peter Corris, Beverley Farmer, Tim Winton and Kate Grenville, while others, including Tom Keneally and Frank Moorhouse, consolidated their careers.

Reform and revival

This was an age of the 'new' – the new poetry, the new drama, the new journalism, the new wave in cinema. There was a widely shared sense of Australian culture as independent, no longer troubled by its relationship to Britain. Innovation in the arts could be linked to generational change – through resistance to Australia's involvement in Vietnam, for example, or feminist challenges to art practice. Australia's censorship regime was liberalised, first under the minister Don Chipp from the late 1960s and then with the Whitlam government.⁸⁵ The energies of the 1970s brought substantial growth in cultural activity across the next two decades. Novelists and film-makers explored contemporary urban life but also revisited colonial and environmental histories, now from a 'postcolonial' perspective, as in Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* (1993) or, more recently, Grenville's *The Secret River* (2005).⁸⁶

In the 1970s vibrant Aboriginal art movements emerged in Central Australia, notably at Papunya, where teacher Geoffrey Bardon worked with elders to produce paintings of the traditional Honey Ant Dreaming. With the introduction of acrylic paints, the movement flourished through artists such as Michael Jagamara Nelson, Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri and Emily Kame

⁸⁴ Carter, 'Publishing, Patronage and Cultural Politics', p. 377.

⁸⁵ Moore, The Censor's Library, pp. 265-88.

⁸⁶ Ken Gelder and Paul Salzman, After the Celebration: Australian Fiction 1989–2007 (Melbourne University Press, 2009); Graham Huggan, Australian Literature: Postcolonialism, Racism, Transnationalism (Oxford University Press, 2007).

Kngwarreye drawing on Dreaming stories and iconography but adapted to new materials and markets. They are now collected internationally. Central Desert 'dot painting' has been joined by a wide variety of styles from different regions, while urban-based Indigenous artists such as Gordon Bennett and Tracey Moffatt have brought confronting postmodernist understandings of art to questions of history and identity.⁸⁷ These developments were progressively matched in other areas: popular music, with bands such as Yothu Yindi; modern dance (the Bangarra Dance Theatre); film-making (directors Ivan Sen, Rachel Perkins and Wayne Blair); journalism (the *Koori Mail* and *National Indigenous Times*); and literature (Kim Scott and Alexis Wright are both winners of the prestigious Miles Franklin Award).

In the mainstream commercial market, two new magazines also reflected changing mores. *Cleo*, published by Kerry Packer and edited by Ita Buttrose, was aimed at the 'progressive woman' aged between 20 and 45. Featuring Australia's first male nude centrefold, it ranged across women's health, sexuality, careers and feminism. *Cleo* was launched in 1972, reaching the market before Fairfax's Australian edition of *Cosmopolitan*.⁸⁸ In the same year, *Nation* merged with the *Sunday Review* to become the irreverent and provocative *Nation Review*.⁸⁹ Irreverence also reigned in ABC television's unexpected hit *The Aunty Jack Show* (1972–73), an absurd review created by Graham Bond that, in turn, let loose Garry McDonald's parody of Australian television, *The Norman Gunston Show* (1975–76).⁹⁰

The formation of the Australian Film Development Corporation in 1970 (from 1975, the Australian Film Commission) meant funding support for local cinema, with nearly 400 films produced in Australia between 1970 and 1985.⁹¹ Offensively Australian comedies such as *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* (1972) were followed by films emulating European art-house styles such as Peter Weir's *Picnic at Hanging Rock* (1975) and Gillian Armstrong's *My Brilliant Career* (1979), period pieces that nonetheless asserted a distinctively Australian character. Others adapted Hollywood styles, such as George Miller's internationally successful *Mad Max* trilogy (1979–85), which defined a new action genre. Many films, including *Breaker Morant* (1980) and *Gallipoli*

88 Griffen-Foley, The House of Packer, p. 297.

90 K.S. Inglis, This is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Commission 1932–1983 (Melbourne University Press, 1983), pp. 295, 356.

⁸⁷ Sayers, Australian Art, pp. 201–9; Ian McLean (ed.), How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art (Sydney: Institute of Modern Art and Power Publications, 2011).

⁸⁹ K.S. Inglis (ed.), Nation: The Life of an Independent Journal of Opinion 1958–1972 (Melbourne University Press, 1989), pp. 209–12.

⁹¹ Australian Government, 'Film in Australia' (2007) http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australia/australia/australia, accessed 8 May 2012.

(1981), revisited formative myths of national identity, while *The Man from Snowy River* (1982) combined elements of the western with a 'classic' bush story. *Crocodile Dundee* (1986) did something similar through comedy, topping the box office in both America and Australia.

Australian film heroes differed from their Hollywood counterparts, being ordinary rather than extraordinary, survivors rather than conquerors. In films of the early 1990s such as *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994) and *Muriel's Wedding* (1994), older types of national identity were replaced by a 'younger', urban, sometimes ethnically and sexually diverse Australia. These 'small' films were well received internationally. *Strictly Ballroom* (1992) launched Baz Luhrmann's international career; his extravagant film *Australia* (2008) brought retro-Hollywood style to an epic story of the Australian outback – now with an undeniable Indigenous presence.

Australian television in the 1970s and 1980s also turned to historical drama with colonial series such as *Rush* (1973–76), *Against the Wind* (1978) and *The Sullivans* (1976–83), set during World War 2. Following the 1980 introduction of tax concessions for investors, an important cluster of quality historical mini-series, particularly those from production company Kennedy Miller, dramatised significant national events such as Anzac, the Depression and the sacking of the Whitlam government.⁹² Otherwise television picked up where radio had left off, with a strong suburban, domestic bias. Australian soap operas found a distinctive range between American and British styles. Focused on the lives of ordinary suburban characters, *Neighbours* (1985–) and *Home and Away* (1987–) gained popularity at home and huge sales abroad, particularly in Britain.⁹³

Colour television arrived in 1975, leading to major changes in national advertising, sports broadcasting and nature documentaries. Nature and travel programs boosted the familiarity of remote Australia, playing an important role in elevating Uluru (Ayers Rock) into a powerful national symbol.⁹⁴ Media rights became a determining factor in sporting competitions. Unable to buy exclusive broadcasting rights to international cricket for his Nine Network, Kerry Packer sponsored World Series Cricket, an alternative competition, designed for television, which split the game worldwide. Media rights played

94 Carter, Dispossession, Dreams and Diversity, pp. 176-7.

⁹² Graeme Turner, 'Historical Television', in Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 634.

⁹³ Kate Bowles, 'Soap Opera: "No End of Story, Ever", in Turner and Cunningham (eds), *The Australian TV Book*, pp. 117–29.

a key role in both Australian Rules football and Rugby League forming national competitions. $^{\rm 95}$

The considerable extra expenditure required for infrastructure led country stations to merge and the diversity of local voices to diminish.⁹⁶ Television came late to some remote parts of Australia – 1971 for Darwin – but the introduction of a domestic satellite in 1986, AUSSAT, enabled commercial stations to complete the process of national networking. With the exception of some local news and advertising, television schedules across the nation became virtually identical. Commercial stations continue to attract almost 80 per cent of the viewing audience, the ABC 17 per cent and the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) up to 6 per cent.⁹⁷ American drama and sitcoms still dominate on the commercial networks, but Australian-made lifestyle programs and reality television, mostly local adaptations of international formats, also attract high audiences.

Foreign-language radio broadcasters were incorporated in the new SBS in 1978, and in 1980 SBS Television was launched under federal multicultural policy. Although initially controversial, SBS Television was and remains an innovative service, bringing greater diversity to television programming, whether through sport (soccer and cycling), foreign-language news and drama, or less mainstream Australian programs. Unlike SBS Radio, SBS Television is not primarily a community language service; its audience is less 'the working-class migrant with poor English [than] the urban cosmopolitan of varying ethnicities'.⁹⁸

The old media and the new

By the 1990s Australia's old media was changing, and contracting. The number of metropolitan daily newspapers fell from nineteen in 1987 to eleven five years later. All afternoon newspapers closed. Rupert Murdoch parlayed his Australian media company, News Ltd, into the global media and entertainment empire, News Corporation. Allowed by the Hawke Labor government to take over the Herald and Weekly Times in 1987, News Ltd came

⁹⁵ Arrow, Friday on Our Minds, pp. 138-9, 148-55.

⁹⁶ Waterhouse, The Vision Splendid, p. 242.

⁹⁷ Screen Australia, 'Television: Trends in Audience Share' (2009) <http://www. screenaustralia.gov.au/research/statistics/archftvratingstrends.asp>, accessed 15 February 2012.

⁹⁸ Ien Ang, Gay Hawkins and Lamia Dabboussy, *The SBS Story: The Challenge of Cultural Diversity* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008); Jacka, 'Public Service TV', p. 63.

to control two-thirds of Australia's metropolitan daily circulation.⁹⁹ In spite of inquiries into, and legislation regulating, media ownership, Australia's newspaper industry is among the most concentrated in the developed world. Today, only Sydney and Melbourne have competing local daily papers, while other cities have just two newspaper titles, a tabloid and the *Australian*, both from News Ltd. The *Australian* has become increasingly influential and controversial, accused of being 'unusually ideological' in its conservatism.¹⁰⁰ Like most newspapers and magazines, it faces pressure from online news and entertainment and portable platforms, not to mention media audiences who expect digital content to be free. Broadsheets, and particularly weekend newspapers, experienced double-digit declines in circulation between 2001 and 2011.¹⁰¹ As old media companies are aware, historically Australian consumers have swiftly embraced new communications technologies.

After decades of stasis, Australian radio was transformed, first by legalisation in 1967 allowing talkback radio, as the industry sought to compete with television, and second by the licensing of FM stations, long feared by commercial AM broadcasters. A new diversity was introduced to radio with the introduction of FM in the 1970s, through community stations dedicated to specific interests including fine music and religion; youth programming (the ABC's 2JJ, later Triple J); and, from 1996, a National Indigenous Radio Service.¹⁰² Even before the *Broadcasting Services Act* of 1992, radio and television regulation moved to self-regulation, if not deregulation. The 'cash for comment' affair of 1999, in which leading talkback presenters were accused of letting secret financial agreements influence their editorial coverage, revealed a failure to ensure the effective operation of self-regulatory codes of practice.¹⁰³

Subscription television began comparatively late, in 1995, and uptake has plateaued at around 29 per cent of households.¹⁰⁴ Again, close ties between incumbent broadcasters and governments stifled efforts to introduce new technology. The shareholders in the dominant provider, FOXTEL, are

- 101 Australian Newspaper History Group Newsletter, 64 (October 2011): 8.
- 102 Bridget Griffen-Foley, 'Radio', in Cunningham and Turner (eds), *The Media and Communications in Australia*, pp. 117–20.

⁹⁹ Rodney Tiffen, 'The Press', in Stuart Cunningham and Graeme Turner (eds), *The Media and Communications in Australia*, 3rd edn (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2010), p. 87.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Manne, 'Bad News: Murdoch's Australian and the Shaping of the Nation', Quarterly Essay, 43 (2011): 1–119.

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 122-3.

¹⁰⁴ Screen Australia, 'Television: Subscriber Numbers, Total and by Operator, 1995–2011' (2011) http://www.screenaustralia.gov.au/research/statistics/wptvsubsxops.asp, accessed 15 February 2012.

Culture and media

major (tele)communications companies: Telstra and News Ltd. Digital terrestrial television finally commenced in Australia in 2001. Despite the historic advantages held by commercial broadcasters, the public service broadcasters have been most innovative in adapting to the digital environment. The ABC's content-rich block programming swiftly adapted to online, with forums, audio streaming, podcasts and transcripts. Radio Australia, launched as an international shortwave service in 1939, continues as part of the ABC, which also runs the Australia Network, a television service that reaches into Asia.

Australian book publishing was drawn into a process of globalisation, as publishing houses worldwide were merged into multinational media conglomerates. By 2004 only one Australian firm featured in the top 20 publishers (Allen & Unwin, independent since a management buyout of its Australian branch in 1990). Nonetheless, the market share claimed by local titles has steadily increased, as have book exports and sales of overseas rights.¹⁰⁵ The Australian offices of multinationals such as Random House have strong local lists, while smaller independents such as Text Publishing are engaged aggressively in international markets. Australian books and authors are protected by restrictions on the 'parallel importation' of overseas editions of books copyrighted in Australia, but the question remains controversial, dividing local and multinational interests.

The challenges of the new media highlight many 'old' questions for Australia's media and for understandings of a national culture. The internet is deeply involved in the forging of contemporary Australian identities. National markets and audiences remain crucial in sustaining both individual careers and viable cultural industries, but the new media sees them dividing internally into niche markets and multiplying externally across national borders. While television, cinema, newspapers and literature continue to address an imagined national community, they must also engage new communities of interest as audiences fragment and diversify.

Australia is no longer a Dominion or client state within a closed imperial market, but a medium-sized player, exporter as well as importer, within globalised cultural industries and markets. Mature production and distribution industries and government support structures have been established and

¹⁰⁵ Jenny Lee, 'Exploiting the Imprint', in David Carter and Anne Galligan (eds), Making Books: Contemporary Australian Publishing (Brisbane: UQP, 2007), pp. 22–8.

sustain professional careers for creators, performers, entrepreneurs, agents and critics. Expatriation has been replaced by international mobility. Consumers have access to a wide range of imported and local culture. With Australian actors and directors in Hollywood and many international films made in Australia, Australian cinema is more integrated than ever into global production and reception.¹⁰⁶ Australian novels move regularly into international markets, as do popular music acts; Australian television programs find overseas markets; children's books and the children's group the Wiggles have had remarkable international success. Domestically, Indigenous-directed and Indigenous-themed films such as *Rabbit-Proof Fence* (2002) and *Samson and Delilah* (2009) have had a major impact, while influences from Asia and the Pacific are increasingly significant in the arts. The Queensland Art Gallery's Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art is a major event both nationally and regionally. Many of the older questions concerning the 'cultural cringe' have diminished almost to vanishing point.

Yet Australian culture remains defined by its global position relative to much larger cultural producers in the United Kingdom, the United States and, increasingly, Asia. While Australian audiences remain strongly attached to local products, imports are dominant in almost every field. Local publishing, film-making, theatre and music production, while vibrant and diverse, are still often precarious and dependent upon government subsidy or protection. The dynamics of contemporary culture involve Australians both participating in and resisting global cultures.

¹⁰⁶ Tom O'Regan, "Knowing the Processes but Not the Outcomes": Australian Cinema Faces the Millennium', in Tony Bennett and David Carter (eds), *Culture in Australia: Policies, Publics and Programs* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 18–45.

Science and medicine

ALISON BASHFORD AND PETER HOBBINS

The Federation celebrations of January 1901 were muted for some. Bubonic plague - a quintessentially Old World disease - arrived in Sydney alongside the new century and the new nation. Infection was a devastating prospect for those at risk and their households and neighbours. But it was also a problem that tested the limits of Australian medical, scientific and governmental capacity and cooperation. How could Commonwealth responsibility for national quarantine - newly granted via the federal Constitution - be reconciled with the prevention of infectious disease, a State power derived from colonial laws? Although ancient, plague remained poorly understood and its appearance in New South Wales raised both research and epistemological questions. As doctors vied to understand and minimise the epidemic through colonial-era sanitary measures, the emerging laboratory sciences linked localised outbreaks to global research on microbes as the agents of disease. Epidemiology and bacteriology were integrated by the local Chief Medical Officer, John Ashburton Thompson, producing an internationally significant verification of a recent French theory: plague was caused by a bacterium harboured in fleas, carried by rats and only thus spread to humans.¹

The components of the plague episode played out repeatedly over the twentieth century. Who held responsibility for the health of Australians: not only for prevention and treatment, but its risks and costs? How were science, technology and medicine linked in the application of new knowledge and the pursuit of improvement? How and where was such knowledge generated, who was empowered to deploy it and who adjudicated its efficacy? Within the transnational orthodoxies of science and medicine, how unique were Australian experiences and enterprises? Health and medicine, and science and technology were social endeavours tightly tied to political structures.

I Peter Curson and Kevin McCracken, *Plague in Sydney: The Anatomy of an Epidemic* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1989).

Shifting perceptions of individual, communal and governmental responsibility for health and useful scientific innovation reflected changing expectations and experiences of citizenship. This informed policy and outcomes in the sciences of earth, life and health.

Sciences of earth and atmosphere

In 1914 the British Association for the Advancement of Science met in Australia for the first time. As delegates toured the Australian capitals, there was a palpable sense that local science had outgrown its ad hoc colonial culture. There had been a strong, even strident, settler tradition that favoured the individual clinician, the lone investigator and the solo inventor. After Federation, however, there was a rising clamour from ambitious researchers for permanent and professional institutional support.² Organisations such as the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science and major regional conferences – typified by the Pan-Pacific Science Congress hosted by Sydney and Melbourne in 1923 – helped ameliorate geographic and intellectual isolation. However, demand grew slowly for local training, facilities and sustained research programs.

This cooperative approach was embodied in the research and applied partnerships that characterised Australian earth sciences. Colonial appropriation of local natural resources, coupled with nineteenth-century debates about evolution and the age of the planet, had ensured that geology, mineralogy, metallurgy, geochemistry and glaciology were foundational for early twentieth-century Australian scientists. As a flat, ancient landmass sculpted by a singular process of glacial movement, the continent that became a nation was geologically unique.³ Federation-era nationalists and scientists perceived a landscape poor for agriculture but rich in geological curiosities. Establishing the age of the island continent and its global tectonic relationships was important for earth scientists comprehending the deep time-scales emerging in the wake of Charles Darwin's theories. Australian research offered important evidence to substantiate geological claims, both on the continent itself and – in a pattern repeated through the century – in

² Roy MacLeod, 'Science, Progressivism, and "Practical Idealism": Reflections on Efficient Imperialism and Federal Science in Australia, 1895–1915', in Roy MacLeod and Richard Jarrell (eds), *Dominions Apart: Reflections on the Culture of Science and Technology in Canada and Australia*, 1850–1945 (Toronto: Canadian Science and Technology Historical Association, 1994), pp. 7–25.

³ Libby Robin, How a Continent Created a Nation (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007).

the surrounding marine and terrestrial regions. For example, the University of Sydney geology professor Edgeworth David's deep drilling on the Pacific island of Funafuti located marine organisms at 340 metres, confirming key aspects of Darwin's speculations on corals.⁴

Earth scientists such as David typically cemented their research careers on an extractive economy built upon natural resource exploitation; the relation between geology, mining, and resource industries was critical. The search for coal and later oil - successful in many instances - advanced Australian earth scientists in career, institutional and funding terms, while exploratory geology and geochemistry were bolstered by such authorising statutes as the Petroleum Prospecting Act of 1926.⁵ But even in this early stage, some Australian scientists were forecasting resource limits and speculating on longer-term energy solutions: in 1924, Sir George Knibbs – the first director of the new Commonwealth Institute of Science and Industry - decried 'the reckless exploitation of the world's petroleum'.6 Such work relied initially upon colonial geological surveys that were gradually superseded by federally backed studies, sponsored by successive Commonwealth bureaus of mineral resources and geophysics.7 Mapping projects of Australian geomorphology, soils and mineral deposits became increasingly comprehensive and large-scale, eventually encompassing aerial photogrammetry of the entire Australian landmass.

Such expansive projects highlighted the exponential rise in the number of local scientific institutes, universities, government departments and industry facilities undertaking research. This growth became particularly prominent after World War 2: while a 1943 survey listed approximately 500 scientific, technical and medical research sites across Australia, by 1966 the number had doubled and by 1988 there were over 2,200 such centres.⁸

- 4 David Branagan, *T.W. Edgeworth David: A Life* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2005), pp. 85–104.
- 5 Thomas Vallance and David Branagan, 'The Earth Sciences: Searching for Geological Order', in Roy MacLeod (ed.), *The Commonwealth of Science: ANZAAS and the Scientific Enterprise in Australasia*, 1888–1988 (Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 141.
- 6 George Handley Knibbs, 'Liquid Fuel Investigations and Their Significance for Australia', typescript 1924, Commonwealth Institute of Science and Industries, NAA A8510, 166/11.
- 7 B.W. Butcher, 'Science and the Imperial Vision: The Imperial Geophysical Experimental Survey, 1928–1930', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 6, 1 (1984): 31–43; C. Rowland Twidale, 'Charles Fenner and Early Landform Studies in South Australia', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 21, 2 (2010): 149–63.
- 8 See Scientific Liaison Bureau, *Science on Service: A Directory of Scientific Resources in Australia* (Sydney: Australasian Medical Publishing Company, 1943); *Scientific and Technical Research Centres in Australia* (Melbourne: CSIRO, 1966); A. Ermers (ed.),

Driven by a post-war economic boom, earth sciences converged after 1945 with high-modern engineering and infrastructure projects to extended mineral and energy exploitation. The management of water, in particular, united civil engineering, energy needs and the requirements of primary industries with experiments that linked hydro-electric power production and large-scale irrigation. The centrepiece was the Snowy Mountains Scheme: commenced in 1949, by its completion in 1974 the project had re-routed water into sixteen dams. As so often happened, this development generated an environmentalist counter group pressing other scientists to undertake ecological studies of both the region and the Scheme's impact.

If geologists, geo-chemists and geo-physicists sought to understand the nature of Australian earth, meteorologists, climatologists and astronomers looked to Australian atmospheres and skies. From the beginning of the century, telegraphy and, later, wireless permitted daily relaying of weather information across the continent and beyond.⁹ For a new nation spanning tropical, temperate and desert climates, meteorology was among the earliest federal scientific endeavours, signalling the importance of forecasting rainfall, drought and flood for primary industries.¹⁰

It was largely meteorological interest that drew Australian scientists to Antarctica. The Southern Ocean's impact on Australian weather systems was known in general terms at the beginning of the century. The Tasmanian-trained physicist and astronomer Louis Bernacchi accompanied the British-funded Southern Cross Expedition (1898–1900), led by a Norwegian settler in Australia, Carsten Borchgrevink. This was followed by Edgeworth David's geological and meteorological work on Shackleton's *Nimrod* expedition (1907–09). The large amount of meteorological data that David brought back was compiled, sorted and published by his student, the geologist and geographer Griffith Taylor, who himself undertook weather-observing duties on Scott's *Terra Nova* expedition (1910–13). Magnetic observations were key to Australian work in Antarctica, from Bernacchi through to Douglas Mawson and David's bid to locate the South Magnetic Pole in 1909.

Australians in Antarctica were never mere observers or collectors of data, however. Territorial claims both accompanied and justified forays such

Scientific and Technical Research Centres in Australia (Melbourne: Information Services Unit, CSIRO Australia, 1988).

⁹ Ann Moyal, *Clear Across Australia: A History of Telecommunications* (Melbourne: Nelson, 1984).

¹⁰ David Day, The Weather Watchers: 100 Years of the Bureau of Meteorology (Melbourne University Press, 2007).

as the British, Australian and New Zealand Antarctic Research Expedition (1929–31), enabling Mawson to stake enduring Australian claims to a sector of the continent. Later, the long-serving director of the post-war Australian Antarctic Division, Phillip Law, pressed the significance of meteorological forecasting to help shift Commonwealth attention from the Southern Ocean Islands towards the Antarctic continent.¹¹ More recently, expedient rationales for substantial Australian scientific projects in Antarctica have been replaced by a broadly environmentalist ethic; first, ecological studies and then climate-change research predicated activity such as trace chemistry studies of ice cores to reconstruct past climates.¹²

Just as Australia's geology was unique, so the southern skies provided an important base for observers. While the establishment of the Commonwealth Bureau of Meteorology in 1908 relieved astronomers of their former duties as weather observers, historians have noted a decline in the standing of both astronomers and physicists with the new century.¹³ A reversal emerged by the mid-1920s, accompanying a suite of new investments such as the Commonwealth Solar Observatory at Mount Stromlo, outside Canberra.¹⁴ Northern hemisphere astronomers and organisations later invested in large-scale infrastructure such the Parkes radio telescope – operational from 1961 and key to the 1969 lunar landing – and the celebrated Anglo-Australian Telescope commissioned at Siding Spring Observatory in the west of New South Wales in 1974.¹⁵

The institutional vigour of Australian earth and physical sciences was often enhanced dramatically when technological enterprise served national security imperatives. The imperial call for foodstuffs, raw materials and munitions during World War I contributed to the formation of a national Advisory Council of Science and Industry in 1916. Although initially a coordinating body, it was enshrined as a Commonwealth Institute in 1920 and recast as the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in 1926.¹⁶

- 12 Tom Griffiths, *Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007); Carolyn Strange and Alison Bashford, *Griffith Taylor: Visionary, Environmentalist, Explorer* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2008).
- 13 R.W. Home, 'The Physical Sciences', in McLeod (ed.) The Commonwealth of Science, p. 153.
- 14 Tom Frame and Don Faulkner, Stromlo: An Australian Observatory (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2003).
- 15 Bernard Lovell, 'The Early History of the Anglo-Australian 150-Inch Telescope', *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society*, 26 (1985): 393–455; Peter Robertson, *Beyond Southern Skies: Radio Astronomy and the Parkes Telescope* (Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- 16 George Currie and John Graham, The Origins of CSIRO: Science and the Commonwealth Government, 1901–1926 (Melbourne: CSIRO, 1966).

¹¹ Ibid., 295–8.

In 1939 CSIR established, more or less secretly, a radiophysics laboratory that attracted leading physicists.¹⁷ One, Professor Eric Burhop from Melbourne University, was seconded to the Manhattan Project to develop the atomic bomb, where he worked with Mark Oliphant, another Australian physicist who had studied nuclear fusion in inter-war Cambridge.¹⁸ Indeed, there was something of a renascence of Australian physics during and after World War 2, especially in optics and radar. Australia's physicists were redeployed to numerous defence and security ventures, from munitions laboratories to meteorological forecasting services under Royal Australian Air Force control.

After 1945 the Commonwealth commitment to the physical sciences – in part rethought in terms of energy – was significant; it was Oliphant who returned to Australia to establish the Research School of Physical Sciences and Engineering from 1950 at the new Australian National University. Not all eminent scientists returned in this manner; international scholarships and honours such as Fellowship of the Royal Society continued to lure talented investigators overseas into the 1950s.¹⁹ Australia's first Nobel Laureates – William Lawrence Bragg (physics, 1915) and Howard Florey (physiology or medicine, 1945) – never countenanced a career in their homeland.

Hopes for a nuclear future in Australia were surprisingly long-lived. Such dreams encompassed not merely civilian energy needs, but grandiose schemes that went beyond defence and envisaged atomic weapons blasting an artificial harbour in Western Australia.²⁰ The CSIR created an atomic physics unit in 1947, consolidating personnel and research links with British facilities that subsequently assisted the 1955 formation of the Australian Atomic Energy Commission at Sydney's Lucas Heights. This research trajectory – and funding – legitimated local acquiescence to British nuclear weapons testing and subsequent recycling of remote

- 17 Home, 'The Physical Sciences', pp. 158–9; Roy MacLeod, 'The Atom Comes to Australia: Reflections on the Australian Nuclear Programme, 1953 and 1993', *History and Technology*, 11, 2 (1994): 299–315.
- 18 Stewart Cockburn and David Ellyard, Oliphant: The Life and Times of Sir Mark Oliphant (Adelaide: Axiom Books, 1981).
- 19 F.C. Courtice, 'Research in the Medical Sciences: The Road to National Independence', in R.W. Home (ed.), Australian Science in the Making (Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 285–7; R.W. Home, 'A World-Wide Scientific Network and Patronage System: Australian and Other "Colonial" Fellows of the Royal Society of London', in R.W. Home and Sally Gregory Kohlstedt (eds), International Science and National Scientific Identity: Australia between Britain and America (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), pp. 151–80.
- 20 Alice Cawte, Atomic Australia 1944-1990 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1992), p. 121.

sites for Commonwealth and international rocketry experiments.²¹ British nuclear tests occurred off Western Australia in 1952, in the Great Victorian Desert in 1953, and at Maralinga in South Australia between 1955 and 1963. Their legacies persisted long after domestic nuclear plans were abandoned in the early 1970s: in 1994 the Australian government compensated local Aboriginal people removed from Maralinga, thereafter pursuing the British government to decontaminate former test sites.²²

Many projects that received wartime funding and infrastructure boosts were later turned to civilian purposes, although the transition was not necessarily pacific. The reformulation of CSIR into the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) in 1949 owed as much to concerns about the free exchange of knowledge – particularly atomic science – compromising western defence as it did to federal desires to rein in research under public service direction.²³ CSIRO's Division of Cloud Physics also perpetuated Air Force–meteorology connections via a series of experiments in which dry ice and silver iodine were dropped into clouds, thus 'seeding' rain. This work had a precedent in the so-called Styrian system that the Queensland meteorologist Clement Wragge had tried at the turn of the century, in which cannons shot large amounts of gunpowder into passing clouds.²⁴ Although attempts to manufacture weather might seem outdated, studies of ozone depletion and climate change prompted a new series of cloud-seeding projects, funded in the early 2000s.²⁵

Sciences of life

For all the developments in the earth and physical sciences, it was life sciences – the study of organisms and their environments – that dominated Australian research and funding for much of the twentieth century. Whether measured via research output, resource allocation or application to human priorities, the life sciences maintained an unparalleled lead until at

²¹ Tim Sherratt, 'A Political Inconvenience: Australian Scientists at the British Atomic Weapons Tests, 1952–53', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 6, 2 (1985): 137–52.

²² Lorna Arnold and Mark Smith, Britain, Australia, and the Bomb: The Nuclear Tests and Their Aftermath (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

²³ C.B. Schedvin, Shaping Science and Industry: A History of Australia's Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, 1926–49 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), pp. 332–44.

²⁴ Day, The Weather Watchers, pp. 34-41.

²⁵ Tim Sherratt, Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (eds), A Change in the Weather: Climate and Culture in Australia (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2005).

least the 1960s. As political acceptance of biological expertise grew, substantial agricultural, biological and ecological research programs were geared both to primary industry and the management and conservation of natural biotic resources.

The new century saw the collecting and naming projects once pursued as 'natural history' transformed into 'biology', an integrative system that explained the dynamics of physiology and biochemistry, and proliferation and extinction. Inheriting specimen collections bursting with uncatalogued plants and animals, by 1914 a new generation of museum directors refocused their collection and display policies. Walter Baldwin Spencer represented this transition: as the last individual to serve concurrently as Professor of Biology at Melbourne University and director of the National Museum of Victoria, his career spanned laboratory experiments to year-long camel-train expeditions.²⁶ Significantly, Spencer pursued major research on Indigenous people too: 'anthropology' was unquestionably an Australian science for much of the century. Indeed, historical analysis has been dominated by how - and with what political effect - Australian anthropological expertise has moved between earth sciences and social sciences, between physical and cultural anthropology, and between palaeontology and linguistics. Into the 1970s disciplines such as archaeology, linguistics and human geography were incorporated institutionally under the rubric of 'science'.²⁷

Acknowledging the decline of both native species and traditional Indigenous cultures, twentieth-century museum expeditions strove to capture vanishing biological specimens and anthropological artefacts. As crammed Victorian cabinets gave way to pared-back displays and representative dioramas, interpretive captions extolled the central tenets of modern biology: evolution and ecology. These shifts were more pedagogical than pedantic; until television ownership accelerated in the 1960s, museums remained the most important mediator between biologists and urban Australia.²⁸ This is not to diminish the enduring appeal of botanical and zoological gardens, but only after 1960 did zoos – alongside new wildlife

²⁶ D.J. Mulvaney and J.H. Calaby, 'So Much That Is New': Baldwin Spencer, 1860–1929, A Biography (Melbourne University Press, 1985).

²⁷ D.J. Mulvaney, 'Australasian Anthropology and ANZAAS: "Strictly Scientific and Cultural", in MacLeod (ed.), *The Commonwealth of Science*, pp. 196–221.

²⁸ For example, Patricia Mather, A Time for a Museum: The History of the Queensland Museum 1862–1986 (Brisbane: Queensland Museum, 1986); Carolyn Rasmussen, A Museum for the People: A History of Museum Victoria and Its Predecessors, 1854–2000 (Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2001).

and marine parks – incorporate research and education programs into their central mission.²⁹

Federation also witnessed the germination of divergent challenges to the authority of museums to represent 'nature'. One was the growth of organisations for bushwalkers and amateur naturalists. More fundamentally, biology as a formal discipline was introduced into the handful of Australian universities from the 1890s, rendering evolutionary thought central to biological theory, research and teaching for the ensuing century. Exquisite description and classification of 'typical' specimens - hitherto hallmarks of expertise - were superseded by studies of the functional and reproductive components of plants and animals, broken down to their smallest units. While botany and zoology had long since diverged, by 1914 Australian biologists were garnering international esteem for sub-specialisations such as animal physiology, neuroanatomy, bacteriology and biochemistry. Botany likewise bifurcated into biochemistry and the particularly productive field of plant physiology, with studies of plant nutrition contributing to a 'second agricultural revolution in Australia' after 1940.30 While reductionist in one sense, many of these sub-fields were fundamentally integrative, and therein lay their effect. Except where specific products such as snake venoms or vegetable oils were extracted for therapeutic or economic ends,³¹ elements of animal and plant systems were isolated precisely to understand better their contribution to the functional whole, as in Alexander Nicholson's biometric studies on the balance of animal populations, or fresh understandings of the cycles sustaining desert ecologies.³² It was only after 1950 that biochemical, pharmacological and hereditary materials came to be studied and manipulated

- 29 See Kay Anderson, 'Culture and Nature at the Adelaide Zoo: At the Frontiers of "Human" Geography', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 20, 3 (1995): 275–94; Catherine de Courcy, *The Zoo Story* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1995); Lionel Gilbert, *The Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney: A History* 1816–1985 (Oxford University Press, 1986); Kevin Markwell and Nancy Cushing, *Snake-Bitten: Eric Worrell and the Australian Reptile Park* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010).
- 30 J.S. Turner, 'The Development of Plant Physiology in Australia', Records of Australian Academy of Science, 3, 3-4 (1975): 29.
- 31 For example, Peter G. Hobbins, 'Serpentine Science: Charles Kellaway and the Fluctuating Fortunes of Venom Research in Interwar Australia', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 21, 1 (2010): 1–34; H.H.G. McKern, 'Research into the Volatile Oils of the Australian Flora, 1788–1967', in *A Century of Scientific Progress* (Sydney: Royal Society of New South Wales, 1968), pp. 310–31.
- 32 J.L. Hopper, 'Opportunities and Handicaps of Antipodean Scientists: A.J. Nicholson and V.A. Bailey on the Balance of Animal Populations', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 7, 2 (1988): 179–88; Libby Robin, Robert Heinsohn and Leo Joseph (eds), Boom and Bust: Bird Stories for a Dry Country (Canberra: CSIRO Publishing, 2009).

routinely without reference to their original milieu.³³ Nevertheless, much of the fundamental and applied biological research following World War 2, and particularly after 1970, applied genetics and molecular biology techniques to plants and animals, reproduction and adaptation, pests and diseases.³⁴

Another strand of investigative biology traced only some of its roots to the universities. From the 1890s applied veterinary, zoological, botanical and microbiological research burgeoned within State and Commonwealth departments of stock and agriculture. Responding as they did to powerful pastoral interests, it is unsurprising that the first applied research establishments in Australia took up problems of primary industry, including Brisbane's Queensland Stock Institute (1893), Sydney's McGarvie Smith Institute (1918) and the Waite Agricultural Research Institute in Adelaide (1924). These and subsequent facilities provided expertise matched to economic - and later environmental - problems affecting foresters, graziers and agriculturalists, ranging from noxious weeds and fertilisers to pleuro-pneumonia and animal husbandry.35 But more than instrumental knowledge arose from state-funded programs: the Victorian Soil Conservation Board sponsored Maisie Fawcett's 1940s research across the Bogong High Plains that broke new ground for the local development of ecology as a practical and theoretical science - and for women crafting a research career.³⁶

Eclipsing these disparate facilities was the ascent of life sciences within CSIR and its successor, CSIRO. Australian agriculturalists, foresters and manufacturers keenly sought CSIR's expertise for 'industry's housekeeping problems' at a national level, but State departments of agriculture also continued to investigate localised issues.³⁷ With laboratories budding across

- 33 J.R. Price, J.A. Lamberton and C.C.J. Culvenor, 'The Australian Phytochemical Survey: Historical Aspects of the CSIRO Search for New Drugs in Australian Plants', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 9, 4 (1993): 335–56; Ian D. Rae, 'The Roche Research Institute of Marine Pharmacology, 1974–1981: Searching for Drug Leads from Australian Marine Organisms', *Historical Records of Australian Science* 20, 2 (2009): 209–31.
- 34 For example, Barry W. Butcher, *Of Vets, Viruses and Vaccines: The Story of CSIRO's Animal Health Research Laboratory, Parkville* (Melbourne: CSIRO Publishing, 2000), pp. 275–89.
- 35 Bruce Davidson, 'Developing Nature's Treasures: Agriculture and Mining in Australia', in MacLeod (ed.), *The Commonwealth of Science*, pp. 276–82; Lionel Frost, 'Australian Agricultural Historiography: A Survey', *Agricultural History*, 71, 4 (1997): 479–90.
 36 Linden Gillbank, 'Into the Land of the Mountain Cattlemen: Maisie Fawcett's
- 36 Linden Gillbank, 'Into the Land of the Mountain Cattlemen: Maisie Fawcett's Ecological Investigations on the Bogong High Plains', in Farley Kelly (ed.), On the Edge of Discovery: Australian Women in Science (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 1993), pp. 133–4; Claire Hooker, Irresistible Forces: Australian Women in Science (Melbourne University Press, 2004), pp. 105–17.
- 37 Josephine M. Bastian and J.R. Vickery, 'Growth of CSIRO's Interests in Food Research', Nature, 261, 5562 (1976): 644–7.

the capital cities and field stations cast over the landscape, the early divisions of the CSIR bespoke its organic bias: agronomy, plant pathology, forest products, fisheries, economic entomology, animal nutrition and food science.³⁸ Several (and arguably too many) projects concentrated initially on importing organisms, often to combat the disastrous consequences of the previous century's introductions, such as codlin moth and prickly pear.³⁹ Indicative of the perceived economic value of applied research, the publication of Australian research was maintained throughout the 1930s Depression.⁴⁰

World War 2 escalated projects aimed at enhancing national security and productivity, further enmeshing scientific expertise throughout governmental, military and industrial bureaucracies.⁴¹ While many initiatives ultimately proved fruitless, post-war technocracy was shaped by the success of major integrated programs, such as the reduction of malaria among Allied forces in the Pacific War, which combined military command and behavioural interventions with applied entomology, parasitology, haematology, economic botany, organic chemistry, and pharmacology.⁴² The CSIR's staff grew fivefold from 1940 to 1949, and its chairman, David Rivett, led the session on 'post-war needs of fundamental research' at the 1946 Royal Society Empire Scientific Conference in London.⁴³

Nevertheless, well into the 1970s CSIRO's chief concern was to assist export industries: maximising quality and quantity of stock and crops; adding value to wool and plant derivatives; and preserving timber, cereals, and meat and dairy produce for customers within and beyond the British Commonwealth.⁴⁴ Some innovations were as lucrative as they were prosaic, such as the harness and crayon system that allowed sheep breeders to determine which rams had tupped which ewes; launched in 1960, it remained a commercial success

- 40 Data extracted from *Australian Science Abstracts*, published by the Australian National Research Council (1922–38) and the *Australian Journal of Science* (1939–57).
- 41 D.P. Mellor, *The Role of Science and Industry* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1958); Michelle Freeman, 'Australian Universities at War: The Mobilisation of Universities in the Battle for the Pacific', in Roy MacLeod (ed.), *Science and the Pacific War: Science and Survival in the Pacific, 1939–1945* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000), pp. 119–38; Bridget Goodwin, *Keen as Mustard: Britain's Horrific Chemical Warfare Experiments in Australia* (Brisbane: UQP, 1998).
- 42 Tom Sweeney, Malaria Frontline: Australian Army Research during World War II (Melbourne University Press, 2003).
- 43 Schedvin, Shaping Science and Industry, p. 286.
- 44 Brad Collis, *Fields of Discovery: Australia's CSIRO* (Melbourne: CSIRO Publishing, 2002), pp. 84–192, 201–315.

³⁸ Schedvin, Shaping Science and Industry, pp. 74-183.

³⁹ R.L. Burt and W.T. Williams, 'Plant Introduction in Australia', in Home (ed.), *Australian Science in the Making*, pp. 252–76; Jodi Frawley, 'Prickly Pear Land: Transnational Networks in Settler Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, 38, 130 (2007): 323–38.

for decades.⁴⁵ Other objectives, such as optimising nitrogen fixation in legumes, sustained half a century of research while enhancing agricultural productivity and sustainability.⁴⁶ The two decades after 1945 have thus been represented as CSIRO's 'golden age' of scientific autonomy and egalitarian meritocracy – yet women continued to occupy predominantly lower ranked or non-scientific roles well into the 1990s.⁴⁷

Whether accommodating global markets, controlling cattle ticks across State and national borders or elucidating the population dynamics of plague locusts, applied biological programs betrayed a growing ecological conception that paralleled CSIR's expanding influence.⁴⁸ Perhaps 1951 proved definitive. In that year, CSIRO's release of the South American myxomatosis virus to combat the rabbit plague intersected with a novel mosquito-borne epidemic being investigated among rural Victorians. Public alarm linked the human ailment – Murray Valley encephalitis – with the rabbit disease that had escaped its planned containment zone and spread virulently across south-east Australia. An astonishing demonstration took place to allay these fears: the new chairman of CSIRO – Ian Clunies Ross – and the nation's two leading virologists, Frank Macfarlane Burnet and Frank Fenner, were inoculated voluntarily with a dose of myxomatosis sufficient to kill up to 1,000 rabbits. While wild rabbits continued to die in unsurpassed numbers, all three scientists remained unaffected.⁴⁹

Yet this episode also suggested an emergent disquiet, heralded by the 1938 publication of CSIR scientist Francis Ratcliffe's enormously popular book, *Flying Fox and Drifting Sand*, which suggested that major agricultural and biological problems were not merely complex but might ultimately prove intractable. As field researchers in the 1950s and 1960s pursued a nationalist project to document Australia's biota comprehensively, their concerns about dwindling species converged with other life scientists observing the destructive legacies of agriculture, acclimatisation and unrestrained appropriation of biological resources. By the 1970s biological scientists within universities and CSIRO shifted their goals both pragmatically and politically

⁴⁵ Butcher, Of Vets, Viruses and Vaccines, p. 109.

⁴⁶ F.J. Bergersen, 'Research on Biological Nitrogen Fixation in CSIRO Plant Industry, 1952–1998', *Historical Records of Australian Science*, 13, 3 (2001): 255–99.

⁴⁷ C.B. Schedvin, 'The Culture of CSIRO', *Australian Cultural History*, 1, 2 (1982–3): 76–89; Amaya Jane Alvarez, 'Invisible Workers and Invisible Barriers: Women at the CSIR in the 1930s and the 1940s', in Kelly (ed.), *On the Edge of Discovery*, pp. 77–103.

⁴⁸ Linden Gillbank, 'The Life Sciences: Collections to Conservation', in MacLeod (ed.), The Commonwealth of Science, pp. 109–11.

⁴⁹ Brian Coman, Tooth & Nail: The Story of the Rabbit in Australia (Melbourne: Text, 1999), pp. 131–3.

from exploitation to conservation. Ironically, this mission necessitated a return to biology's natural history roots: the central aim of the Australian Biological Resources Study (initiated in 1973) is to provide 'the underlying taxonomic knowledge necessary for the conservation and sustainable use of Australia's biodiversity'.⁵⁰ This ambition is not merely land-bound; the 1990s saw a substantial expansion of Australian territorial waters and CSIRO's marine science projects catalogued hitherto unknown submarine landscapes, climates and ecologies.⁵¹

Despite an enduring national imperative to harness and preserve natural resources, governmental support of Australian scientific research peaked in the mid-1970s. Thereafter, many centres required transnational subsidies, philanthropic donations or commercial partnerships to remain solvent. Under the rubric of 'accountability', productivity reviews, innovation assessments and the demands of non-state investors tended to plough local research back into its familiar, pragmatic furrow.⁵² While such programs generated notable results, from the bionic ear to plastic banknotes, the opportunities to '''play'' with ideas and experiments' – in the words of Australian 1996 Nobel Laureate Peter Doherty – continued to diminish as the century closed.⁵³

Health, hygiene and the biomedical sciences

The impact of the Australian environment was as profound upon the human and health sciences as it was on the earth and life sciences. Indeed it was questions of climate and environment that united these fields early in the twentieth century. Beliefs that temperature, humidity, rainfall, prevailing winds and other environmental factors shaped human physiology, difference, health and illness persisted well into the 1940s. Such conceptions shaped physiological, psychological and pathological research, underwriting the logic of numerous health promotion and prevention programs.

Tropical environments did most to foster this orientation, with Commonwealth interest materialising in the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine in Townsville (1910). This facility investigated diseases, including filariasis, malaria and hookworm, as well as elaborating human physiology in

52 Butcher, Of Vets, Viruses and Vaccines, pp. 74-99.

⁵⁰ Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, 'Learn More about Australian Biological Resources Study (ABRS)' http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/abrs/about.html, accessed 18 November 2011.

⁵¹ Collis, Fields of Discovery, pp. 316-47.

⁵³ Peter Doherty, The Beginner's Guide to Winning the Nobel Prize: A Life in Science (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2005), p. 80.

tropical environments, especially that of white working men, though women's fertility was occasionally investigated too. While such tropical medicine enterprises were foundational for Australian microbiology and biochemistry, they also carried a political dimension.⁵⁴ In taking up the longstanding physiological question regarding the ability of whites to thrive in the tropics, these programs sought to legitimate the peopling of the 'empty' north of the continent in the face of sustained Asian immigration, industry and trade in tropical Australia. It was the particularities of the tropics, then, that linked health policies and the white Australia policy. The connection between human physiology, tropical environments and communicable diseases was the nexus that put Australian medical research on the global map early in the century, intersecting with transnational actors such as the Rockefeller Foundation.⁵⁵

Australia's geography and global location have shaped many aspects of its human health and disease history. Micro-organisms periodically entered the continent from adjacent as well as distant populations, creating problems for governance and science alike, from plague in 1901 to current fears of avian influenza and the persistence of multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis across Southeast Asia.⁵⁶ Concurrently, the continent's sparse population has effectively minimised the presence and severity of particular infectious diseases, while producing other epidemiological problems: achieving a so-called herd immunity through vaccination programs has often proved difficult.⁵⁷

- 54 Lorraine Harloe, 'Anton Breinl and the Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine', in Roy MacLeod and Donald Denoon (eds), *Health and Healing in Tropical Australia and Papua New Guinea* (Townsville: James Cook University Press, 1991), pp. 35–46; Peter Hobbins and Kathryn Hillier, 'Isolated Cases? The History and Historiography of Australian Medical Research', *Health and History*, 12, 2 (2010): 1–17.
- 55 Alexander Cameron-Smith, 'Australian Imperialism and International Health in the Pacific Islands', *Australian Historical Studies*, 41, 1 (2010): 57–74; Warwick Anderson, *The Cultivation of Whiteness: Science, Health and Racial Destiny in Australia* (Melbourne University Press, 2002).
- 56 Alison Bashford, 'The Great White Plague Turns Alien: Tuberculosis and Immigration in Australia 1901–2001', in Michael Worboys and Flurin Condrau (eds), *Tuberculosis Then and Now: Perspectives on the History of an Infectious Disease* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 2010), pp. 100–22.
- 57 Peter Curson and Kevin McCracken, 'Flu Downunder: A Demographic and Geographic Analysis of the 1919 Pandemic in Sydney', in Howard Phillips and David Killingray (eds), *The Influenza Pandemic of 1918–19* (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 110–31; Claire Hooker and Alison Bashford, 'Diphtheria and Australian Public Health: Bacteriology and Its Complex Applications, c. 1890–1930', *Medical History*, 46, I (2002): 41–64.

At Federation, most health powers and responsibilities remained legislatively and bureaucratically with the States. The mandate to make laws respecting quarantine was federal, however, and the 1908 *Quarantine Act* was supported by a new quarantine service, from which the Commonwealth Department of Health arose in 1921.⁵⁸ Occasionally implementing quarantine measures internally (at State borders, for example), most effort has been expended at ports and airports to regulate the entry of humans, goods and animals. The Australian continent has thus remained relatively untroubled by some devastating infectious diseases and parasites affecting human, animal and plant health, notably cholera and rabies. This benefit has been offset, however, by the close connection between strict quarantine measures and problematic immigration restriction and exclusion procedures.⁵⁹

Another early Commonwealth responsibility was the regulation of therapeutic goods, commencing with evaluations of safety and followed by greater scrutiny of efficacy claims and finally encompassing cost-effectiveness.60 While wartime isolation and implementation of compulsory immunisation programs drove federal involvement in the manufacture of serums, vaccines and penicillin via the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories (1916), Australia also proved a lucrative market for local and international pharmaceutical firms. Consumer demand and the stability brought by government subsidies for medicines helped foster significant commercial investment in sales and manufacturing facilities, if not in research and development.⁶¹ Financial support for the latter was slow at first by global standards, but enhanced by the creation in 1936 of the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). Unlike CSIRO's numerous staff and facilities, the NHMRC acted primarily as a policy body directing funds for research, training and health interventions, but its importance in fostering local medical science should not be understated.

Reflecting Australian concerns with isolation and population health, local biomedical research has focused on infection and immunity. Between 1940 and 1970 a cluster of leading-edge developments emerged from Australians

- 58 Michael Roe, 'The Establishment of the Australian Department of Health', *Historical Studies*, 17, 67 (1976): 176–92.
- 59 Alison Bashford, Imperial Hygiene: A Critical History of Colonialism, Nationalism and Public Health (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 115–62.
- 60 Lynette Finch, 'Soothing Syrups and Teething Powders: Regulating Proprietary Drugs in Australia, 1860–1910', *Medical History*, 43, 1 (1999): 74–94; John McEwen, A History of Therapeutic Goods Regulation in Australia (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2007).
- 61 A.H. Brogan, *Committed to Saving Lives: A History of the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories* (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1990).

working abroad - notably Howard Florey's role in the development of penicillin - and from within Australian centres, for example, Norman McAlister Gregg's critical discovery in the 1940s that maternal rubella caused congenital defects.⁶² Energised by ecological conceptual frameworks, Macfarlane Burnet and Gustav Nossal at Melbourne's Walter and Eliza Hall Institute redefined medical understanding of the immune system.⁶³ In subsequent decades, Jacques Miller elaborated the centrality of the thymus to immunological function while Donald Metcalf's team identified factors responsible for proliferation and specialisation of blood cells. Frank Fenner made similarly important contributions to virology, spearheading the global eradication of smallpox while building a major institution at Canberra's John Curtin School of Medical Research. Alongside a strong focus on communicable diseases and micro-organisms, the last quarter of the twentieth century saw research expanding into cancer mechanisms, chronic diseases with a notable epidemiology in Australia (such as childhood asthma), and occupational and environmental diseases such as asbestos-related mesothelioma.64

Maternal and infant health and welfare were critical to the formation of Australian public health, and to an emerging sense of state responsibility for its citizens.⁶⁵ Women's low fertility rates were noted from the outset of the century – applauded by some, deplored by others – accompanied by relatively low infant mortality rates that were lauded both nationally and

- 62 Frank Fenner (ed.), *History of Microbiology in Australia* (Canberra: Australian Society for Microbiology, 1990), pp. 381–4.
- 63 Hyung Wook Park, 'Germs, Hosts, and the Origin of Frank Macfarlane Burnet's Concept of "Self" and "Tolerance", 1936–1949', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 61, 4 (2006): 492–534; Warwick Anderson, 'Natural Histories of Infectious Disease: Ecological Vision in Twentieth-Century Biomedical Science', *Osiris*, 19 (2004): 39–61.
- 64 Suzanne Parry, "'Of Vital Importance to the Community": The Control of Leprosy in the Northern Territory', *Health and History*, 5, 1 (2003): 1–21; Lachlan M. Strahan, 'An Oriental Scourge: Australia and the Asian Flu Epidemic of 1957', *Australian Historical Studies*, 26, 103 (1994): 182–201; Ian R. Tyrrell, *Deadly Enemies: Tobacco and Its Opponents in Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1999); Richard Gillespie, 'Accounting for Lead Poisoning: the Medical Politics of Occupational Health', *Social History*, 15, 3 (1990): 303–31; Pamela Kinnear, 'The Politics of Coal Dust: Industrial Campaigns for the Regulation of Dust Disease in Australian Coal Mining, 1939–49', *Labour History*, 80 (2001): 65–82.
- 65 Histories of gendered health and medicine emerged strongly in Australia over the 1990s; see Judith Smart, 'Sex, the State and the "Scarlet Scourge": Gender, Citizenship and Venereal Diseases Regulation in Australia during the Great War', *Women's History Review*, 7, 1 (1998): 5–36; Janet McCalman, *Sex and Suffering: Women's Health and a Women's Hospital* (Melbourne University Press, 1998); Louella McCarthy, 'Idealists or Pragmatists? Progressives and Separatists among Australian Medical Women, 1900– 1940', *Social History of Medicine*, 16, 2 (2003): 263–82.

internationally.⁶⁶ This interesting demographic circumstance, combined with government concern about low population density, encouraged demographic and statistical science innovations. Before 1939 Australian statisticians, including Timothy Coghlan and George Knibbs, offered important new methods in mathematical modelling of future population trends. This strong tradition of demographic scholarship was extended in the social sciences later in the century, notably by J.C. Caldwell.

Quantifying the health of Indigenous populations was typically undertaken not by health departments, but by agencies charged with the management of Aboriginal welfare.⁶⁷ Recognition of the life expectancy gap – the key indicator of population health – between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians drives a continuing tendency to separate bureaucracy for Indigenous health from government responsibility for general public health – a process that some consider historically problematic but others continue to support.⁶⁸

Another group of Australians often socially marginalised were those with mental illnesses. Psychiatry until the late 1940s existed largely as a custodial discipline, institutionalising but only infrequently 'curing' individuals. Although management of 'shell-shocked' veterans from both world wars was less than salutary, it was a former prisoner-of-war – John Cade – who in 1949 dramatically altered psychiatry by demonstrating the value of lithium in treating bipolar disorder.⁶⁹ As mental illness was slowly destigmatised, decriminalised and ultimately de-institutionalised from 1950 to 1990, psychiatry flourished to become one of the largest medical specialties in Australia. In part as a consequence of Cade's work, pharmacological and physical interventions have tended to predominate over analysis and psychotherapy, but a counselling culture nevertheless prospered as university enrolments in psychology courses rose in the last third of the century.⁷⁰

- 67 Gordon Briscoe, Counting, Health and Identity: A History of Aboriginal Health and Demography in Western Australia and Queensland, 1900–1940 (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2003).
- 68 Ernest Hunter, Aboriginal Health and History: Power and Prejudice in Remote Australia (Cambridge University Press, 1993); Ian Anderson and J. Whyte, 'Australian Federalism and Aboriginal Health', Australian Aboriginal Studies, 2 (2006): 5–11.
- 69 John Raftery, *Marks of War: War Neurosis and the Legacy of Kokoda* (Adelaide: Lythrum Press, 2003).
- 70 See Stephen Garton, Medicine and Madness: A Social History of Insanity in New South Wales 1880–1940 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1988); Catharine Coleborne and Dolly Mackinnon (eds), 'Madness' in Australia: Histories, Heritage and Asylum (Brisbane:

⁶⁶ Philippa Mein Smith, Mothers and King Baby: Infant Survival and Welfare in an Imperial World, Australia 1880–1950 (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).

Although sometimes institutionalised under government auspices, particularly the school system and military service, substantial health sectors such as psychology, dentistry, optometry and assisted reproduction were often private ventures. However, other establishments, such as the Royal Flying Doctor Service, came to receive significant government support. Generally, medical practice and pharmacy remained largely entrepreneurial vocations for much of the twentieth century. Representative organisations such as the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the British Medical Association campaigned vigorously to reduce external scrutiny of professional conduct and exclude rival practitioners. One such competitor was idiosyncratic polio therapist Elizabeth Kenny, who went on to pursue an impressive career in the United States, supported not least by wheelchair-bound president Franklin D. Roosevelt.⁷¹ Professional organisations also sought to reduce the bargaining power of friendly societies that had previously negotiated affordable health care for working-class individuals and families.72 Conversely, nurses' unions became increasingly likely to campaign for professional recognition and improved working conditions within the expanding hospital sector.73

Before World War 2, burgeoning government responsibility for health infrastructure and services also permitted interventionist management and shaping of populations. The resultant policies embodied the core idea of eugenics by differentially valuing particular groups of citizens (and non-citizens). Australian eugenic movements were organised, promoted and sometimes implemented by doctors, psychiatrists and – occasionally – geneticists. Eugenics advocates were most often reform-minded and progressive, eager to pursue social improvement and frequently interested in birth control and maternal and infant welfare. The goal that most united them was the reduction over time of the number of mentally and physically disabled people. This imperative dovetailed with immigration restriction policies and to some extent with internal and external racial policies. Many eugenic proponents actively pursued legislation for the sterilisation of the mentally ill and physically disabled. Although practised within some

UQP, 2003); Joy Damousi, Freud in the Antipodes: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005).

- 71 Naomi Rogers, 'Silence Has Its Own Stories: Elizabeth Kenny, Polio and the Culture of Medicine', *Social History of Medicine*, 21, 1 (2008): 145–61.
- 72 James Gillespie, 'Medical Markets and Australian Medical Politics, 1920–45', Labour History, 54 (1988): 30–46; David Green and Lawrence Cromwell, Mutual Aid or Welfare State: Australia's Friendly Societies (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1984).
- 73 Judith Godden, Australia's Controversial Matron: Gwen Burbidge and Nursing Reform (Sydney: College of Nursing, 2011).

Australian institutions, sterilisation was never implemented as government policy either as a compulsory or voluntary measure.⁷⁴ The inter-war link between eugenics and birth control was pursued after 1945 through developments in reproductive and fertility medicine, family planning, and genetic and marriage counselling.

Health education and promotion were accepted early as State and federal responsibilities. A philosophy of harm minimisation entered Australian public health policy quite early by international comparison, not least in the effort to reduce sexually transmitted diseases: the provision of condoms to soldiers during World War I compared favourably with British practice. When Australian governments responded to HIV/AIDS in the early 1980s, a risk reduction and harm minimisation approach was successfully implemented with the cooperation of politicians, key health policy personnel and effective gay lobby groups. Needle-exchange programs implemented at that time have curtailed the spread of HIV and hepatitis C, recognised internationally as manifesting distinctively Australian harm minimisation philosophies.⁷⁵

The wider institutionalisation of a state-centred risk-management culture is exemplified by many decades of effective anti-smoking initiatives and the personalisation of public health messages such as the highly visible 1970s 'Life. Be in it' campaign. Such programs represented a 'new public health' in the final third of the century, characterised by a shift from treating illness to promoting wellness, and from isolating infectious diseases in the community to altering individuals' lifestyle choices.⁷⁶ Australians were thus made responsible for reducing their own 'risky' behaviours, whether engaging in 'safe sex', submitting to regular screening for cervical cancer or giving up cigarettes.⁷⁷ The resultant medical surveillance and internalisation of 'community standards', however, created several crises of responsibility. One case was an epidemic in the 1980s of repetitive strain injury, variously depicted as an

⁷⁴ Stephen Garton, 'Eugenics in Australia and New Zealand: Laboratories of Racial Science', in Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Eugenics* (Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 243–57.

⁷⁵ Paul Sendziuk, *Learning to Trust: Australian Responses to AIDS* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003). For a longer history, see Milton Lewis, *Thorns on the Rose: The History of Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Australia in International Perspective* (Canberra: AGPS, 1998).

⁷⁶ Fran Baum, The New Public Health: An Australian Perspective (Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁷⁷ Jennifer Read, Susan Hardy and Anthony Corones, 'Contested Surveillance: Risk, Safety, and Cervical Screening in Australia', *Health and History*, 13, 2 (2011): 104–29; Cary Bennett and Raymond Donovan, 'Governing at a Distance: Mainstreaming of Australia HIV/AIDS Treatments and Services 1989–1996 Reconsidered', *Health and History*, 11, 2 (2009): 92–115.

occupational hazard, a psychosomatic illness or a media creation.⁷⁸ Another was a renewal in the 1990s of the debates around immunisation and its safety; these reignited concerns over individual autonomy, government power, community protection and the legitimacy of alternative health practices that had arisen when mass immunisation was first instigated in the 1920s.

Across nineteenth-century Australia, the sum of government responsibility for health and welfare had been the management of infectious disease, basic services for the sick and poor, and institutional care for the mentally ill. In the twentieth century - especially as military and then repatriation authorities took responsibility for the welfare of unprecedented numbers of soldier-citizens and their dependants - Australians rapidly came to presume a 'right' to health services.⁷⁹ With the impetus of Labor governments in particular, pensions for people incapacitated by tuberculosis were developed in the first decades of the century. Maternity hospitals, general hospitals and facilities for the mentally ill slowly shifted from their religious or philanthropic roots to become primarily state or repatriation institutions, although private hospitals always found paying clients. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were sometimes explicitly excluded from health services that other Australians were beginning to take for granted by the middle of the century. For example, benefits extended under the 1948 *Tuberculosis Act* paid allowances to persons over sixteen with active disease as well as to their dependants with the nominated exception of Indigenous people.⁸⁰

In Queensland the idea of state-controlled health care and an aspirationally universal medical insurance was implemented earliest – and most fully – after World War 2.⁸¹ But the prospect of becoming government 'employees' was unpopular among medical practitioners, contributing to the abandonment of federal Labor's 1948–49 national health service bills, although the 1947 *Pharmaceutical Benefits Act* had introduced Commonwealth subsidies for medications. It was only in 1975 that the Whitlam government introduced universal health cover for all citizens in the guise of Medibank; although dismantled over 1976–81, it was relaunched as Medicare in 1984.⁸² Provision of

82 Ann Daniel, Medicine and the State: Professional Autonomy and Public Accountability (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990).

⁷⁸ Yolande Lucire, Constructing RSI: Belief and Desire (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), pp. 68-124.

⁷⁹ Kate Blackmore, The Dark Pocket of Time: War, Medicine and the Australian State, 1914– 1935 (Adelaide: Lythrum Press, 2008).

⁸⁰ Sue Taffe, 'Health, the Law and Racism: The Campaign to Amend the Discriminatory Clauses in the Tuberculosis Act', *Labour History*, 76 (1999): 41–58.

⁸¹ Anne Crichton, Slowly Taking Control? Australian Governments and Health Care Provision, 1788–1988 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990).

health services continued to represent an ever-increasing but uncapped strain on both federal and State budgets, prompting the Commonwealth first to assist and then stridently to encourage private health cover via tax measures rolled out from 1999.

Indeed, throughout the twentieth century, the oversight of health services had witnessed a continuing tension between local morbidities, social need, governmental control and free enterprise. As was the case with the earth and life sciences, the transnational flows of information, equipment and practitioners meant that Australian developments could never be isolated from global currents. Nevertheless, the persistence of an identifiably Australian variant of these presumptively universal systems of knowledge was ensured by the specifics of local environments, populations, governments and cultures.

¹² Society and welfare

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Despite the prominence of the bush and the bushman in the national imagination, Australia at the beginning of the twentieth century was one of the world's most urbanised nations. It was most remarkable, the American scholar Adna Weber observed, that the greatest centralisation of population occurred 'in that newest product of civilization'.¹ The capital cities were home to up to 40 per cent of each State's population, a proportion that would stabilise at more than 60 per cent by mid-century. Although Indigenous people have always been more evenly spread over the country, in the second half of the twentieth century they too followed the drift to the cities, with just over 30 per cent living in urban centres by 1996.² Described rather harshly by the poet A.D. Hope as 'teeming sores' sitting 'timidly on the edge of alien shores', the capital cities provided an environment in which the descendants of the highly mobile immigrants who had populated nineteenth-century Australia were able to build more settled communities.³ Absorbing both those retreating from rural life, and successive waves of migration from overseas, these cities projected an image of egalitarianism while they tolerated degrees of inequality that made it increasingly difficult to distinguish Australia's social structure from that of other advanced capitalist nations.

The increasing tendency of Australians to cluster in cities existed alongside an ideological adherence to the rural ideal. Country living was popularly imagined to produce a healthier, sturdier people, epitomised in the laconic but self-sufficient bushman, or later the Anzac, who came to constitute the typical Australian – an ideal towards which many could aspire despite the

I Adna Weber, quoted in Peter Spearritt, Sydney's Century: A History (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000), p. 8.

² Graeme Hugo, 'A Century of Population Change in Australia', in Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book Australia*, 2001, cat. no. 1301.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2001).

³ A.D. Hope, 'Australia', in Ken Goodwin and Alan Lawson (eds), *The Macmillan Anthology* of Australian Literature (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1990), p. 311.

dissonance with their lived reality. Beliefs about the superiority of rural living and concerns that 'empty spaces' posed a threat to national security led successive governments to promote closer settlement schemes designed to reverse the urbanising trend.⁴ In the early years of the century large estates were broken up, laying the basis for ambitious schemes to put returning soldiers on the land after World War I, but the problems of farming relatively small blocks in a harsh environment defeated most.5 More than 60 per cent of Victorian soldier settlers, for example, had left the land by the beginning of World War 2.6 The consolidation that followed such failures might have improved levels of productivity but did little to reverse the decline of rural Australia.⁷ A second and more modest soldier settlement scheme on sounder economic and scientific principles, following World War 2, had a less disastrous outcome but its comparative success was short-lived. The family farm, which provided the backbone for rural Australian communities, continued to decline, increasingly unable to support a family without an external wage earner, and with little prospect of supporting multiple generations. As Graeme Davison observed, 'farming, once an occupation for strong men and horses, is increasingly an occupation for older men in four-wheel drives and air-conditioned tractors'.8 The country towns that serviced such farming communities are also in decline, with services consolidated in a small number of regional centres large enough to sustain the facilities that attract people to city life.

Two exceptions to the general pattern of rural decline were apparent at the end of the century. With resource extraction replacing rural production as the core element of the Australian economy, substantial employment opportunities have arisen outside the capital cities. However, much of this employment is arranged on a fly-in, fly-out basis and even when settlements are established they tend to be both isolated and transitory, contributing little to rural communities. A more sustainable area of growth is on the urban fringe, where two factors are in operation. The first is economic, with people shut out of housing by rising costs in the cities finding some relief in declining rural centres where both prices and rentals are lower but

⁴ Graeme Davison, 'Country Life', in Graeme Davison and Marc Brodie (eds), *Struggle Country: The Rural Ideal in Twentieth Century Australia* (Melbourne: Monash University ePress, 2005), p. 01.3.

⁵ Ibid., p. 01.5.

⁶ Marilyn Lake, *The Limits of Hope: Soldier Settlement in Victoria, 1915–38* (Oxford University Press, 1987), p. xviii.

⁷ Ibid., p. 19.

⁸ Graeme Davison and Marc Brodie, 'Introduction', in Struggle Country, p. xi.

services are minimal. The second factor is lifestyle, with economically secure retirees moving to picturesque coastal or small regional centres, which are often transformed as a result. The spread of such communities, particularly in the south-east Queensland and northern New South Wales area, has the potential to challenge the dominance of the State capitals. While this has resulted in a greater spread of population, it does not indicate an embrace of, or revival in, rural ideals.⁹

Growth in the twentieth century was concentrated in the cities, where the sprawling suburbs allowed residents to match an aspiration for the rural life with the urban reality. The idea of suburban living came with immigrants from Britain, but it was developed more fully in Australia, where the contemporaneous provision of public transport allowed for a far lower density than cities in the Old World.¹⁰ In the first half of the century suburbs spread out along train, tram and bus lines, with the greater availability of the car allowing the gaps to be filled out in the second. Industry and retailing also relocated increasingly to outer suburban areas, allowing for further suburban expansion without a concomitant increase in commuting time.^{II} While average house sizes grew as block sizes declined, the sprawl of most cities continued unabated, despite attempts by government to promote higher density living. Suburban development is grounded in high levels of home ownership, encouraged and facilitated by governments and enthusiastically embraced by the population.¹² Already exceptional by international standards at the end of the nineteenth century, home ownership rates continued to improve well into the 1960s, when 70 per cent of the population were living in a property which they fully or partially owned.¹³ This proportion has remained remarkably stable ever since, despite a rise in the price of housing relative to income, evidence of Australians' continuing attachment to the home ownership ideal.¹⁴

Australian suburbs are neither as uniform nor as classless as the high levels of home ownership might suggest. The pattern, established by the end of the nineteenth century, of inner mixed-use working-class suburbs physically

9 Ibid.

- 11 Troy, 'Introduction', in Australian Cities, p. 5.
- 12 Frost and Dingle, 'Sustaining Suburbia', p. 29.

¹⁰ Lionel Frost and Tony Dingle, 'Sustaining Suburbia: An Historical Perspective on Australia's Growth', in Patrick Troy (ed.), *Australian Cities: Issues, Strategies and Policies for Urban Australia in the 1990s* (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 22.

¹³ Troy, 'Introduction', p. 2.

¹⁴ Tony Kryger, *Home Ownership in Australia: Data and Trends* (Canberra: Parliamentary Library, 2009).

separate from the more desirable villa suburbs in which the affluent resided, persisted until World War 2. In the villa suburbs blocks were larger and leafier, and industry was kept at bay. Public housing schemes in the post-war era embraced the suburban ideal, developing large estates adjacent to new industries on the city outskirts and offering detached house and garden living to working-class families, many of whom were assisted to purchase their own homes. With the decline of manufacturing and the reduction in state housing provision in the last quarter of the century, the shape of most of the major capitals has changed again, with middle-class professionals embracing inner-city living and the less privileged increasingly pushed to the city's edge where housing prices are more affordable, but the lack of services and the costs of commuting can strain family budgets. A shift in the state housing policy, from provision for working-class families to social or welfare housing, sapped the vitality of many of the older estates, concentrating the economically and socially marginal in areas where employment prospects were also in decline.

The re-embrace of the inner city gave hope to planners who, from the 1970s, argued for urban consolidation. At the beginning of the twentieth century the inner cities primarily housed those who had been too poor to participate in the move to the suburbs that was facilitated by the expansion of public transport. Housing quality was poor and dwellings were overcrowded, raising fears that Australian cities were beginning to replicate the slums that marred the cities of the Old World. Housing reformers were eventually successful in persuading State governments to rehouse many inner-city residents in developments modelled on the suburban ideal, substantially depopulating city centres. A similar disdain for Old World housing patterns led to a suspicion of apartment developments. Although Sydney, and to a lesser degree other capital cities, saw increasing numbers of apartments from the mid-1920s, flats - as they were commonly called in Australia - were not seen as desirable housing for families; many municipalities prevented their construction because of fears of the type of residents they would attract to the area.¹⁵ By the 1960s this prejudice was beginning to dissipate. In the 1950s only 3 per cent of the money spent on housing construction went on flats. By the mid-1960s the proportion had risen to 21 per cent.¹⁶ State housing authorities, increasingly aware both of the infrastructure costs of broad-acre developments, and the social and economic costs of breaking up inner-city

¹⁵ Spearritt, Sydney's Century, p. 69.

¹⁶ Humphrey McQueen, Social Sketches of Australia, new edn (Brisbane: UQP, 2004), pp. 235–6.

working-class communities in the process of slum reclamation, began to experiment with high-rise estates designed, controversially, to accommodate both families and single people. With the decline in manufacturing and the relocation of port facilities, most of Australia's cities also embraced urban redevelopment schemes that provided high-density and often high-rise living, creating new communities on reclaimed land close to city centres that was pitched predominantly at high-income earners.

The success, albeit limited, of urban consolidation accentuated the ruralurban divide. While for much of the century most city dwellers were but one or two generations from a rural ancestor, that connection has now been broken. As Davison and Brodie concluded in their study of rural Australia, 'Most city dwellers now view the bush as landscape, a place of aesthetic pleasure and spiritual refreshment, rather than as countryside, a place where people live and work'.¹⁷ For those for whom the country is still a place in which to live and work, this growing disconnect led to feelings of resentment. Politically this resentment was manifest in the rise of a series of protest movements claiming to represent country interests in opposition to the cities. However, their success has been short-lived, suggesting that the centrality of the country to definitions of Australianness has all but lost its power.

Social structure

Egalitarianism ranked high in the construction of the typical Australian; yet like the bushman, this has its mythic elements. The myth was made possible because of the emphasis on wealth rather than birth as the basis of assigning status, but levels of inequality varied widely over the century, and egalitarianism was always mediated by gender and ethnicity. During the twentieth century there were periods of greater social mobility when working-class families who had bought into the concept of respectability could take advantage of economic prosperity and government programs to advance their status, but by century's end inequality was increasing and opportunities for social mobility were in decline. The wealthiest 20 per cent of Australian households now account for 62 per of total household worth, while the poorest 20 per cent control only I per cent.¹⁸

The relative egalitarianism of early twentieth-century Australia was a reflection of the fact that the country had generated few fortunes of the size

¹⁷ Davison and Brodie, 'Introduction', p. ix.

¹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Household Income and Income Distribution, Australia,* 2009–10, cat. no. 6523.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2011).

of those in Britain or the United States.¹⁹ Many of the fortunes that had been made were lost during the Depression of the 1890s. While this experience generated some commitment to notions of a 'fair go', particularly through wage regulation, the early years of the new century saw a solidifying distinction both between the working and the middle classes, and within the working class between the respectable and the shiftless or thriftless. Working-class suburbs were more Irish, more Catholic, more male (because of the absence of servants) and had proportionately more children than the areas to which the middle classes had retreated. While such suburbs did have their local elites, the opportunities for social mobility were limited during the first half of the century by a struggling economy and an education system that, although it was expanding, was intent on keeping people within their class.²⁰ Only where the male breadwinner was missing or inadequate did married women enter the workforce, and the proportion forced to take this step declined steadily until the stringencies of the 1930s Depression drove women to take work wherever it was available. Middle-class suburbs were marked by larger and more comfortable homes, but accommodated smaller families; the children had ready access to secondary education designed to prepare them for professional employment. The availability of servants, always scarcer in Australia than in comparable countries, declined dramatically after World War 1, and was only partially compensated for by the increasing availability of labour-saving devices.²¹ The nuclear family was the dominant family form and despite increased access to secondary and tertiary education for middle-class women, levels of workforce participation among married women remained low.

The period from 1940 to 1970 was a time of higher social mobility. World War 2 and its aftermath opened job opportunities, particularly for women who were drafted to fill vacancies in an expanding economy. Although many of these jobs were temporary, destined to be vacated when the troops returned, they demonstrated capacities and aroused aspirations that would dramatically reshape both workforce and family structure over the next half century. The expansion of secondary education, as well as the scheme that allowed returning servicemen and women to undertake

¹⁹ W.D. Rubinstein, 'Entrepreneurial Effort and Entrepreneurial Success: Peak Wealth-Holding in Three Societies, 1850–1939', *Business History*, 25, I (1983): 11–29.

²⁰ Janet McCalman, *Struggletown: Public and Private Life in Richmond* 1900–1965 (Melbourne University Press, 1984), p. 15.

²¹ Janet McCalman, Journeyings: The Biography of a Middle-Class Generation 1920–1990 (Melbourne University Press, 1993), pp. 77–8. This shift is tracked in B.W. Higman, Domestic Service in Australia (Melbourne University Press, 2002).

tertiary education for the professions or training for the trades, combined with a booming economy to create a temporary fluidity in the social structure. Initially, this resulted in a consolidation of the nuclear family in the suburban home. The fertility rate, which had declined from a peak of four children per woman to two between 1901 and the mid-1930s, began to rise, creating a baby boom similar to that in other western nations in the post-war period.²² These children grew up in greater affluence than any previous generation, with many more families able to purchase homes in the expanding suburbs and to educate their children to levels higher than ever before.

However, this was but a temporary reversal of a longer-term trend towards smaller and less stable family units, and the collapse of the male breadwinner model. Families needed consumer items to fill their new homes, women's wages were required to pay for them, and expanding industries were more than prepared to accommodate this new workforce. Recently arrived immigrant women were the pioneers, anxious to take every opportunity to advance their families' future in the new country. Over time they were joined by increasing numbers of Australian-born women, particularly mothers of school-age children. Often working part-time, utilising skills developed before their marriage, such women were increasingly visible across all sectors of the workforce. Initially, they were prepared to accept lesser wages and conditions in exchange for shaping their work around their family commitments, seeing their income as essentially supplementary. Their presence and their competence over time added substantial pressure to the long-running campaign for equal pay and for government commitments to services needed to facilitate married women's participation in the workforce. The right to work was one of the fundamental principles of the revived women's movement of the 1970s, which achieved a commitment at least to the principle of equal pay, the removal of formal barriers to married women's access to work in the public service, subsidisation of child care, and by century's end a debate about access to paid maternity leave. By 2001 the predominant pattern was both parents in employment except where the youngest child was in his or her first year of life.²³

Increasing female participation in the workforce was only one of a series of changes that transformed the shape of the Australian population during the

²² Hugo, 'A Century of Population Change in Australia'.

²³ David De Vaus, Diversity and Change in Australian Families: Statistical Profiles (Melbourne: Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2004), p. 32.

twentieth century, again bringing it more into line with Old World patterns. In 1901 Australia imagined itself as young both as a nation and a people, an understanding epitomised in the 'little boy from Manly', a figure used repeatedly in political cartoons to signify a new nation bravely confronting an older and threatening world.²⁴ However, like the rest of the industrialised world, Australia's population is now ageing. Children, who made up 35.1 per cent of the population in 1901, comprised only 20.2 per cent a century later.²⁵ Falling birth rates, combined with increasing life expectancy, saw the median age of the population rise from 22.5 in 1901 to 30.7 in 1947 and reach 35 in 2001.²⁶ Where children born in 1901 could expect to live only into their mid-fifties, those born a century later had a life expectancy of almost 80. In part this increased life expectancy was a result of the dramatic decrease in infant mortality, which fell from a high of 103.6 per thousand in 1901 to 5.3 in 1999.27 An ageing population brought a shift in the dominant household forms, so that couples with dependent children now comprise only 28.2 per cent of the total while 24 per cent of homes have only one person in residence.²⁸ Suburban infant welfare centres were replaced in the closing years of the century by facilities for senior citizens, while fears about the cost of meeting the health and welfare needs of an ageing population were matched by calls for more effective use of the skills of a generation of older people who, on average, are fitter and healthier than ever before.

The changes in the birth rate were caused by changes in patterns of cohabitation and family formation. Gender disparities inherited from the nineteenth century meant that rates of marriage were comparatively low in 1901, with slightly less than 50 per cent of the population aged over 15 recorded as married. As the gender ratio evened out and economic conditions improved, the rate rose to more than 60 per cent in the post–World War 2 period before declining to just over 50 per cent in 2001. The higher proportion of married people reflected a declining age of first marriage, which fell steadily from the 1930s to the late 1970s, but then rose.²⁹ Significant in explaining these later changes is the impact of safe contraception on sexual mores. While, as exnuptial conception rates make clear, premarital sex was not uncommon in

- 27 Hugo, 'A Century of Population Change in Australia'.
- 28 De Vaus, Diversity and Change in Australian Families, p. 4.
- 29 Ibid., pp. 161, 167.

²⁴ Ken Inglis, 'Anzac Day: The Little Boy from Manly Grows Up', in John Lack (ed.), Anzac Remembered: Selected Writings by K.S. Inglis (Melbourne: Department of History, University of Melbourne, 1998), pp. 9–12.

²⁵ De Vaus, Diversity and Change in Australian Families, p. 13.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 12.

Australia in the early twentieth century, its consequences were stigmatised: marriage provided the official licence for a sexual relationship. The impact of the availability of the contraceptive pill, released in Australia in the early 1960s, is apparent in rates of cohabitation before marriage that began to rise steadily from the late 1960s and had become normative by 2001.³⁰ The increased acceptance of cohabitation outside marriage was also reflected in the growing exnuptial birth rate, which, after sitting at around 5 per cent of live births through to the 1950s, rose rapidly from the 1960s to approach 30 per cent by 2000.³¹ The reliability of contraception also changed the pattern of births within marriage. Although couples had used whatever contraception was available to attempt to regulate intervals between births and to control completed family size, the contraceptive pill was commonly used to delay the first birth. Until the mid-1960s the first child typically appeared within the first year of marriage. Between 1966 and 1975 this interval rose to 30 months and has continued to rise slowly ever since.³²

The shift in the pattern of births is one indication of the dramatic changes in the shape and stability of family relationships. At the beginning of the century, marriage was regulated by government but overwhelmingly administered by religious bodies, which remained committed to the notion of a union for life. Although the regulation of marriage was a federal responsibility prior to the passage of the Marriage Act in 1961, the Commonwealth was prepared to allow existing State laws to remain in operation. This Act also provided for the registration of civil celebrants, beginning a move that would see civil ceremonies become the dominant form of marriage celebration by 2000.³³ In 1959 the Commonwealth took a first step towards the regulation of divorce with the passage of the Matrimonial Causes Act. While synthesising existing State legislation, the Act contained a provision for divorce after five years' separation, a first step toward the introduction of no-fault divorce. The new Act was administered through the States until the 1975 Family Law Act brought divorce within the federal sphere with the foundation of the Family Court of Australia. This Act encoded a new understanding of divorce, removing fault and instituting a single ground of separation for twelve months. The annual divorce rate, which had risen from 0.1 per thousand of the population in 1901 to 0.8 between 1961 and 1970, leapt to almost 5 following the introduction of the

30 Ibid., p. 115.

31 Hugo, 'A Century of Population Change in Australia'.

32 De Vaus, Diversity and Change in Australian Families, p. 203.

33 Ibid., p. 168.

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new Act, before stabilising at 2.2 to 2.8 in the years that followed.³⁴ On this basis it is now estimated that 43 per cent of marriages will end in divorce.³⁵

The rising divorce rate contributed to the increase in the proportion of one-parent families, from 13 per cent of all families immediately following the passage of the *Family Law Act* to almost 20 per cent by 1996.³⁶ Given the much higher parental death rates of the nineteenth century, lone-parent households might not have been substantially less common in 1901; however, the pattern of single parenting brought about by relationship breakdown has changed. Most lone-parent households are headed by women, although in an increasing number of cases the children have significant contact with their other parent, with rates of shared parenting after divorce rising. Although divorce and separation occur across the social spectrum, lone parents on average have lower rates of workforce participation and hence lower rates of income than those in intact relationships.³⁷

Yet the increase in the instability of family relationships is not indicative of a reluctance to form families. Rates of remarriage are high, and by century's end there was also substantial agitation for people in same-sex relationships to be able legally to marry. Ways of forming families also diversified, particularly from the 1950s. The introduction of legal adoption in most States during the 1920s formalised the exchange of children within and between families. Initially slow to gain acceptance, adoption boomed from the 1950s to the 1970s. Promoted as the solution to the joint problems of illegitimacy and infertility, its popularity created a situation in which single mothers felt pressured to consent to part with their newborn infants. By the mid-1970s the wisdom of adoption came under question, first from adult adoptees anxious to find out details of their origins, and later from their long-silenced parents. Such activism, in combination with the introduction of social security payments for supporting parents, led to a dramatic decline in the number of infants available for adoption. Advances in infertility treatment provided the answer for some infertile couples (Australia's first IVF baby was born in 1980) but others turned to intercountry adoption, a practice that gained government sanction during the last days of the Vietnam War. Both IVF and intercountry adoption were also used to extend the possibility of rearing children beyond the only

^{34 &#}x27;Marriages, Divorces and De Facto Relationships', in Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book Australia, 2009–10*, cat. no. 1301.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2010).

³⁵ Hugo, 'A Century of Population Change in Australia'.

³⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Social Trends, 1997*, cat. no. 4102.0 (Canberra: ABS, 1997).

³⁷ Ibid.

previously authorised structure of the heterosexual couple, with both single women and same-sex couples becoming parents in this way. None of these changes was without controversy. An alliance of conservatives positioned themselves as defenders of what they saw as the traditional family as a core building block of society while feminists concerned about transgressions of women's autonomy promoted alternative family forms facilitated by more effective contraception and new reproductive technologies.

Social life

The shrinking size and growing diversity of family and household were reflected in changes in community and social life. Shifts in the patterns of transport and communication technology altered the ways in which individuals related to each other, but throughout the century the lives of most Australians have been embedded within family and community networks. Most people who live alone have family nearby. Despite the suburban sprawl, over 50 per cent of older people and families with young children live within 30 minutes of an adult child or parent to whom they can turn for companionship or help. Most of this care and support is provided by women: grandmothers assisting daughters with their children, adult daughters taking responsibility for ageing parents. The drift to the city has meant that levels of closeness and contact between family members are lower for people in rural areas, intensifying the need in such areas for community support, much of which is provided through voluntary associations.³⁸

The mutual aid and class-based benevolence that had marked community life in the nineteenth century was replaced in the twentieth century by the principle of voluntary association. Class-based benevolent organisations survived, and indeed were responsible well into the twentieth century for the delivery of services ranging from outdoor relief to major hospitals. However, they were augmented by new organisations aiming to reform rather than ameliorate social ills. Men and women came together, claiming the status of experts in such areas as health, housing, and maternal and child welfare. The various State Housing Commissions, founded from the late 1930s, had their origins in such organisations, as did the infant welfare centres that became standard in most communities during the inter-war period; in some States kindergartens and various community health initiatives also began in this

38 De Vaus, Diversity and Change in Australian Families, pp. 5, 70, 76, 73, 74.

way. Despite their substantial dependence on voluntary labour, all of these initiatives placed professionals in a position of power over those to whom they were delivering services. However, most of the voluntary associations that flowered from the early years of this century took a more egalitarian stance.

Initially, voluntary association was closely linked to locality. Before the spread of the car, people shopped and socialised in the areas in which they lived. The churches provided a key focus for community life, organising social and often sporting groups for men, women, boys and girls in addition to involving them in regular religious services. Reflecting continuing sectarian struggles, such groups were designed to reinforce denominational allegiances in the hope of keeping people 'within the flock', as well as protecting young people from what were perceived as the dangerous elements of more popular culture. At least until the 1960s, most Protestant children were enrolled in Sunday schools and an increasing proportion of Catholic children were taught in parish schools, but there was a growing number of competitors for their leisure time. While overtly religious organisations like the local branches of the international Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations maintained their aim of preserving the moral welfare of young people in employment, other more secular organisations reached into younger age groups where their organised leisure activities proved particularly popular. The Boy Scout movement spread to Australia within months of its foundation in London in 1908 and quickly developed a strong network of locally based troops. Twelve months later girls in Australia began to form similar groups, even before the foundation of the Girl Guide Association in London. The pattern of regular weekly meetings augmented by organised camps saw these organisations quickly become the predominant local youth organisations in Australia, eclipsing older denominationally based groups.³⁹

World War I provided a further boost for locally based, non-denominational, voluntary organisations. The international movement, Red Cross, introduced to Australia in 1914, cultivated elite leadership augmented by a local branch network, enlisting women whose services could be used in support of the war, and in peacetime could be directed to local disaster relief. Patriotic funds organised at the community level united men and women across denominational lines, both to raise funds and provide material comforts for the troops. When peace came, many of those engaged in such

³⁹ David Maunders, Keeping Them Off the Streets: A History of Voluntary Youth Organizations in Australia, 1850–1980 (Melbourne: Phillip Institute of Technology, 1984), pp. 56–8.

organisations sought to continue their involvement, not least because of the social connections it allowed. The inter-war period saw the foundation of many organisations designed to harness the energies of women, who, with smaller families and increased access to labour-saving devices, had more leisure time. At the elite level State Councils of Women came together in 1924 to form a national organisation, which grew to become the major forum for middle-class women's activism. It relied for its influence, however, on affiliates, which included national organisations such as the Country Women's Association, founded in New South Wales in 1922 with networks of branches reaching into local communities. Alongside such national organisations were the very local auxiliaries and clubs associated with schools, hospitals, churches, and sporting and charitable organisations. These groups provided social opportunities for women but they also provided a workforce willing to raise money through cooking, craft work and selling their wares, as well as catering and sometimes cleaning for functions conducted by the organisations with which they were associated.

The small number of women professionals also found support and companionship through voluntary association. Exclusive women's clubs, often with their origins in student societies formed during university days, appeared in several States in the early years of the new century.⁴⁰ Women doctors, who first organised in Victoria in 1896, established a national association in 1927. The model for these organisations was British but from the 1930s American patterns of association were having an influence, evident in the foundation of the first local chapter of Soroptimists International in Sydney in 1937. Men were also coming to embrace the American concept of a service organisation, different in both its purpose and approach from the older, secretive, fraternal patterns of Freemasonry. The first Australian branch of Rotary International was founded in Sydney in 1921, quickly spreading across all States.41 In 1931 a specifically Australian organisation, Apex, was founded on a similar model. While all of these organisations offered opportunities for networking and personal advancement within the local community, the service organisations differed from Freemasonry in their emphasis of involvement with the community rather than just the brotherhood. As a result of their activity, Australian suburbs and towns were dotted with Rotary parks

⁴⁰ Joan Gillison, A History of the Lyceum Club, Melbourne (Melbourne: Lyceum Club, 1975); Monica Starke, The Alexandra Club: A Narrative 1903–1983 (Melbourne: Elm Grove Press, 1986).

⁴¹ Harold Hunt, *The Story of Rotary in Australia, 1921–1971* (Sydney: Regional Rotary Institute, 1971).

and Apex playgrounds, marking the good works of the organisation onto the landscape. The appeal of linking social activity with community service was also harnessed through the establishment of volunteer ambulance services, rural fire services, and, eventually, emergency response units in most States.

The multiple and overlapping memberships of such voluntary organisations created dense bonds of interrelationships, which crossed, at least partially, the sectarian divide. The divisions of class proved harder to breach. In rural areas, where distance limited choices, a semblance of cross-class participation survived, although local hierarchies tended to be reproduced within organisations. In the suburbs, already segregated along class lines, greater income provided greater choice as to the organisations to which people devoted their energy. But for working-class people, and particularly working-class women, the local community was the place in which they found meaning in their lives. Their contribution was vital to the survival of many local institutions, particularly during the Depression when resources of all kinds were in short supply.⁴²

By that time, however, advances in communication had widened horizons for both city and country dwellers, particularly in relation to popular entertainment. The availability of radio expanded entertainment options within the home and opened Australians to new influences. Spreading from the cities into the suburbs in the inter-war period, cinema encoded the ideas of Hollywood, which quickly overtook Britain as the primary source of popular culture. A weekly trip to the cinema became a part of many people's lives, with Saturday matinees a popular entertainment for children. Cinema also influenced trends in music and dancing, replacing the older Australian bush forms with the latest American styles. Spectator sport also became a popular leisure activity, with local football teams in particular acting as an important binding force both for communities represented in the major leagues and the small, contained country towns.⁴³

While World War 2 brought a halt to large-scale sporting events, it represented a high point for voluntary action. Patriotic charities on the World War I model were revived, but as the threat moved closer to Australia many more people became engaged with efforts to protect or promote their communities, as well as provide services to men and women in the armed forces. Civil defence, modelled closely on provisions in Britain, relied heavily on volunteers. Across the country auxiliaries and religious organisations provided entertainment and comforts for local and visiting troops. The 'we

⁴² McCalman, Struggletown, p. 184.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 140–1.

can do it' mentality developed during the war, Melanie Oppenheimer believes, 'provided an impetus for increased civic engagement in a wide range of areas, and resulted in a country buzzing with voluntary action', and harnessing these energies at the local community level was a key aim of post-war reconstruction.⁴⁴ However, other historians have argued that the immediate reaction of the privations and forced sociability of the Depression and war years resulted, in the aftermath, in an increased focus on private life.⁴⁵

Economic, technological and social factors enabled a retreat into the sanctuary of the family. A prolonged economic boom provided the prosperity that fuelled private consumption. A major component of this consumption was the family car, which moved transport from the public to the private sphere, while also rendering the public streets an increasingly unsafe place for children to play. The car became a key site of family togetherness, with the Sunday drive threatening to replace church attendance as a core family activity.⁴⁶ As rates of car ownership grew, holiday activities were also transformed. No longer limited by the accessibility to public transport, families could travel further afield both for day trips and for longer stays. Previously fashionable destinations declined as new and more remote locations took their place. In a further sign of a retreat into the privacy of the family, caravans replaced tents, and hotels and guesthouses with communal facilities gave way to the self-contained motel.

Yet it is important not to overestimate either the rapidity or extent of such change. One-third of Melbourne households were still without cars in 1964, and there were very few that had more than one.⁴⁷ Without access to a second car, most of the women at home were restricted to their immediate community, supervising children going to and from local schools, purchasing their daily needs in local strip shopping centres, and serving on auxiliaries that supported their husbands' or children's activities, with perhaps some time to take advantage of local recreation facilities.⁴⁸ Voluntary association remained central to the lives of this post-war generation. In the new suburbs local progress associations provided a means of agitating for the services that were often lacking. Membership of mothers clubs at schools and kindergartens provided a way for women to make friends while also raising funds to fit

⁴⁴ Melanie Oppenheimer, *Volunteering: We Can't Survive Without It* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2008), p. 20.

⁴⁵ McCalman, Journeyings, p. 208.

⁴⁶ Graeme Davison, Car Wars: How the Car Won Our Hearts and Conquered Our Cities (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2004), p. 10.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 22.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

out the sparse public facilities. Parents of children with disabilities organised to provide training, respite and later small-scale accommodation rather than surrender their sons and daughters to the large institutions provided under the older government and charitable models. Volunteers trained to provide marriage counselling for couples struggling to hold their families together. Involvement with the local church was both a means of integrating into a new community, and an entrée to a range of leisure activities: sporting teams for adults and children, after-school clubs for boys and girls, and the youth groups seen as an antidote to the many risks facing that new social phenomenon created by the extension of secondary education and the consequent delayed entry into the workforce, the adolescent or teenager.⁴⁹

Any attempt to idealise the community life of the 1950s needs to take into account the forces already at work to disrupt this idyll. The introduction of television from 1956 contributed further towards the reduction of the distinctiveness of Australian popular culture. American, and to a lesser extent British, content dominated, bringing new models of imagining and relating into Australian homes. Although, in the earliest years, neighbours clustered around sets left running in shop windows to view their favourite programs, television privatised entertainment. In the short term local cinemas were closed and church attendances suffered, with many denominations abandoning evening services as all but the most faithful worshippers were drawn to the attractive Sunday night television offerings.

The assumed homogeneity of the Australian community was also in decline. The increasingly visible presence of Indigenous people, who had been moving into urban areas since the 1930s, and the diversity that resulted from the post-war migration scheme challenged the assumptions on which the concept of community had been based. Funded by the federal government, volunteers in many communities formed Good Neighbour Councils, designed to introduce migrants, referred to as 'new Australians', to the 'Australian way of life'.⁵⁰ However, it became apparent over time that no such singular entity existed. Rather, migrants were changing Australia just as Australia was changing them – a diversity that increased as, with the end of the white Australia policy, Asians, Africans and people from the Middle East were added into the mix.

Initial activism on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had a similarly benevolent tinge, but a rift developed following the success

⁴⁹ McCalman, Journeyings, p. 236.

⁵⁰ Anna Haebich, Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950–1970 (Fremantle Press, 2008), pp. 178–81.

of the 1967 referendum as a younger and more radical leadership demanded the right of self-determination.⁵¹ In remote areas some communities established outstations where they could again embrace traditional living. At a national level, the new Indigenous leadership was able to obtain funding for Indigenous-controlled organisations providing services such as legal aid, health, education, and child and aged care. In the last decade of the century the rift between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians was partially bridged as people across the country met in small study groups and participated in large symbolic events designed to promote the concept of reconciliation. However, this development also attracted an adverse reaction from other sections of the community, angry at what they saw as being history rewritten and pioneer heroes dethroned.

The concept of community was replaced by the notion of communities, with each individual facing multiple choices as to which communities he or she would identify with. While many of the older voluntary organisations went into decline, new social movements emerged in their place, some social, some political, more commonly a mix of both, but built around interests rather than locality. Changes over the last quarter of the century reinforced this pattern. The spread of the two-car family broke many of the ties to the immediate neighbourhood, freeing women to transport both themselves and their children in search of communities of shared interests. The increased workforce participation of married women resulted in a dramatic decline in auxiliaries and other social or fundraising bodies. Shifts in gender relations and changing priorities among men led to a similar decline in the service and other fraternal clubs, only temporarily halted by the decision by many to allow women to become members. The decline in religious adherence, in combination with the extension of shopping and other leisure activities into Sundays, displaced the churches from the centre of local community life. The activities that they formerly conducted for children and youth no longer had wide appeal. Secular youth organisations fared little better, replaced by more formal instruction in music, dance, sport and other fitness activities. Advances in communications concentrated even more entertainment in the home and critics bewail the limited time that children now have for free play.

It would be wrong to read such shifts as evidence of a decline in community. Australian families still gather together to celebrate significant occasions and communicate with each other frequently, using the range of

⁵¹ Jennifer Clark, Aborigines and Activism: Race, Aborigines and the Coming of the Sixties to Australia (Perth: UWA Press, 2008), ch. 9.

the new technology now available to them. Individuals still see themselves as members of communities, coming together around shared interests or to raise common concerns. However, these communities are no longer defined by location, as new technology allows relationships to be formed across the country and indeed across the world. Not all such relationships are based in the cyberworld. While the activists of the 1970s saw their time as a highpoint of voluntary action, levels of volunteering have grown.⁵² As the traditional volunteer workforce of married women declined, other people arose to fill their place. The first group to engage were retirees, but they have been joined by younger people, some attempting to improve their prospects of gaining employment, some enlisted by their employers as part of a corporate social responsibility plan, but many others wanting to 'give back' to the community.⁵³ While this new spirit of community engagement does not involve membership of formal organisations, it does involve a forging of links across barriers of class and ethnicity.

Social expectations and policies

The contemporary enthusiasm for volunteering is one reaction to the growing levels of inequality in Australia. This is not a situation that those who planned the Federation would have expected. Their conventions took place in the shadow of a worldwide Depression that struck Australia particularly hard, and there were voices among the delegates who wanted the new nation to capture the earlier colonial dreams of a country in which poverty did not exist and hence that harsh and judgemental charity would have no place. The Depression had forced many working-class families to seek charitable assistance and they were often left scarred by the experience. At the beginning of the twentieth century it is estimated that 10 per cent of the population lived in permanent poverty, with a similar percentage with insufficient reserves to protect themselves should their circumstances suddenly change. The most vulnerable groups were struggling farmers, unemployed labourers, the elderly and deserted or widowed mothers with children to support.⁵⁴

In the early years of the Federation Liberal and Labor forces came together to position Australia as a social laboratory in which to demonstrate new ways of eliminating such areas of need. The solution, they argued, was

⁵² Oppenheimer, Volunteering, p. 21.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 6.

⁵⁴ Philip Mendes, Australia's Welfare Wars: The Players, the Politics and the Ideologies (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), p. 12.

to guarantee the rights and conditions of workers and to introduce direct payments for those who were no longer able to work. Such payments were understood to be subsidiary, the assumption being that workers, properly remunerated throughout their lives, would be able to provide for themselves and their families.⁵⁵ Tariffs, introduced to safeguard local manufacturing, created an economic environment in which wages could be set, not on the basis of what industry could afford to pay but rather the amount a worker required in order to support his wife and family adequately. Initially calculated by State-based wages boards, this practice spread across Australia following the Harvester judgment of 1907. One of the first decisions of the new Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, established to mediate between workers and employees, the judgment set in place the concept of a basic wage for unskilled male workers.

The basic wage was understood as the primary means of delivering wage justice and hence economic security. Welfare payments, as they were introduced, were always designed in the knowledge that it was there. Hence Australia did not opt for the compulsory insurance model being adopted in many European nations, in which workers, employers and government were all called upon to make a contribution. Nor did it embrace the concept of universal benefits built upon a notion of citizenship rights. Rather, it chose a residual system, means-tested, moralistic and funded from general taxation.⁵⁶ The aged and invalid pensions, introduced in 1908 and 1910 respectively, might have been intended to restore respect to the stricken or worn-out worker, but some of the older notions of deserving and undeserving were reflected in conditions that excluded Asians, Indigenous people, alcoholics, past prisoners, recent immigrants and other applicants judged to not be of 'good character'.⁵⁷

Although some women were eligible for these pensions in their own right, in general their access to the benefits of the wage earner's welfare state was mediated through their relationship to a male breadwinner. Women's wages were set as a fixed proportion of the male wage irrespective of whether or not they had dependants to support. Some feminist groups organised against what they saw as an injustice. However, recognising the security provided to most married women by the wage-fixing system, they gave only

55 Ibid.

57 Mendes, Australia's Welfare Wars, p. 13.

⁵⁶ The history of the Australian welfare state is described in Francis G. Castles, *The Working Class and Welfare: Reflections on the Political Development of the Welfare State in Australia and New Zealand*, 1890–1980 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1985).

muted support to campaigns for equal pay, preferring instead to argue for government to provide direct payment to women who were rearing families, irrespective of whether or not they were married. As mothers of the nation, they argued, such women were performing an important role for which they were entitled to be remunerated. The introduction of the third element in Australia's early welfare scheme, the Maternity Allowance of 1912, was, in part, a response to this campaign. Designed to pay a flat sum to all women on the safe delivery of a child, the payment was not means-tested and, somewhat controversially, was paid to single as well as married mothers, although racial exclusions applied. It was, however, the one success of the feminist campaign, later attempts to introduce a mother's wage being dismissed because of the fear that they would create the conditions for a reduction of the basic wage.

The non-contributory basis of the early Australian social security system functioned as a brake on its extension.⁵⁸ The threat of unbudgeted payments overwhelming the economy was aggravated by the introduction of a parallel welfare system for returned servicemen at the end of World War I. Designed as a reward for heroes, it was seen as a payment for services rendered and hence could not be subject to the moral and means testing of the existing system. Nor could it be as minimalist in its provision.⁵⁹ As a result, Australia's social security system stagnated; there were debates over the need for widows' pensions, child endowment and other benefits being introduced in comparable countries, but these failed because of fears about costs, and a continuing reluctance to contemplate a shift to a contributory scheme.⁶⁰ The centralised wage-fixing system, in combination with government willingness to intervene in industrial relations and a residual welfare system funded out of general revenue, was seen as producing about as much redistribution as the electorate would tolerate.⁶¹

Those who fell through the gaps in the system continued to be helped by charity, largely administered by women and marginalised by the belief that wages and benefits covered most areas of need. Displaced from the prominent position they had occupied in the nineteenth century, these charities had neither the resources nor the motivation to change the mixture

⁵⁸ John Murphy, A Decent Provision: Australian Welfare Policy, 1870 to 1949 (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), p. 129.

⁵⁹ The history of the Australian repatriation system is told in Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return* (Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁶⁰ Murphy, A Decent Provision, p. 155.

⁶¹ Elaine Thompson, Fair Enough: Egalitarianism in Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1994), p. 166.

of benevolence and judgementalism that guided their operations. When Depression returned in the 1930s, again forcing larger sections of the working class to look to charities for relief, they were ill equipped to cope. Although governments assumed initially that administering assistance through existing organisations would satisfy the increasing demand, the reaction of recipients was harsh and more direct relief schemes had to be introduced. Even these directly government-funded schemes involved considerable humiliation for recipients, creating a political environment in which further welfare reform would become palatable.⁶² Planning for post-war reconstruction, drawing substantially on parallel developments in the United Kingdom, involved the replacement of old charitable regimes with a national system of benefits predicated on notions of citizen entitlement. Although charity was not to entirely disappear, it needed to rethink its philosophies and its role, and, in particular, its relationship with government.⁶³

Beginning in 1941, social security was substantially remade, with the introduction of pensions for widows and deserted wives, endowment payments for dependent children, short-term payments for the sick and the unemployed, and an attempt to underwrite the cost of health care (largely thwarted at this stage by the opposition of the medical profession).⁶⁴ The changes were funded by the extension of income tax to low-income workers, introducing, by default, a contributory element. Although the words 'social security contribution' were added to taxation forms, the funds raised were not earmarked to meet the additional costs, creating a sense of entitlement that was to cause difficulty in years to come.⁶⁵ While this reform involved a considerable broadening of provision, there was little change in the underlying philosophy. Welfare continued to be subsidiary to the operations of the labour market, with the presence or absence of a male breadwinner the key factor.⁶⁶ The combined provisions of wage regulation and social security ensured that men in secure full-time employment were able to support their families, and in the years of full employment, appeared to be succeeding in providing the 'fair go' that was considered an important element of what

65 Mendes, Australia's Welfare Wars, p. 15.

⁶² For a general history of social conditions in the Depression, see Geoffrey Spenceley, A Bad Smash: Australia in the Depression of the 1930s (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1990); Wendy Lowenstein, Weevils in the Flour: An Oral Record of the 1930s Depression in Australia (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1978).

⁶³ Murphy, A Decent Provision, p. 181.

⁶⁴ Mendes, Australia's Welfare Wars, p. 14. For details of the thwarted attempt to introduce a national health service, see James A. Gillespie, *The Price of Health: Australian Governments and Medical Politics*, 1910–1960 (Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁶⁶ Murphy, A Decent Provision, p. 226.

Australia had to offer.⁶⁷ For those who were situated outside this safety zone – Indigenous Australians, casual and non-unionised workers, recently arrived immigrants and women trying to support their families – the guarantees of the welfare safety net were precarious.⁶⁸ When they fell on hard times the only place they could turn was to charitable and community organisations, many of which struggled to raise money because of the assumption that their services were no longer needed.⁶⁹

This assumption was unsettled when, with the long boom beginning to recede, unemployment again became a problem. By the late 1960s activists associated with some of the former charities, which had reinvented themselves as social research organisations, heralded a 'rediscovery' of poverty centred on families with low incomes and high rents, aged and widowed pensioners without subsidised accommodation, and immigrant and Indigenous families. A survey conducted by Ronald Henderson in 1966 concluded that 7.7 per cent of Melbourne families were living in poverty and that a further 5.2 per cent were at risk of joining them. Appointed by the federal government to extend his inquiry nationwide, he reported in 1975 that 10.2 per cent of Australians were very poor and a further 7.7 per cent were rather poor, statistics indicating little improvement from 1901.⁷⁰

Reforms introduced since the 1970s have done little to shift these depressing statistics. The Whitlam government was elected in 1972 on a platform that included a commitment to transform welfare into a right available to every member of the community rather than a stigmatised charity.⁷¹ The range of benefits was widened; they included a supporting mother's benefit for the many single mothers who in the past had been forced to part with their children because they found it difficult to prove their eligibility under the widows' pensions schemes, and the first national health insurance scheme. The level of benefits was also raised and linked to existing wage levels. Many of these reforms were wound back or restricted in the years that followed as governments of both persuasions, faced with increasing outlays on unemployment benefits, sought to limit welfare expenditure and combat what they increasingly perceived as the problems of welfare dependency. While some of the later reforms were designed to remove the

⁶⁷ Michael Pusey, The Experience of Middle Australia: The Dark Side of Economic Reform (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 3.

⁶⁸ Murphy, A Decent Provision, p. 225.

⁶⁹ Mendes, Australia's Welfare Wars, p. 3.

⁷⁰ Ibid., pp. 18, 21.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 19.

exclusions around gender and race that had marred the existing system, these changes took place in an environment in which welfare recipients were increasingly demonised, with the unemployed a particular object of media and political hostility even when levels of unemployment were high.⁷²

Welfare reform cannot be understood without reference to the inroads made by neoliberal economics, as arguments developed in both Britain and the United States increasingly intruded into Australian debates. The most immediate impact of this change was the dismantling of the industrial relations and wage-fixing model that had underwritten Australia's welfare provision. The neoliberal emphasis on the freedom of the individual undermined notions of the collective good, positioning welfare recipients as a danger to their dependants and a drain on the national economy, while introducing generous benefits and tax concessions for those who can be constituted as trying to help themselves. This philosophy underwrote the national superannuation scheme introduced in 1992. While the scheme required all employers to contribute to their employees' superannuation, its aim was to reduce the number of people drawing the aged pension and provide generous tax benefits to those who through private savings were able to fund their own retirement.⁷³

By the end of the century the welfare landscape had been transformed, the supposed retreat from welfare marked by little diminution in expenditure but rather by a shift towards promoting and rewarding workforce participation. This resulted in a steady increase, and impregnability, of the notion of middle-class welfare, seen as central to government support for 'working families'. In contrast there was an emphasis on restricting conditions of access to those seen as non-compliant – who bear an uncanny resemblance to the undeserving who dominated welfare discourse one hundred years earlier. Families who can afford to support one parent to remain at home are subsidised while single parents are penalised if they refuse to return quickly to the workforce.

While this new understanding of welfare may sit comfortably with an overwhelmingly middle-class electorate, it leaves those who had placed their faith in the older notion of social security as the safety net preserving the notion of Australia as the land of the 'fair go' feeling lost. Interviewing residents of state housing estates in the 1990s, Mark Peel found 'a world being destroyed'

72 Ibid., pp. 23, 24.73 Murphy, A Decent Provision, p. 228.

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and 'the return of insecurity and poverty that many people thought had gone for ever'.⁷⁴ Surveys taken at the end of the century found that 17.4 per cent of children were growing up in families where neither parent was working. The casualisation of employment had left 20 per cent of households where the head was of working age dependent on benefits as their principal source of income. The benefits might have been ameliorating the worst effects of poverty, but were doing nothing to promote the family's chances of social mobility.⁷⁵ While tax and social security incentives decreased the number of couple families with children living in poverty between 1986 and 2001, the situation for lone-parent families has not shown a similar improvement and an increasing proportion of single people are living in poverty as well.⁷⁶

The dreams of early Australian legislators to restrain the excesses of capitalism, using a mix of wage regulation and social security in order to create a new nation that was fairer and more egalitarian than those that had come before, had little currency at the century's end. They sought to create an economic system in which each new generation could hope to do better economically but for substantial proportions of the Australian population that hope too is now being reversed.⁷⁷ There is a particular concentration of poverty in Indigenous Australia, where many people in remote communities live in conditions that can only be described as third world. Calls for a restriction of wealth on the basis of equity are quickly condemned as 'the politics of envy', and poverty, rather than being seen as a national problem, has been redefined as a personal pathology to be overcome by behavioural change.78 While most Australians continue to enjoy the privileges of affluence, and the survival of the principle of a minimum wage provides a safety net for the lowest paid workers, there is no place in the national imaginary for the marginalised and the poor.

- 76 De Vaus, Diversity and Change in Australian Families, pp. 35, 54.
- 77 Peel, The Lowest Rung, p. 176.
- 78 Ibid., pp. 172–3.

⁷⁴ Mark Peel, *The Lowest Rung: Voices of Australian Poverty* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 4.

⁷⁵ Mendes, Australia's Welfare Wars, p. 28.

¹³ Gender and sexuality

KATIE HOLMES AND SARAH PINTO

The population of colonial Australia was always marked by a significant imbalance in the ratio of European men and women, which closed only at the beginning of the twentieth century. Its legacy was a highly masculinist culture, where violence against women, especially Indigenous women, was common and women were treated as bedmates, child bearers and domestic workers. Feminists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries campaigned vociferously for women's bodily autonomy, recognition of their importance as mothers, and the right to vote and participate in government. The suffrage campaigns were rewarded by the relatively early extension of the franchise at State levels between 1894 (South Australia) and 1909 (Victoria). The right to vote for and stand for election in the Commonwealth parliament was granted to white women who were British subjects in 1902. Feminists argued for the women's vote on the grounds of equality with men, but also because of the maternal values women would bring to public life. It was an argument that spoke directly to the racialised concerns of a new nation in need of white mothers to populate its vast expanses. This anxiety about population, its growth and colour, would continue to shape attitudes towards gender and sexuality across the century and beyond.

Citizen-workers and citizen-mothers

Marriage and family was the expected life course for both men and women. Heterosexuality was normalised and sexual self-control was the ideal for all, though in practice women were held to this more tightly than men. While sex was often understood as an essential or inevitable part of men's lives, the strong emphasis on motherhood and racial fitness left little room for non-procreative notions of female sexuality. In the period after Federation there was an emphasis on sexual and social purity that belied a deep interest in, and discussion of, sex. There were significant public conversations about the age of consent, prostitution, rape and masturbation. As one commentator remarked in 1917: 'you can't move without Sex being flung in your face'.¹

Although the imperative to marry was strong, surprisingly large numbers of women and men remained single: 12.3 per cent of women and 22.4 per cent of men in 1911. The marriage rate began falling in the 1890s and continued to do so through the first two decades of the twentieth century.² The state of marriage was also under scrutiny, with feminists attacking the institution for its subjection of women in language that revealed the influence of British feminists and liberal theorists. The prospect of women's independence and apparent lack of interest in child bearing created considerable anxiety. Married women who sought to curtail their fertility were singled out for special condemnation. The 1903 New South Wales Royal Commission into the decline of the birthrate – which had fallen from six children in the average family in the 1880s to three in 1910 – laid the blame squarely at the feet of selfish women and their increasingly 'lax morality', condemning women's desire for pleasure and aversion to child bearing.³ Yet the overwhelming reason for limiting family size was economic, and withdrawal was the main form of birth control – requiring the agreement of men.

The feminist movement's emphasis on women's independence from men enabled some women to imagine autonomy. Women's magazines encouraged small-scale, home-based industry as a path to independence, which could be appealing. Mildred Hood, eighteen, poor and living on a farm near Hobart in 1909, dreamed of becoming a doctor by selling produce from her market garden and 'patching scraps out of the newspaper to gather and Medical pamphlets to make my begining [sic]'.⁴ Not surprisingly, Mildred did not realise her dream, and spent the rest of her life caring for her family. Domestic service was still the dominant form of employment for working-class women, although factory work was becoming more common among urban women; in Victoria they constituted 37 per cent of the

- I Quoted in Lisa Featherstone, Let's Talk about Sex: Histories of Sexuality in Australia from Federation to the Pill (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp. 11, 23–54.
- 2 Marriage rates differed across the States: they were highest in Western Australia and Queensland, lowest in Victoria. Nationally, the percentage of women never married by the age of 45–49 rose from 6.5 per cent in 1891 to 16.6 per cent in 1921; the percentage of men decreased from 23.6 per cent in 1891 to 19.7 per cent in 1921. See Peter F. McDonald, *Marriage in Australia: Age at First Marriage and Proportions Marrying, 1860–1971* (Canberra: Department of Demography, ANU, 1974), pp. 133–5.
- 3 Alison MacKinnon, Love and Freedom: Professional Women and the Reshaping of Personal Life (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 22–6.
- 4 Quoted in Katie Holmes, Between the Leaves: Stories of Australian Women, Writing and Gardens (Perth: UWA Press, 2011), p. 74.

manufacturing workforce in 1900.⁵ Although women's participation in the workforce increased steadily, their pay did not. On average women received just over half the male wage, a ratio that would prove persistent once the Harvester judgment of 1907 enshrined the concept of the 'living wage' calculated on the needs of a family of five and applied only to men.⁶ As newly enfranchised citizens, women could claim a kind of equal status to men, but not equal pay.

As citizens, it was women's role as mothers that most interested both the state and feminists. 'Maternal citizenship' was a key platform for feminists and women attached to the Labor Party.⁷ In 1912 women in the Labor Party convinced Prime Minister Andrew Fisher to introduce the \pounds 5 maternity allowance, payable to all white women on the birth of a child. The inclusion of single mothers in the maternity allowance was radical, its racial exclusion telling: in an extension of the white Australia policy, Asian, Aboriginal and Islander mothers were ineligible. Some feminists saw it as an example of 'the White Australia policy gone mad'.⁸

While the women who were populating the new Commonwealth could be described as citizen-mothers, the men creating the nation were citizen-workers, and of a race peculiarly suited to progressive nation building. Women could give birth to future citizens, but it was upon the shoulders of their sons that the future and defence of the country were seen to lie. Different understandings of masculinity circulated at the turn of the twentieth century: the bushman, a figure based on the large number of rural workers and considered to be the quintessential Australian, embodied the values of egalitarianism, mateship and the freedoms and vigour of outdoor life; the respectable workingman, a skilled labourer who was a hard-working family man; and the working-class 'larrikin' who was a danger to the social order, hanging around on street corners and threatening respectable citizens, especially women.⁹ Feminists generalised the figure of the larrikin to encompass many working-class men who, they believed, rendered family life difficult at

⁵ Raelene Frances, *The Politics of Work: Gender and Labour in Victoria* 1880–1939 (Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 17.

⁶ See Edna Ryan and Anne Conlon, *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work 1788–1974* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1975), chs 3–4.

⁷ Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999), ch. 2.

⁸ Katie Holmes and Marilyn Lake (eds), Freedom Bound II: Documents on Women in Modern Australia (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p. 7.

⁹ Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity* 1870–1920 (Melbourne University Press, 2001), pp. 10, 15–17.

best, miserable and dangerous at worst, a critique politicised by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. $^{\rm 10}$

This paradigm converged with calls from some feminists, religious leaders, purity workers (who campaigned for a single moral and sexual standard for women and men) and doctors for men to control their sexual desires. Unlike so many other colonial societies, however, the anxiety did not extend to the threat of Indigenous men, whose sexuality was often silenced.¹¹ Instead, it was Asian and Pacific Islander men who carried the burden of being cast as the non-white sexual predator, apparently threatening national racial purity. The fear associated with interracial sex could have consequences that extended far beyond legislative restrictions: a police constable in La Grange Bay in Western Australia chained Aboriginal women overnight to protect them from the men of pearling boats.¹²

People sometimes found ways of subverting normative understandings of gender and sexuality. Indeed, historians have argued that the disorder and threat represented by figures such as the cross-dresser was important for producing understandings of 'normal' sexual behaviour.¹³ Transgressing gender or sexual norms could bring severe punishment, but in the early decades of the century this was more likely to be directed towards men engaged in 'deviant' sexual practices than women, whose same-sex desire was only beginning to be publicly acknowledged.¹⁴ When compared with the United States or Europe, however, there is relatively little acknowledgement – beyond prosecutions – of same-sex desires, practices or experiences in Australia during this period.¹⁵ Prostitution was by far the most widely recognised form of female 'deviant' sexual behaviour, implicitly sanctioned but also legally and criminally regulated.¹⁶

With the outbreak of World War I and Australia's 'baptism of fire' on the shores of Gallipoli, the earlier masculine types came together as the Anzac soldier. The war sharpened understandings of gender but also sowed

- 12 Featherstone, Let's Talk about Sex, p. 86.
- 13 Lucy Chesser, Parting with My Sex: Cross-Dressing, Inversion and Sexuality in Australian Cultural Life (Sydney University Press, 2008), pp. xviii–xvix.
- 14 Ibid.; Ruth Ford, ""The Man-Woman Murderer": Sex Fraud, Sexual Inversion and the Unmentionable "Article" in 1920s Australia', *Gender & History*, 12, 1 (2000): 158–96.
- 15 Featherstone, Let's Talk about Sex, pp. 59–62.
- 16 Rae Frances, Selling Sex: A Hidden History of Prostitution (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007).

¹⁰ Patricia Grimshaw, 'Only the Chains Have Changed', in Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (eds), *Staining the Wattle: A People's History of Australia since* 1788 (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1988), pp. 66–86.

II Victoria Haskins and John Maynard, 'Sex, Race and Power: Aboriginal Men and White Women in Australian History', Australian Historical Studies, 36, 126 (2005): 191–216.

the seeds for future changes. It was not only Australian men who rushed to enlist and sought to serve the Empire. Australian women volunteered in their thousands to assist the war effort, but the government rejected all but nurses for war service; their experiences in this war differed markedly from those of British counterparts.¹⁷ Motherhood remained paramount; concerned by the threat to the population posed by so many men at war, some even campaigned for celibate motherhood (via artificial insemination) to enable women to contribute to the nation without disgrace.¹⁸ Women were also encouraged to make their sacrifices as wives and mothers, offering their husbands and sons to the nation and Empire; they were to 'wait and weep'. Many women found such passivity unconscionable and committed themselves to labouring long hours as volunteers: knitting, sewing, packing parcels to send off to the troops.¹⁹ Others challenged established roles and claimed public voices and spaces.²⁰ They also organised internationally to oppose the war, joining the Sisterhood of International Peace, the Women's Peace Army and the Australian Peace Alliance. Their opposition to the war, however, was framed within conventional understandings of women's roles. As Kathleen Hotson declared in the Woman Voter in 1916, 'We shall have no faith in womanliness, in wifeliness, motherliness, if woman cannot [oppose the war]'.21

Australian soldiers were credited with the ultimate power of national creation. Gallipoli, Prime Minister William Morris Hughes declared in 1916, was 'the birthplace of the nation'.²² The official war correspondent, C.E.W. Bean, would famously declare that the importance of the war was the discovery of Australian manhood.²³ The Anzac, embodying the characteristics of courage,

- 17 Katie Holmes, 'Day Mothers and Night Sisters', in Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (eds), Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 43–59; Jan Bassett, Guns and Brooches: Australian Army Nursing from the Boer War to the Gulf War (Oxford University Press, 1992); Kirsty Harris, More than Bombs and Bandages: Australian Army Nurses at Work in World War I (Sydney: Big Sky Publishing, 2011).
- 18 Frank Bongiorno, *The Sex Lives of Australians: A History* (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2012), p. 140.
- 19 Bruce Scates, 'The Unknown Sock Knitter: Voluntary Work, Emotional Labour, Bereavement and the Great War', *Labour History*, 81 (2001): 29–49.
- 20 Joy Damousi, 'Socialist Women and Gendered Space: Anti-Conscription Campaigns and Anti-War Campaigns 1914–18', and Judith Smart, 'Feminist, Food and the Fair Price: The Cost-of-Living Demonstrations in Melbourne, August–September 1917', both in Damousi and Lake (eds), *Gender and War*, pp. 254–273, 274–301.
- 21 The Woman Voter, 25 May 1916.
- 22 Marilyn Lake, 'Mission Impossible: How Men Gave Birth to the Australian Nation: Nationalism, Gender and Other Seminal Acts', *Gender & History*, 4, 3 (1992): 305.
- 23 Alistair Thomson, Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 148.

resourcefulness, mateship and good humour, emerged from the war as the dominant, if contested, understanding of Australian masculinity. But for some men the Anzac legend proved incompatible with their own experiences, a source of discomfort and further disillusionment.²⁴ The mythologised Anzac also belied a more violent and militarised version of masculinity that found expression among some returned servicemen, many of whom were unemployed and unemployable.²⁵ The hundreds of thousands of wounded men inhabiting Australia's public and private spaces threatened social stability and domestic harmony. War-wounded men also needed to be cared for, a task that fell predominantly onto families.²⁶ Thousands of men returned from Europe with venereal diseases, requiring a very different type of care. In contrast to earlier panics, these men also found themselves condemned as diseased carriers, putting the health of women and children – and by extension the nation – at risk.²⁷

Modern men and women

World War I might have reinforced traditional understandings of gender but the economic expansion of the 1920s brought significant changes to the lives of women and men. Modernity heralded a more sexualised culture, with increased attention to women as desiring subjects. Several versions of femininity circulated, including the sexually precocious flapper, the modern woman and the bachelor girl. Young women's behaviour was hotly debated: they were both the harbingers of modernity and its more worrying manifestations.²⁸ White, single women were of particular concern, lest they find the modern desire for pleasure and freedom too appealing and relinquish their marriage and reproductive responsibilities. The author Dymphna Cusack was very tempted: 'I'm finding life as an independent woman so fascinating I can't conceive of wanting to change it for any other'.²⁹ Even so, established ideas about gender and sexuality remained important, particularly in rural areas

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 169-74.

²⁵ Judith A. Allen, *Sex and Secrets: Crimes Involving Australian Women since* 1880 (Oxford University Press, 1990), ch. 6.

²⁶ Marina Larsson, *Shattered Anzacs: Living with the Scars of War* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009).

²⁷ Featherstone, Let's Talk about Sex, pp. 95–103.

²⁸ Katie Holmes, Spaces in Her Day: Australian Women's Diaries of the 1920s and 1930s (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995), ch. I.

²⁹ Dymphna Cusack to Florence James, April 1933, in Holmes and Lake (eds), *Freedom Bound II*, p. 68.

and within religious cultures where restraint and self-control continued to be valued. $^{\scriptscriptstyle 30}$

The expansion of factory work for working-class women freed them from the demands of domestic service, while middle-class women also found increased opportunities for work.³¹ Labour-saving devices such as gas and electric stoves, vacuum cleaners and washing machines assisted middle-class women with domestic labour. Efficiency and rational, scientific management became the principles that were to govern the domestic and paid workplaces. Scientific 'experts' were teaching women how to mother and to clean, and scrutinising their labour.³² The promises of technology to reduce women's labour proved illusory. Mabel Lincoln, a housewife in the Victorian town of Leongatha, recorded the unrelenting nature of her labour: 'Start work 8 oclock finish 11 p.m., feel awfully fed up, this life is much worse than the farm'.³³

Experts also turned their attention to sex, where a scientific approach was expected to deliver substantial benefits to all. Sex education became a focus, particularly for adolescents. Arguments for sex education varied, but they had one thing in common: 'the chief aim was simply to convince children and young adults *not* to have sex', as Lisa Featherstone argues. Adolescent boys were encouraged to exercise control, and adolescent girls implored to assist them. Advice was different in the sex and marriage manuals written for (married) adults. New, companionate models of marital life substantially altered understandings of sex, with mutual pleasure the aim. Australian writers such as Marion Piddington were strongly influenced by British and US reformers, and especially by Marie Stopes.³⁴ This advice literature offers useful insight into expectations and understandings of heterosexual sex in the period. But evidence of practices and experiences is much harder to come by; most bedroom doors remain closed to historians.

Expert attention to mothers reflected the persistent concern with low fertility rates among white families. White women seemed impervious to such concerns, however, and the severe economic Depression of the 1930s brought a further fall in the birth rate and a dramatic rise in abortions. In 1935 the number of women seeking treatment 'suffering from abortions' at

³⁰ Bongiorno, The Sex Lives of Australians, p. 161.

³¹ Beverly Kingston, My Wife, My Daughter, and Poor Mary Ann: Women and Work in Australia (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1975).

³² Kerreen M. Reiger, The Disenchantment of the Home: Modernizing the Australian Family 1880–1940 (Oxford University Press, 1985).

³³ Mabel Lincoln, Diary, 21 January 1930, in Holmes, Spaces in Her Day, p. 53.

³⁴ Featherstone, Let's Talk about Sex, pp. 123-30.

Melbourne's Royal Women's Hospital was estimated to be as high as one for every two births, and in 1936 sepsis from abortions accounted for 31 per cent of the maternal death rate for Victoria. The vast majority of these women were married. A 1937 report to the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) suggested that the most common reason given by women for seeking an abortion was poverty; but the report also noted that middle-class women were similarly seeking to limit the number of children they bore.³⁵

While heterosexuality was actively promoted, modernity opened up new possibilities for its transgression. Transgressors, in turn, were more rigorously policed. Male homosexuality remained illegal in all States, with charges of sodomy, buggery, indecent assault and gross indecency variously used to prosecute offenders. Most people only became aware of homosexual activity when its 'criminality' impinged on society, and then it was generally discussed in euphemistic terms.³⁶ Lesbian sexual activity was not explicitly outlawed in Australia, although suspects were subject to increasing police harassment and intervention.³⁷

Influenced by eugenic ideas, governments engaged in the population debate. Indigenous women and families were specifically identified. The rising number of lighter skinned, or 'half-caste' children, was a particular concern to authorities, although the white men involved in creating the 'problem' were mostly ignored. The practice of child removal intensified in the inter-war years, and children born as the product of interracial relationships were singled out. The practice was designed to breed out the blackness and to purify white Australia, although it paradoxically aimed to do so by mixing bloodlines.³⁸ Fiona was five when she was taken from her mother in 1936. It was 32 years before she again saw her mother, who had been left without any children. 'Who can imagine what a mother went through?' Fiona asked.³⁹

35 Holmes and Lake (eds), *Freedom Bound II*, p. 79; see Katie Holmes, 'Filling the Empty Cradles: Sexuality, Maternity, and the Effects of Depression and War on Gender Relations in Australia', in Peter Bastian and Roger Bell (eds), *Through Depression and War: The United States and Australia* (Sydney: Australian-American Fulbright Commission and Australian and New Zealand American Studies Association, 2002), pp. 51–61.

- 37 Ruth Ford, "'Lady-Friends" and "Sexual Deviationists": Lesbians and the Law in Australia, 1930s–1950s', in Diane Kirkby (ed.), *Sex, Power and Justice: Historical Perspectives on Law in Australia* (Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 34.
- 38 Anna Haebich, Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000 (Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000), p. 274.
- 39 'Fiona's Story', in Carmel Bird (ed.), *The Stolen Children: Their Stories* (Sydney: Random House, 1998), p. 97.

³⁶ Garry Wotherspoon, *City of the Plain: History of a Gay Sub-culture* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1991), pp. 41–2.

Some feminist groups took an active interest in the conditions of Indigenous Australians, linking with international women's organisations to press their cause. The British Commonwealth League and the Pan-Pacific Women's Association both provided venues for Australian feminists to highlight Indigenous women's subordination.⁴⁰ Mary Montgomerie Bennett, a Perth-based teacher and campaigner for Aboriginal rights, issued a 'Call to the Women of Australia' to 'affirm the right of the aboriginal woman to the sanctity of her person and ask for definite reforms for her protection'. Bennett's analysis of interracial relations was uncompromising: she believed there was a 'white slave trade in black women' in the north-west of Western Australia.⁴¹

A plethora of women's organisations campaigned for the interests of white women. The conservative Australian Women's National League boasted 52,000 members at its height in 1914. It sought to combat socialism and protect the interests of home, women and children. The non-aligned National Council of Women served middle-class women's activism, while the Country Women's Association sought to represent the welfare of rural women and children.⁴² The United Associations of Women, with Jessie Street as a founding member, was the more radical of women's organisations and campaigned for women's economic rights and independence.

Australian feminists engaged in sustained international activism during the inter-war period. They joined with feminists from other Dominions to campaign for peace, and were committed to educating themselves about other cultures and nationalities. Such involvements broadened their views and strengthened their critiques of racism within Australia: the Pan-Pacific Women's Association, in particular, provided a forum where women could engage with a 'more egalitarian international framework'.⁴³ Their goals included an equal rights treaty, which would recognise the equality of the sexes, including the right to work and payment for women's labour both inside and outside the home.

The right of women to work became hotly debated during the mass unemployment of the Depression. Most of those thrown out of work were

⁴⁰ Fiona Paisley, Loving Protection? Australian Feminism and Aboriginal Women's Rights 1919– 1939 (Melbourne University Press, 2000); Angela Woollacott, 'Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms: Australian Women's Internationalist Activism in the 1920s– 30s', Gender & History, 10, 3 (1998): 425–48.

⁴¹ Quoted in Lake, *Getting Equal*, pp. 110–11.

⁴² The Australian Woman's Register http://www.womenaustralia.info/biogs/AWE0067b.htm, accessed 24 January 2012.

⁴³ Woollacott, 'Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms', p. 445.

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men, who felt acutely their failure as breadwinners to provide for their families. Children and adults alike went hungry. Women in paid work were accused of taking men's jobs – and, by implication, their manhood. They were also accused of being 'scarlet lipped' and 'overdressed', their very visibility a threat to conventional understandings of femininity.⁴⁴ In 1935 the trade union organiser Muriel Heagney published *Are Women Taking Men's Jobs?*, arguing cogently that sexual segregation was an entrenched feature of the labour market in Australia, and men's jobs were safe. She also exposed women's appalling pay and working conditions.⁴⁵

Wartime opportunities and anxieties

It was another war that brought women's wages closer to men's, and opened up new areas of employment. World War 2 had a profound impact on the understandings and daily experiences of gender and sexuality in Australia. Images of militarised manhood again called men to join up. As men left their jobs, women were called upon to step into them. The mobilisation of women into the auxiliary services and war industries is in stark contrast to their experience during World War I. Now women could be welders and truck drivers, farmers and mechanics, secretaries and munitions workers. 'Total war' meant that even married women with children were expected to work, although childcare provision was lacking.⁴⁶

Women's entry into paid work in large numbers created many new opportunities. Those in traditional areas of male employment received between 60 and 100 per cent of the male rate, and the wages of other female workers were raised to 75 per cent. Many women experienced a new independence and autonomy, but their new freedoms were bound within strict understandings of sexual difference. Those involved in the war effort were encouraged to retain their femininity, which was increasingly defined in terms of heterosexual desirability.⁴⁷ The presence of large numbers of

⁴⁴ Noted Sydney feminist Jessie Street in her letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 20 February 1934, defending women's right to work; quoted in Holmes and Lake (eds), *Freedom Bound II*, p. 74.

⁴⁵ See Lake, Getting Equal, p. 179.

⁴⁶ Kay Saunders and Geoffrey Bolton, 'Girdled for War: Women's Mobilizations in World War Two', in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds), Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation (Sydney: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992), p. 388; Kate Darian-Smith, On the Homefront: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939–1945 (Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 124–5.

⁴⁷ See Marilyn Lake, 'Female Desire: The Meaning of World War II', Australian Historical Studies, 24, 95 (1990): 267–84.

American servicemen, better paid and considered better looking and better mannered than their Australian counterparts, introduced many women to previously unexplored pleasures, and threatened Australian masculinity. Lola Taylor, a Brisbane teenager during the war, remembered the impact of American servicemen: 'after Australian men, American men were so clean. They smelt beautiful...They had beautiful teeth...Their clothes were starched and smelt so lovely.'⁴⁸

Young women's readiness to experiment with their newfound freedoms brought condemnation. Particular concern was expressed about those described as 'amateurs', women who apparently actively sought out men for sexual relations and risked spreading venereal disease among the troops, sabotaging the war effort. Young working-class women found themselves blamed for the moral breakdown of the community. There was a racial element to this anxiety: black American soldiers represented a fascinating and frightening sexual frontier. The war presented other challenges for Australian men; the 22,000 men taken prisoner of the Japanese were difficult to incorporate into the Anzac legend. One-third of these prisoners died while in captivity. All suffered physical and psychological torture. Photographs of their emaciated bodies posed a direct challenge to understandings of Australian, and especially Anzac, masculinity.⁴⁹

The war also provided homosexual men with increased opportunities to explore their sexuality, and Australian women were not the only ones to find American servicemen attractive. But the war brought the full consequences of censure and exposure if soldiers were discovered in a homosexual relationship.⁵⁰ In a not dissimilar way, the auxiliary services provided lesbians with the opportunity to meet and form relationships with other women, at the same time as providing circumstances whereby their activities could be more easily policed. Paradoxically, the military's anxiety about lesbian behaviour both increased public awareness and fostered a lesbian identity.⁵¹

Concerns about homosexual activity were also an expression of anxiety about heterosexual behaviour, and a desire to reinforce the expectation of

49 Christina Twomey, 'Emaciation or Emasculation? Photographic Images, White Masculinity and Captivity by the Japanese in World War Two', *Journal of Men's Studies*, 15, 3 (2007): 300.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Libby Connors et al., Australia's Frontline: Remembering the 1939–1945 War (Brisbane: UQP, 1992), pp. 146–7.

⁵⁰ Garry Wotherspoon, 'Comrades-in-Arms: World War II and Male Homosexuality in Australia', in Damousi and Lake (eds), *Gender and War*, pp. 215–18.

⁵¹ Ruth Ford, 'Lesbians and Loose Women: Female Sexuality and the Women's Services during World War II', in Damousi and Lake (eds), *Gender and War*, p. 98.

marriage and procreation. Worry over the declining birthrate continued during the war, though the birthrate had begun to increase when Australia's strategic vulnerability was dramatically exposed. In 1943, when Enid Lyons gave her maiden speech in the House of Representatives, population growth was a key theme. As a mother of eleven children, she believed she spoke with authority on the subject. Lyons was one of the two women first elected to the Commonwealth parliament, but in many ways she was not representative: most Australian women were clearly seeking to limit the number of children they bore. When the NHMRC called on women to explain why they were limiting their offspring, it received 1,400 replies. Like the 1936 report on abortion, chief among the reasons given were poverty and economic insecurity. Second came the unending round of domestic labour and the impossibility of obtaining help. As young women in the 1930s, these writers had been promised the adventure of romance and marriage. When this melted into the realities of daily life as a mother and housewife, women gave voice to their dreams of different horizons. They sought better wages, domestic help, assistance with child care, a few hours respite per week and some level of equality in the partnership of marriage.

Home is where the heart is?

'Sydney went wild' when peace was declared in 1945, according to Enid Sweetnam, a member of the Australian Women's Land Army. 'I didn't come home for three days...I walked the streets and sang, danced, talked, laughed. I just went silly.'⁵² It is tempting to characterise the war's end as a time when people eagerly resumed life at the beginning of Australia's long boom of economic prosperity and material comfort. The immediate aftermath of the war, however, was a time of uncertainty and unrest. Arrests for crimes against the person rose by 20 per cent in the two years following the war, an increase on pre-war levels that was maintained until the 1950s.⁵³ The rate of divorce also increased, as it did in Britain, France and the United States.⁵⁴ The statistics gesture towards a time of increased interpersonal conflict, and the foundation of the Marriage Guidance Council in 1948 indicates concern

⁵² Quoted in Sue Hardisty (ed.), *Thanks Girls and Goodbye: The Story of the Australian Women's Land Army 1942–45* (Melbourne: Viking O'Neil, 1990), p. 205.

⁵³ Stephen Garton, *The Cost of War: Australians Return* (Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 197.

⁵⁴ Kate Darian-Smith, 'War and Australian Society', in Joan Beaumont (ed.), Australia's War, 1939–45 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996), p. 70.

for the institution of marriage. The common image of the 1950s – 'suburbia, nuclear families, material prosperity, social stability' – was not so much the inevitable outcome of the war's end as the 'imagined solution' to the instabilities of the period.⁵⁵ This can be seen in the management of anxieties that surrounded gender and sexuality.

The circulation of advice about how men and women could return to their 'natural' roles as breadwinners and homemakers suggests doubts about their attainment. Advice literature gave guidance on the return to normal marital sexual relations, advice that betrayed concern about the continuation of the alternative sexual practices of wartime. The Melbourne psychiatrist R.S. Ellery warned that military life resulted in 'an unnatural life of repression' or 'substitute gratifications', both of which could interfere with the sexual relationship between husbands and wives.⁵⁶ There was concern, too, around diminished or damaged masculinity, seen most clearly in discussions of returning prisoners-of-war. Wounded and incapacitated men stood in direct contrast to the many women who had experienced the war as a time of independence and freedom. Magazines and newspapers of the late 1940s were filled with fictional and non-fictional accounts of these women as a threat, a 'suspicion of women' that extended beyond cultural narratives.⁵⁷

The possibility that women would be unable or unwilling to return to pre-war femininities also animated public discussion in the post-war years. Ellery warned that women in the services who had 'tasted the independence which money and position confer' might struggle to return to a life of domesticity.⁵⁸ An article in the *Australian Women's Weekly* noted that military uniforms had 'encouraged striding, abruptness and jerky mannerisms'. Women would have to relearn how to look and behave like women.⁵⁹ Despite these and other anxieties, many women happily anticipated a return to a more stable and domesticated life. One West Australian woman noted in 1944 that she was 'breaking [her] neck to get out, get married and have children'.⁶⁰ But not all welcomed that prospect.

- 55 Garton, The Cost of War, pp. 196-8.
- 56 R.S. Ellery, *Psychiatric Aspects of Modern Warfare* (Melbourne: Reed & Harris, 1945), quoted in Garton, *The Cost of War*, p. 180.
- 57 Garton, The Cost of War, pp. 191-3.
- 58 Quoted in Joy Damousi, Living with the Aftermath: Trauma, Nostalgia and Grief in Post-War Australia (Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 135.
- 59 Australian Women's Weekly, 2 February 1946, quoted in Barbara Baird, 'Now That the War Was Over: The Australian Women's Weekly in 1946', in Susan Sheridan et al., Who Was That Woman? The Australian Women's Weekly in the Postwar Years (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002), p. 18.
- 60 (Perth) Sunday Times, 1 July 1944, quoted in Gail Reekie, 'Women's Responses to War Work in Western Australia 1942–1946', Studies in Western Australian History, 7 (1983): 60.

Gender and sexuality

The home loomed large in 1950s Australia. Idealised and longed for, it became the principal site of Australia's post-war reconstruction. Domesticity shaped private lives and underpinned ideas about citizenship and community. The everyday life of the Australian woman was to be framed around her husband and children, who were to be prioritised in all but the most unusual of circumstances. As Cora Carlisle put it in *Women's Day* in 1950, 'No substitute for marriage exists to establish a girl's position in the cosmic scheme of things'.⁶¹ Among the generation of women who were the mothers of the post-war baby boom, only around 5 per cent never married.⁶²

As the war had amplified pro-natalist population policies, motherhood dominated understandings of this domesticated femininity. Although motherhood was not women's only role in the 1950s - around 30 per cent of women worked outside the home, making up almost one-quarter of the Australian workforce – motherhood was assumed to be women's priority.⁶³ But motherhood and domestic life were not embraced unquestioningly. There was discussion of the limits of domesticity, and in particular of 'suburban neurosis', the Australian version of American feminist Betty Freidan's 'problem with no name'.64 There were also some mothering roles that women did not welcome. Returned soldiers, for example, could sometimes demand the care of a mother from their wives, as one wife of a returned serviceman explained: 'I always felt that he was my eldest child. He's never [been] a husband...He needed help. I hated him.'65 And there were women whose capacity to be acceptable mothers was questioned, with often devastating implications; Indigenous and unwed mothers were particular targets, albeit in quite different ways.66

There were alternatives to motherhood. While many working-class women saw work outside the home as a necessary chore or exhausting juggle – immigrant women in particular, with little option but to work, were concentrated in low-skilled and low-paid jobs – others, particularly middle-class women, found employment outside the home interesting and

⁶¹ Quoted in John Murphy, Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000), p. 43.

⁶² Ibid., p. 21.

⁶³ Tom Sheridan and Pat Stretton, 'Mandarins, Ministers and the Bar on Married Women', *Journal of Industrial Relations*, 46, 1 (2004): 86.

⁶⁴ Murphy, Imagining the Fifties, pp. 42-7.

⁶⁵ Damousi, Living with the Aftermath, p. 117.

⁶⁶ Heather Goodall, "Assimilation Begins in the Home": The State and Aboriginal Women's Work as Mothers in New South Wales, 1900s to 1960s', *Labour History*, 69 (1995): 75–101.

satisfying.⁶⁷ For others still, work alleviated the drudgery and narrowness of domesticity in precisely the way that second-wave feminists would soon be insisting it could. The late 1950s and early 1960s also saw significant increases in the number of women in higher education in Australia – from less than 7,000 in 1955 to more than 12,000 in 1960 and 22,000 in 1965 – many of them in professional courses.⁶⁸ The increasing education of women was to be a major driver of social change in later decades.

Working women had to contend with continuing institutional impediments to their participation in the workforce. Women worked outside the home despite unequal rates of pay, the significant tax benefits afforded to single-income families, and the marriage bar in the public services and large parts of the private sector. Although female participation in the workforce grew only slightly, the proportion of married women who worked rose from 8.6 per cent in 1947 to 18.4 per cent in 1961.⁶⁹ This increase was significantly below the participation rates of married women in Britain and the United States, but it was a dramatic change nonetheless.⁷⁰ Domesticity might have been a 'powerful middle class imagining' that 'filled public space' in the 1950s, but it could not capture the entirety of women's experiences.⁷¹

The idealised masculinity of the breadwinner was just as domestically bound as that of the homemaker. As the sociologist Morven Brown put it in 1956, the Australian man is satisfied 'within the home circle. His great ambition is typically to marry, to have a family, to purchase a house, to own a car and then to settle down to enjoy life.'⁷² The difference was the perceived relationship between gender and parenthood. Whereas women's embrace of motherhood was assumed to be a seamless and natural process, men required instruction: 'the wife must take upon herself the task of making her husband into a father', as David Mace commented in *Women's Day* in 1952.⁷³ Indeed,

- 67 John Murphy and Belinda Probert, 'Never Done: The Working Mothers of the 1950s', in Patricia Grimshaw, John Murphy and Belinda Probert (eds), *Double Shift: Working Mothers and Social Change in Australia* (Melbourne: Circa, 2005), p. 143.
- 68 Alison Mackinnon and Penny Gregory, "A Study Corner in the Kitchen": Australian Graduate Women Negotiate Family, Nation and Work in the 1950s and Early 1960s', *Australian Historical Studies*, 37, 127 (2006): 74.
- 69 Sheridan and Stretton, 'Mandarins, Ministers and the Bar on Married Women', p. 86.
- 70 21.4 per cent of married women were working in Britain in 1951 and about 23 per cent in the United States in 1950; Melanie Nolan, 'The State Changing Its Mind? Australian and New Zealand Governments' Postwar Policy on Married Women's Paid Employment', in Grimshaw, Murphy and Probert (eds), *Double Shift*, p. 159.
- 71 Murphy and Probert, 'Never Done', in Double Shift, p. 150.
- 72 Morven Brown, 'Australians and Their Way of Life', Australia Today, 20 October 1956, 55, quoted in Murphy, Imagining the Fifties, p. 35.
- 73 Quoted in Murphy, Imagining the Fifties, p. 61.

the historian Mark Peel has highlighted the way the 1950s father understood the work of fatherhood to take place outside the home: it was 'the work I did so my kids wouldn't have to', as one working-class man commented.⁷⁴

Others saw limits to the breadwinning role. In men's magazines such as *Man* and *Man Junior*, marriage could be represented as an intensely unhappy state, with fatherhood only adding to its burdens.⁷⁵ The post-war years also witnessed a gradual opening up of alternative expressions of gender and sexuality, as well as the 'birth' of the 'teenager'. Whether it was at the harder edge of bodgie culture, where violence and criminal activity was a possibility, or as part of a less threatening subculture centred around rock'n'roll music, some young men and women found alternatives to lives as breadwinners and mothers. The influx of migrants from continental Europe also altered sexual cultures, prompting both interest and anxiety.⁷⁶ While the sexualisation of young people in this period was nascent in popular culture, by the beginning of the twenty-first century it had become endemic.

As in the inter-war period, marriage was to be heterosexual, procreative and monogamous. Couples were under renewed pressure to perform in the bedroom, with simultaneous orgasm during intercourse the ideal of heterosexual sex. Men were to be good lovers, responsible for women's pleasure. Women who didn't reach orgasm, and specifically vaginal orgasm, risked being classified as frigid, a reflection of the growing influence of Freud on ideas about normative sexuality. But heterosexual sex was not confined to marriage, as the rising number of ex-nuptial pregnancies during the 1950 and 1960s makes clear. Women who found themselves pregnant and unmarried typically faced familial and social ostracism, and were usually expected to relinquish their babies at birth.⁷⁷ Legitimate mothers were white and married.

For gay and lesbian people, the 1950s were a 'dark decade' of increased persecution and sharpened surveillance as the medicalisation of ideas about homosexuality solidified. Men and women who displayed same-sex desires or engaged in same-sex practices – or those who came under suspicion for doing so – were talked about and victimised. The public activities of gay men were of particular concern to police, and there was a significant increase in arrests and convictions for unnatural offences. In Victoria a squad was formed to

⁷⁴ Quoted in Mark Peel, 'A New Kind of Manhood: Remembering the 1950s', *Australian Historical Studies*, 28, 109 (1997): 152.

⁷⁵ Ross Laurie, 'Fantasy Worlds: The Depiction of Women and the Mating Game in Men's Magazines in the 1950s', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 22, 56 (1998): 116–24.

⁷⁶ Bongiorno, The Sex Lives of Australians, p. 212.

⁷⁷ Featherstone, Let's Talk about Sex, pp. 231, 244-5, 272-3.

deal with the apparent menace: 'We know there are hundreds of perverts in Melbourne and we plan to get them all'.⁷⁸ Women in same-sex spaces also aroused suspicion.⁷⁹ Graham Willet argues that although gay and lesbian lives were possible in post-war Australia, they were only possible in private.⁸⁰ Not all chose to live in secrecy: Val, who ran a coffee shop in Melbourne, 'rebelled against the dreariness of Melbourne...An Italian woman tailor made me beautiful suits which were extremely mannish but beautifully cut and in very good taste.^{'81}

Decades of change

From the introduction of the contraceptive pill in January 1961 to the federal government's Affirmative Action Act in 1986, a wave of social, cultural and legislative changes challenged normative ideas about gender and sexuality, and changed lives. Many of these changes came about as a result of individual and collective activism. Women came to the women's movement in a variety of ways: frustration with workplace inequalities, outrage at the men of the New Left, demand for new models of female desire, insistence on full control over reproduction, and engagement in universities with the history and politics of women's oppression. The list of their achievements is striking: the gradual removal of the marriage bar in employment, the achievement of equal pay (in two decisions of the Arbitration Commission in 1969 and 1972), the introduction of no-fault divorce (1975), the provision of benefits for single mothers (1973), the creation of paid maternity leave in the public service (1973), increasing attention to the need for child care, the beginnings of the decriminalisation of abortion, and the introduction of anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws (1984). This was second-wave feminism at work, a broad movement that aspired to bring about a major reformulation of women, men and society. 'We felt enormously powerful', remarked one woman involved in the establishment of the Darwin branch of the Women's Electoral Lobby in the early 1970s.82

⁷⁸ Quoted in Graham Willett, 'The Darkest Decade: Homophobia in 1950s Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, 28, 109 (1997): 128.

⁷⁹ Ruth Ford, "Filthy, Obscene and Mad": Engendering "Homophobia" in Australia, 1940s–1960s', in Shirleene Robinson (ed.), *Homophobia: An Australian History* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2008), pp. 86–112.

⁸⁰ Willett, 'The Darkest Decade'.

⁸¹ Quoted in Ford, "Filthy, Obscene and Mad"", p. 106.

⁸² Quoted in Chilla Bulbeck, Living Feminism: The Impact of the Women's Movement on Three Generations of Australian Women (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 141.

One of the most noticeable aspects of this reformulation was the way it provided women with avenues out of motherhood and domesticity. Reliable birth control and increased access to education changed women's horizons, undoing the idea that women's primary role was maternal. Women were instead to live as properly desiring subjects and full members of the workforce, with all the benefits and privileges both these roles were believed to entail. Most obviously articulated in campaigns around access to contraception, abortion and child care, this turn away from motherhood as a defining feature of femininity can be seen in many campaigns associated with the women's movement in Australia, particularly in the early 1970s. So, too, consciousness-raising groups offered some women the opportunity to examine the disappointments and limitations of marriage and the life of the wife and mother.⁸³

Not all rejected the primacy of motherhood. Indigenous women had reason to resist the women's movement's critiques of motherhood and the family. Colonisation had resulted in sustained and continuing attacks on Indigenous family life, and the forcible removal of Indigenous children involved a denigration of Indigenous motherhood that is yet to be fully redressed.⁸⁴ Some radical and lesbian feminists argued for a new form of motherhood, one removed from the world of men that would allow women to embrace their difference from men – a difference perceived as innate superiority.⁸⁵

The women's movement also provided an intense critique of men and the models of masculinity they inhabited. Men were said to be oppressing women in the home, benefitting from women's unpaid physical and sexual labour, and dominating a society they had created without reference to anyone but themselves. They had circumscribed women's lives and sought to write them out of history. Some were inadequate lovers, propagated the myth of the vaginal orgasm and maintained their dominance through actual or threatened violence. Although this critique echoed and was directly informed by feminist politics in the United States and the United Kingdom, feminist historians marked out Australian society as particularly masculinist – the historian Miriam Dixson, for example, described Australian women as 'the doormats

⁸³ Robyn Hartley and Dianne Parsons, 'Women's Liberation in Diamond Valley', in Margaret Bevege, Margaret James and Carmel Shute (eds), *Worth Her Salt: Women at Work in Australia* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1982), p. 383.

⁸⁴ Haebich, Broken Circles.

⁸⁵ Katy Reade, "Struggling to be Heard": Tensions between Different Voices in the Australian Women's Liberation Movement in the 1970s and 1980s', in Kate Pritchard Hughes (ed.), *Contemporary Australian Feminism* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1994), p. 210.

of the western world' – and sought to understand women's oppression by looking to Australia's origins.⁸⁶

The iconoclastic atmosphere of the 1970s went beyond constructions of gender: protest and activism also reformulated sexuality. As the pill gradually uncoupled sex from procreation, so the pleasures of sex became its *raison d'être*, a development that opened up space for non-normative sexual expression and gave rise to new forms of sexual identities. Campaigns for homosexual law reform gathered pace, with the public articulation of sexuality they involved enabling the remaking of homosexual identities.⁸⁷ Indeed, coming out could not help but function as a rejection of the privatised sexualities of the pre-liberation era. For a lesbian couple, Mim and Sue, coming out in the early 1970s meant 'kissing in the park, arabesques in the art gallery, pirouettes on the pavement, holding hands in the street'.⁸⁸

Amid the tumult of the new social movements and the counterculture, gay and lesbian rights campaigns quickly became more radical, particularly with the establishment of Gay Liberation. Where earlier campaigns sought to change opinions, Gay Liberation sought to change society, primarily through a reformulation of the individual. Sexuality was at the centre of these remade selves and sex the 'centrepiece' of liberation.⁸⁹ The insistence on the public assertion of homosexuality was the most significant and enduring change of this period. As early as 1978, this was something to be protected. Male homosexuality was decriminalised in South Australia (1972), the Australian Capital Territory (1976) and Victoria (1980). All other States and Territories made legislative changes in the next decade, with the exception of Tasmania, the last to decriminalise in 1997. Since only 22 per cent of surveyed Australians had supported homosexual law reform in 1967, this was a swift and substantial change.⁹⁰ Decriminalisation marked a time of increased possibilities for new and different kinds of lives - and, indeed, this is the legacy of campaigns for gay and lesbian rights in this period.

The practice of heterosexual sex was also changing, moving out of the sanctity of the marriage bed to become an accepted, even expected, aspect of de facto and some casual relationships. The pill liberated women to be

⁸⁶ Miriam Dixson, *The Real Matilda: Women and Identity in Australia 1788–1975* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1976).

⁸⁷ Robert Reynolds, From Camp to Queer: Re-making the Australian Homosexual (Melbourne University Press, 2002), p. 32.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Graham Willett, Living Out Loud: A History of Gay and Lesbian Activism in Australia (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000), p. 76.

⁸⁹ Reynolds, From Camp to Queer, pp. 74-82.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 36.

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desiring sexual subjects, although not all ethnic groups were supportive of such developments. Talk about sex, in women's magazines, newspapers and journals, proliferated and the introduction of sex education in schools diminished the ignorance and fear that had characterised the experience of sex in earlier decades.⁹¹ By the turn of the twenty-first century sexually explicit imagery had become ubiquitous, profoundly altering sexual cultures in strikingly gendered ways; in a 2003 survey 73 per cent of boys and 11 per cent of girls aged 16 to 17 years reported watching X-rated videos.⁹²

The possibilities for women were also expanding. Around 45 per cent of working-age women were in the workforce in 1980, a figure that was to increase in the decades to come.⁹³ In a development unique to Australia, the Hawke Labor government enacted legislation aimed at providing equal opportunity for women in employment. The Affirmative Action Act of 1986 required employers with more than 100 staff to create equal opportunity programs, a recognition of the impediments to equality that continue to exist even after formal legislative or regulatory changes.⁹⁴ Feminist bureaucrats entered the federal and State public sectors to develop and implement women's policies, a defining feature of Australian feminism. These 'femocrats' - women in middle and upper management positions in organisations that in the not-too-distant past had required married women to give up their employment - were instrumental in the creation of publicly funded refuges, health centres, rape crisis centres and information services for women.95 Members of the women's movement who remained outside the realms of institutional power regarded femocrats as hopelessly compromised by their association with the (patriarchal) state.⁹⁶ Conversely, anti-feminist organisations such as Women Who Want to be Women and the Women's Action Alliance sought to undo many of the legislative and policy changes femocrats had overseen as they looked for a reaffirmation of motherhood.⁹⁷

- 92 Michael Flood and Clive Hamilton, Youth and Pornography in Australia: Evidence on the Extent of Exposure and Likely Effects (Canberra: Australia Institute, 2003), p. v.
- 93 Joanna Abhayaratna and Ralph Lattimore, *Workforce Participation Rates How Does Australia Compare?* Productivity Commission Staff Working Paper (Melbourne: Productivity Commission, 2006), p. 11.
- 94 Glenda Strachan, 'Still Working for the Man? Women's Employment Experiences in Australia since 1950', Australian Journal of Social Issues, 45, I (2010): 122–3.
- 95 Marian Sawer, Sisters in Suits: Women and Public Policy in Australia (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1990).
- 96 Hester Eisenstein, *Inside Agitators: Australian Femocrats and the State* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996), pp. xv-xvi.
- 97 Irene Webley, 'The New Right and Women Who Want to Be Women in Australian Politics in the 1980s', *Hecate*, 9, 1–2 (1983): 7–24.

⁹¹ Bongiorno, The Sex Lives of Australians, pp. 233, 253.

The citizen-mother no longer filled the national imaginary. The fertility rate fell from a post-war high of 3.5 children to less than 2 in the 1980s and 1990s, while the median age of mothers rose from a post-war low of 25.4 in 1971 to a high of 30.8 in 2006.98 Over half of Australia's women were engaging in paid work outside the home, more women than men were attending universities, and there were greater numbers of women in parliaments, management positions and occupations and professions that had been the preserve of men. Yet gender remained a marker of difference in social, political and economic outcomes. In the early 1990s the Australian workforce was one of the most gender-segregated in the industrialised world: women dominated the ranks of the low-paid, part-time and casual workforces, while men continued to occupy management positions in both male and female-dominated industries.99 Women continued to do the vast majority of unpaid domestic work, in spite of increased work outside the home.¹⁰⁰ And more than 50 per cent of single parents – 80 per cent of whom were women – were living below the poverty line, contributing to what the Federal Inquiry into Equal Opportunity and Equal Status for Women in 1992 called the 'feminisation of poverty'.¹⁰¹ A survey of women's safety in 1996 found that 7 per cent of women had experienced violence in the previous 12 months and 38 per cent had experienced violence during their lives.102

Backlash

Despite entrenched inequalities, the 1990s saw a backlash. Reflecting similar developments around the western world, the women's movement was accused of failing women. The most significant of these failings was around motherhood: not only had (older) feminists unfairly derided motherhood, but the insistence on the importance of careers had robbed many women of the chance to be mothers at all. The journalist Virginia Haussegger declared in 2002 that she was childless and angry: 'Angry that I was daft enough to believe female fulfilment came with a leather briefcase'.¹⁰³ One of the

⁹⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Births, Australia (Canberra: ABS, 2010), pp. 9-14.

⁹⁹ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, Half Way to Equal: Report of the Inquiry into Equal Opportunity and Equal Status for Women in Australia (Canberra: AGPS, 1992), pp. 31–52.

¹⁰⁰ Ian Castles, *How Australians Use Their Time*, cat. no. 4153.0 (Canberra: ABS, 1994), p. 7.

¹⁰¹ Half Way to Equal, p. 90.

¹⁰² Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Women's Safety, Australia, 1996* (Canberra: ABS, 1996), pp. 4, 12.

¹⁰³ Virginia Haussegger, 'The Sins of Our Feminist Mothers', (Melbourne) Age, 23 July 2002.

women's movement's greatest achievements – 'giving women a choice about when and whether to mother' – had instead apparently become 'the basic cause of their oppression'.¹⁰⁴ Whereas the women of women's liberation had largely understood their oppressions collectively, looking for structural explanations and causes, these women's narratives of disenchantment were often intensely individual.

Such critiques ironically echoed those made from within the emerging men's movement, a term describing a variety of men's activities and activism that developed in response to the women's movement. It emerged at a time of renewed attention to men and men's issues that can be seen in public policy, but also in a move into studies of masculinity in academic scholarship. Some in the men's movement saw themselves as responding directly to feminism's questioning of men and masculinity, and sought to develop new models of feminist manhood.¹⁰⁵ Others articulated men's rights in the face of the crisis of masculinity apparently prompted by feminism.¹⁰⁶ The argument that feminism's extension of women's rights came at the expense of men was strongest in relation to the rights of fathers, many of whom felt disenfranchised following divorce. Groups such as the Abolish Child Support/Family Court Party and Dads Against Discrimination suggested a profound discomfort with the changes brought about by the women's movement. The arguments of father's rights campaigners varied. Some were 'angry white men' acting as apologists for violence against women.¹⁰⁷ Others were struggling to inhabit a newly softened version of fatherhood they felt was undermined by 'the system'.¹⁰⁸ Although the women's movement had disrupted the hegemony of men's role as breadwinning workers – by 1990 men were the sole breadwinners in only 35 per cent of couples with children¹⁰⁹ – the type of masculinities that might replace it were less than clear.

In the late 1990s some of the institutional achievements of the women's movement, and particularly of the femocrats, were dismantled: women's

104 Natasha Campo, From Superwomen to Domestic Goddesses: The Rise and Fall of Feminism (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), p. 135.

- 106 R.W. Connell, Masculinities, 2nd edn (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005).
- 107 Marian Sawer, 'EMILY's List and Angry White Men: Gender Wars in the Nineties', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 23, 62 (1999): 1–9.
- 108 Sarah Maddison, 'Private Men, Public Anger: The Men's Rights Movement in Australia', *Journal of Interdisciplinary Gender Studies*, 4, 2 (1999): 39–51.
- 109 Michael Gilding, 'Gender Roles in Contemporary Australia', in Hughes (ed.), Contemporary Australian Feminism, p. 112.

¹⁰⁵ For an example of this kind of engagement, see Michael Flood, 'Men's Groups', XY: Men, Sex, Politics, 4, 2 (1994): 27–8.

policy makers were moved out of prime ministerial and premiers' departments; impact-on-women tests of public policy and budgets were removed; the Women's Bureau, Equal Pay Unit, the Work and Family Unit and the Women's Statistics Unit were abolished; and a raft of women's organisations lost their funding, including the Women's Electoral Lobby, the Women's Emergency Services Network and the National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence.¹¹⁰ Feminists noted these changes with dismay and alarm.

Feminists' frustration was fostered in large part by a renewed emphasis on motherhood in Australian politics.¹¹¹ By 2004 both the Coalition government and the Labor Opposition supported pro-natalist policies that included cash payments for newborns, effecting a return to the maternity allowance of the early decades of the twentieth century, albeit this time through the so-called Family Tax Refund. Changes to the funding of child care and child payments brought about by the Howard government significantly benefitted stay-at-home mothers at the expense of working mothers, changes that largely remained in place under the Rudd and Gillard governments, even with the introduction of Paid Parental Leave in 2011.¹¹² Kevin Rudd's 2007 election campaign also brought with it a new appellation firmly within this mould: 'working families'.¹¹³ Some have viewed Prime Minister Julia Gillard's 2012 parliamentary speech attacking Opposition leader Tony Abbott's sexism and misogyny as the most visible indication of an undercurrent of frustration and anger at continuing gender inequalities, particularly in the workplace.¹¹⁴

Despite its many successes, the women's movement's attempt to transform gender relations has not yet come to pass. Gay and lesbian rights campaigns have moved away from the radicalism of the 1970s. Indeed, it is possible to trace a narrative of decreasing radicalism in the gay and lesbian movement in Australia from the high point of the first Mardi Gras parade in Sydney in 1978, initially conceived and enacted as a political protest. The HIV/AIDS epidemic curtailed the possibility of radical sex, questioning the promise of

- 110 Marian Sawer, 'Disappearing Tricks', Dialogue, 27, 3 (2008): 4-9.
- 111 Anne Summers, *The End of Equality: Work, Babies and Women's Choices in 21st Century Australia* (Sydney: Random House, 2003), pp. 225–56.
- 112 Ibid., pp. 142–71.
- 113 Stephanie Younane, "Working Families" and the "Opportunity Society": Political Rhetoric in the 2007 Australian Federal Election Campaign', *Communication, Politics* & Culture, 41, 2 (2008): 72–5.
- 114 Ben Eltham, 'Gillard Rides the New Wave of Femimism', New Matilda, 10 October 2012 <http://newmatilda.com/2012/10/10/gillard-rides-new-wave-feminism>, accessed 21 November 2012

sexual liberation.¹¹⁵ The increased commercialisation of the Mardi Gras led many to question the parade's political significance and potential.¹¹⁶ And the 'mainstreaming' of gay and lesbian lives and identities led some to wonder if we are approaching the 'end of gay'.¹¹⁷

If gender relations have proved more resistant to change than many hoped, the proliferation of discourses about sexuality has proved as pervasive as many feared. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, sex saturated the culture and concern over the increasing sexualisation of children animated public discussion. Fears over the incidence of child sexual abuse increased and the practice of pedophilia became a focus for sustained community anxiety and police surveillance, leading eventually to a royal commission into institutional responses to child abuse in Australia in 2012. At the same time, concerns over the sex trade in Asian women echoed the fears of feminists a century earlier about a white slave trade.

While some of the gains made by the feminist movement and those campaigning for the rights of gay, lesbian and transgendered people seem to be at risk, fundamental changes of the past century have had a dramatic impact on the daily lives of the majority of Australian men and women. The decoupling of fertility and sexuality, along with persistent campaigns to improve the conditions of women's lives and their access to the same opportunities as men, has had a profound effect on the expression and understanding of gender and sexuality. Understandings of masculinity and femininity are far more diverse than at the turn of the twentieth century and the transgression of gender norms far more acceptable, especially in highly urbanised areas. But the changes have not been felt equally. Most notably, Indigenous communities continue to experience high levels of gendered violence and disadvantage. While women have infiltrated many areas of traditional male employment, the sexual segregation of the labour market continues, with women in particular concentrated in lower paid jobs, and migrant women often the lowest paid, and most at risk of exploitation. New and different lives are both more visible and more possible, but the sweep of change can, and does, mask the everyday discriminations that remain for many.

117 Robert Reynolds, What Happened to Gay Life? (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007).

¹¹⁵ Gary W. Dowsett, Practicing Desire: Homosexual Sex in the Era of AIDS (Stanford University Press, 1996); Michael Hurley, 'AIDS Narratives, Gay Sex and the Hygienics of Innocence', Southern Review, 25, 2 (1992): 141–59.

¹¹⁶ Bridget Haire, 'Mardi Gras', in Craig Johnston and Paul van Reyk (eds), *Queer City: Gay and Lesbian Politics in Sydney* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 2001), pp. 102–4.

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The diverse twentieth-century histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people stem from the enduring legacy of the cultures of an estimated 250 separate language groups that existed at the time of British colonisation of Gadigal country in 1788.¹ Bound within the histories of colonisation of the many countries of these separate language groups (increasingly referred to as 'nations') are personal stories of survival, loss, transformation and tradition. These stories and the accounts of non-Indigenous people – transported, migrated or born locally – are drawn uncomfortably and at times tragically together in the history of the Australian nation-state.

Different laws in the States and Northern Territory created experiences particular to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people whose lands exist within them. Opportunities for wider cooperation were limited in the first half of the century by government controls over their lives, but shared experiences of segregation, denial of rights and low status worked over time to create bonds. A growing Indigenous leadership mobilised grassroots political movements that sought improved conditions, an end to inequality, and recognition of rights to land and self-determination. These movements redefined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity, politics and aspirations in the latter half of the twentieth century, reclaiming Indigenous estates along with judicial, political, cultural and economic reforms. They challenged the nation-state to confront the past and reframe the future to incorporate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as equal yet holding unique indigenous rights.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history in the twentieth century is founded in repeated assertions of difference based on millennia of culture, self-government and ownership of distinct territories. Diverse and multiple

I Gadigal country is the name for the country belonging to the people of what is now known as Botany Bay.

language groups or nations have asserted rights and responsibilities to country and collective community identity, and to negotiate with the nation-state. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this history begins with imposed ideas of protection, segregation and assimilation and transforms through political campaigns towards equality, recognition of difference and self-determination. For Australia's people as a whole, it is a history of a nation-state resistant to change and reluctant to recognise Indigenous difference in positive terms: from the 1930s Australians were challenged to concede the liberties of citizenship, and from the 1970s certain Indigenous-specific rights. In making such concessions Australians debated – and continue to debate – how best to understand their nation's colonial foundations and its obligations towards its Indigenous minority.

Systems of 'protection'

With Federation a limited number of functions were transferred from the former colonies, now States, to the Commonwealth. Indigenous administration remained a State responsibility, though when the Commonwealth took over government of the Northern Territory from South Australia in 1911 it assumed control of the Territory's Indigenous people. The Constitution did confer on the Commonwealth a power to make laws for the 'people of any race' as part of its exclusionary goal of racial purity, and therefore had to specify that this power did not apply to Indigenous people; this provision was removed in 1967. The Constitution also excluded those classified as 'Aboriginal natives' when reckoning electoral boundaries. The powerful and apparently unifying vision of a white Australia made race a 'constituent element' of the nation's founding Constitution.²

All State governments passed discriminatory laws and the consequences for Indigenous people were drastic.³ Although they were legally British subjects, Indigenous Australians were denied the fundamental rights and benefits associated with that status.⁴ In particular, most were excluded from

² Andrew Markus, 'Of Continuities and Discontinuities: Reflections on a Century of Australian Immigration Control', in Laksiri Jayasuriya, David Walker and Jan Gothard (eds), *Legacies of White Australia: Race Culture and Nation* (Perth: UWA Press, 2003), pp. 175–216.

³ John Chesterman and Brian Galligan, *Citizens Without Rights: Aborigines and Australian Citizenship* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), chs 2–3.

⁴ David Mercer, "Citizen Minus"? Indigenous Australians and the Citizenship Question', *Citizenship Studies*, 7, 4 (2003): 421–45.

the federal franchise until 1961, and became eligible for Commonwealth welfare benefits only gradually between 1940 and 1975.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, in the name of 'protecting' and 'civilising', most States introduced punitive and oppressive regimes to control Indigenous people within their borders. The benevolent rationale for protection was that it would shield surviving Indigenous populations from the destructive influences of white settlement; in practice, the policy provided the scaffolding for rigid segregation through legally mandated race barriers and containment, buttressed by local and unofficial exclusions. Protectionist legislation was passed in Queensland (1897), Western Australia (1905), New South Wales (1909), South Australia (1911) and the Northern Territory (1911).⁵ These laws enabled governments to control virtually every aspect of Indigenous people's lives, to segregate these populations from white society and, most devastating of all, to take Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from parents and communities and place them into institutional settings. Reserves, missions and residential institutions were the typical instruments of such control. Such protection cleared Indigenous people from lands desired for white settlement, while making them available as cheap labour for local employers.

The rationale for protection was the belief that the Indigenous population, greatly reduced at the turn of the century, might die out altogether. The estimated 93,000 survivors constituted a fraction of the pre-1788 population calculated at between 300,000 and over 1 million.⁶ In Queensland and Western Australia estimated numbers fell over the nineteenth century from 120,000 to 26,670 and 52,000 to 5,201 respectively.⁷ Interpretations of evolutionary theory promoted the idea of inevitable race extinction, though governments and missionaries acted as though their increased control could prevent this. Romanticised accounts penned by the amateur anthropologist Daisy Bates promoted the idea of 'dying remnants', but in remote central and northern

⁵ Anna Haebich, For Their Own Good: Aborigines and Government in the Southwest of Western Australia, 1900–1940 (Perth: UWA Press, 1988), ch. 2. For Queensland, see Rosalind Kidd, The Way We Civilize: Aboriginal Affairs – The Untold Story (Brisbane: UQP, 1997); for New South Wales, Heather Goodall, From Invasion to Embassy: Land and Aboriginal Politics in New South Wales 1770–1972 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996); and nationally, Richard Broome, Aboriginal Australians: A History since 1788, 4th edn (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2010) and Rachel Perkins and Marcia Langton (eds), First Australians: An Illustrated History (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2008), ch. 7.

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book Australia*, 1994, cat. no. 1301.0 (Canberra: ABS, 1994) and *Year Book Australia*, 2002, cat. no. 1301.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2002).

⁷ Anna Haebich, Broken Circles: Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800–2000 (Perth: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2000), p. 138.

regions, away from closer settlement, there were still strong local groups and Aboriginal people made up 80 per cent of the population in the Northern Territory. The appropriation of their lands and resources was seen as the right and duty of a higher civilisation. Such views also shaped Australia's protectionist policies, which were designed to 'smooth the pillow of a dying race', a popular and conscience-soothing euphemism for providing minimal short-term amelioration of poor living conditions.

An anxiety gnawing at the guardians of white Australia was the growing number of people of mixed Indigenous and European or Asian descent. A visible reminder of frontier sexual exploitation and brutality, they embodied the threat of a 'coloured' presence within the nation. In 1900 Archibald Meston, the Protector of Aborigines for southern Queensland, demanded 'a stop to the breeding of half-castes, a very undesirable element in any white population...among whom the LAW OF ATAVISM will assert itself in later years with unpleasant results'.8 Yet some authorities saw much promise in race mixing.9 The views expressed to the South Australian Royal Commission on the Aborigines in 1913 ranged widely, from the judgement that they were 'thrifty industrious fellows' to claims they were 'prolific but diseased'.¹⁰ Available demographic estimates suggest considerable variations between the States. In the south-west of Western Australia, 720 'half-castes' were counted in 1901 and they had increased by 65 per cent over the previous decade. In 1935 the Aborigines Department counted 2,807.11 By contrast, high infant and child mortality rates and low life expectancy dampened the increase in Victoria into the 1920s, despite high fertility.¹²

The systems of protection also varied between the States, but events in Western Australia provide insight into how protectionist laws were adopted. The major catalyst for its 1905 *Aborigines Act* was humanitarian criticism of Aboriginal employment conditions in the pastoral industry in the north, coupled with alarm about the rising numbers of children of mixed descent. A further concern was the financial commitment to Aboriginal people in the State constitution, imposed by the Colonial Office as a condition of the colony's self-government in 1890, which required it to spend $\pounds_{5,000}$

9 Haebich, Broken Circles, pp. 134-5.

- 11 Haebich, Broken Circles, p. 138; Haebich, For Their Own Good, p. 165.
- 12 Diane E. Barwick, 'Changes in the Aboriginal Population of Victoria, 1863–1966', in D.J. Mulvaney and J. Golson (eds), *Aboriginal Man and Environment in Australia* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1971), pp. 288–315.

⁸ Quoted in Raymond Evans, *Fighting Words: Writing about Race* (Brisbane: UQP, 1999), p. 132.

^{10 &#}x27;Progress Report of the Royal Commission on the Aborigines', *South Australian Parliamentary Papers*, 1913, vol. 2, pp. 13, 34.

or I per cent of revenue annually for the benefit of Aboriginal people. Amended in 1897, the relevant section of the constitution was repealed in the 1905 legislation. Accusations of slavery published in the British press in 1904 enraged the pastoral establishment, which responded by appointing the Roth Royal Commission. This action also served the purposes of the Chief Protector of Aborigines, Henry Prinsep, who had been agitating for greater powers to remove 'half-caste' children and for the administration of Aboriginal people in the State generally.¹³

Dr Walter Roth was Chief Protector of Aborigines in Queensland with eight years of experience administering the 1897 Aboriginal Protection and Restriction on the Sale of Opium Act, which would provide the blueprint for legislation in Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Roth's inquiries revealed an exploitative system whereby police arrested as many Aboriginal men as they could in order to obtain a ration subsidy and also brought in women to increase the numbers. The police kept the women for themselves, their trackers and local drovers. As scarce resources forced greater reliance on police rations, women became the hub of a survival strategy for obtaining food. In practice, the system encouraged the increased incarceration of Aboriginal men with hard labour and cash profits for the police.¹⁴ The estimated 500 'half-caste' children were a particular concern. Roth recommended that the Chief Protector be made their legal guardian with control of all institutions for their accommodation. Roth's report, issued in 1905, was damning of government policy and administration, as well as the contacts of Asian pearling crews with Aboriginal women, but surprisingly quiet on pastoralists' treatment of their workers.

The legislation that followed was a jumble of self-interest and muted humanitarian concern. It brought overlapping and contradictory polices of protection, segregation, assimilation and reform. Charged with the duty of 'protection and care' of Aboriginal people, the Aborigines Department would also provide separate welfare services and education for their children. Operating with a greatly reduced budget following the repeal of the financial clause of the State constitution, this duty of care meant little more than providing meagre rations to 'deserving' cases and enforcing the restrictive provisions of the Act.

¹³ Haebich, For Their Own Good, pp. 71–3.

¹⁴ Report of the Royal Commission on the Condition of the Natives (Perth: Government Printer, 1905).

Across Australia, protectionist legislation was able to accommodate a range of policies – protection, benign paternalism, benevolence, segregation and assimilation. Working from central city offices, white administrators operated through local protectors – superintendents, missionaries, employers and police officers. Tragically few Indigenous people could escape the system. Individuals could apply for formal exemption from the legislation but were usually refused following negative reports from local police. Exemption provided only partial rights, was conditional on 'good behaviour' and was easily revoked.

Legal definitions of 'Aboriginal', 'half-caste' and in some jurisdictions 'quarter-caste' determined who came under the legislative regime. In Western Australia these classifications provided the basis of an elaborate system of personal and family cards used for surveillance and control.¹⁵ Using gender and age, the cards created specific categories for special treatment. For example, in contrast to 'half-caste' men, women remained subject to the provisions of the 1905 Act regardless of age and maturity, affecting their choice of sexual and marriage partners and their rights over their children, and condemning many to a life of servitude and isolation in white homes or government institutions. This was typical of gendered treatment in other jurisdictions.¹⁶ Such measures against women of mixed descent were intended to limit further mixed-descent births and contrasted dramatically with pro-natalist measures to bolster white Australia. As in some other western nations in the early twentieth century, an 'unholy alliance' of government and the science of eugenics was used to manage the size and composition of the population.¹⁷

This vision of the Indigenous family as a site of danger, neglect and lack provided a strong rationale for intervention in all States, laying the basis for the 'Stolen Generations' – those children taken from their parents – despite evidence of functional mixed-descent families, some going back several generations. Many had accommodated a changing society, working for pastoralists and farmers on their traditional lands, or even owning small farms, while hunting, fishing and harvesting bush-foods. Life for all became increasingly precarious as more land was taken up for settler farming

17 Haebich, Broken Circles, p. 271.

¹⁵ Steve Kinnane and Lauren Marsh, 'Ghost Files: The Missing Files of the Department of Indigenous Affairs (DIA) Archive', in Christine Choo and Shawn Hollbach (eds), *History and Native Title*, special issue of *Studies in Western Australian History*, 23 (2003): III–27.

¹⁶ Heather Goodall, "'Saving the Children": Gender and the Colonisation of Aboriginal Children in NSW 1788–1990', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, 44, 2 (1990): 6–9.

enterprises, leaving them impoverished and vulnerable to forced removal of their children by the police. $^{\mbox{\tiny 18}}$

When white residents in rural towns objected to the presence of Aboriginal families, administrators followed a strategy of segregation identified by the historian Peter Read as the 'dispersal policy'.¹⁹ Families were segregated away from towns in government-controlled camps or dispersed off their country to fend for themselves.²⁰ They could also be removed to state institutions or collected in mission stations. In Queensland whole communities were forced into large settlements, leaving only to work under government supervision and with their wages docked. Under this system between 5 and 75 per cent of Indigenous wages were withheld by the State in trust accounts.²¹

Institutions provided the dominant technology for governing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations. These legally mandated Indigenous spaces - missions, government settlements, children's homes, native hospitals and permanent reserves - shared practices of 'punishment, protection and prevention' typical of other custodial institutions. They could deliver the wide range of services that fell under the ambit of Indigenous administrations: segregation, shelter, welfare, medical care, schooling, training and punishment.²² In Western Australia, venereal disease 'Lock Hospitals' established off the Carnarvon coast in 1907 also served to rid pastoralists of unwanted Aboriginal people from their station properties. Moola Bulla Aboriginal Pastoral Settlement (1910) in the East Kimberley was a cheap alternative to imprisonment for men convicted of killing cattle on pastoral properties and a site to train children as pastoral workers. Moore River Native Settlement (1918) in the south was to be a 'clearing house' for Nyungar families, but became a permanent institution and an overcrowded, verminous dump for all the department's problems.

- 18 For further details, see Haebich, For Their Own Good; Goodall, From Invasion to Embassy; Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Bringing Them Home: National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (Sydney: HREOC, 1997); Doreen Mellor and Anna Haebich (eds), Many Voices: Reflections on Experiences of Indigenous Child Separation (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2002).
- 19 Peter Read, "'A rape of the soul so profound": Some Reflections on the Dispersal Policy in New South Wales', *Aboriginal History*, 7 (1983): 23–33.
- 20 Anna Haebich, Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950–1970 (Perth: Fremantle Press, 2008), pp. 70–6.
- 21 Rosalind Kidd, Hard Labour, Stolen Wages: National Report on Stolen Wages (Sydney: Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation, 2007).
- 22 Alison Bashford and Carolyn Strange, 'Isolation and Exclusion in the Modern World', in Carolyn Strange and Alison Bashford (eds), *Isolation: Places and Practices of Exclusion* (London: Routledge, 2003) pp. 2, 6–7, 9.

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In north Queensland, the Palm Island archipelago off the Townsville coast was used to imprison 'troublemakers' from around the State, with one island set aside for Indigenous people with leprosy and sexually transmitted diseases. At Kinchela Boys Home in New South Wales, boys were to be educated and trained for work in isolation from their families, but spent long hours doing jobs and menial tasks, leaving most unskilled and unemployed as adults.²³

Indigenous political movements to the 1938 Day of Mourning

An unintended consequence of these laws and policies was the creation of Aboriginal political movements across the southern States: the Australian Aboriginal Progressive Association (AAPA) formed in 1924 in New South Wales; the Australian Aborigines' League (AAL) created in 1933 in Victoria; and the Aborigines' Progressive Association (APA) formed in 1937 in New South Wales. Two organisations were established in Western Australia: the Native Union in 1926 and the Euralian Association in 1932. Often beginning on reserves or within mission settlements and stations, these were mostly grassroots political organisations formed by respected community leaders with the core aim of securing equal rights with other Australians. Most operated with elected members, office bearers and constitutions.²⁴ They took up particular issues concerning the state regimes that controlled their lives as well as shared concerns, including the removal of Aboriginal children, provision of lands for community development, repeal of discriminatory laws and the right to vote.

The AAL promoted itself as representing Aboriginal Australians nationally and endeavoured to contact other Aboriginal groups; it was aligned with trade unions and missionary groups, held regular public meetings, raised funds and lobbied State governments. The AAL also lobbied the

²³ For the Lock Hospital, see Mary-Anne Jebb, 'Isolating the Problem: Venereal Disease and Aborigines in Western Australia 1898–1924', MA thesis, Murdoch University, 1987; for Moola Bulla, see Henry Achoo, *Moola Bulla: In the Shadow of the Mountain* (Broome, WA: Kimberley Language Resource Centre Broome and Magabala Books, 1996); for Moore River, see Haebich, *For Their Own Good*, ch. 6; for Palm Island, see Joanne Watson, *Palm Island: Through a Long Lens* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2010).

²⁴ Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus (eds), *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights: A Documentary History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1999), pp. 10–11; Haebich, *For Their Own Good*, p. 269.

Commonwealth to ensure better treatment for remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory and for Commonwealth control of Aboriginal Affairs to overcome the worst elements of parochial State regimes.²⁵

In most instances the authorities rejected the protests of these organisations and their goals for reform. In Western Australia the Native Union, made up of Aboriginal men from key Nyungar families in the south, sent letters of protest to the Aborigines Department, the newspapers and the premier, and the 1928 delegation that William Harris led to the Labor premier, Philip Collier, was the first of its kind there. The main target was the restrictive 1905 Aborigines Act and the discriminatory powers of A.O. Neville, Chief Protector from 1915 to 1940. The Moseley Royal Commission of 1934 heard desperate protests from around the State. William Harris claimed he was 'a prisoner in his own country...In many cases death alone ends our term of duress.²⁶ In a ten-page letter, an anonymous group of women from Broome highlighted injustices ranging from the cruel loss of their children and refusal of permission to marry the men they loved to police demands for their sexual favours. They wrote that 'many of us have our own house and land...we pay rates' and demanded to be released from the 'stigma' of being 'kept in bondage by the Act'.²⁷ White supporters such as the feminist Mary Montgomerie Bennett, with her catchcry condemning the 'official smashing up of Aboriginal family life', drew on the League of Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child (endorsed by the Australian government in 1925) to attack child removals and the 1925 Slavery Convention to condemn treatment of Aboriginal women workers.²⁸

The Western Australian government rejected these calls for freedom and instead followed the advice of Chief Protector Neville by adopting a eugenics-based policy of biological absorption. The 1936 *Native Administration Act*, which resulted from the recommendations of the 1934 Moseley Royal Commission, expanded the range of children who could be removed and enabled the State to arrange marriages to ensure progressively lighter 'castes'. An analysis of Australian indifference to Indigenous rights, issues and inclusion has found that the distinctiveness of the inter-war absorptionist policies of the 1930s lay in their 'attempted systematisation':

²⁵ Attwood and Markus (eds), The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights, p. 12.

^{26 &#}x27;Evidence before the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Affairs, 1934', p. 225, transcript in Western Australian State Parliamentary Library.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Anna Haebich, 'Forgetting Indigenous Histories: Cases from the History of the Stolen Generations', *Journal of Social History*, 44, 4 (2011): 1033–46.

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Instead of merely removing fair-complexioned, mixed-descent children from their families as they happened to appear, officials would actively intervene to promote the reproduction of increasingly fair-skinned individuals.²⁹

The policy was supported nationally at the first Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities in Canberra in 1937, but its implementation was pronounced in Western Australia and the Northern Territory. The conference resolved that 'the destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin, but not the full-blood lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth and it therefore recommends that all efforts be directed to that end'. Although details of administration were left to the States, there was to be 'uniformity of legislation as far as possible'.³⁰

While white experts met in Canberra to decide their fate, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders worked within their communities to overcome the disadvantage of repressive legislation, regressive policy and authoritarian administrators. William Revel Cooper was born in the Yorta Yorta country of the Murray–Goulburn region in 1862, and helped form the AAL in Melbourne in 1933. By 1937 he had obtained 2,000 signatures for a petition to the King seeking intervention to enable Aboriginal representation in parliament.³¹ Cooper wrote to Prime Minister Lyons responding to the outcomes of the 1937 Conference:

From our point of view, the conference was only a waste of time. We did not expect a Magna Carta from the Premier's Conference but from the Conference of Chief Protectors we only got the confirmation of our humiliation.³²

The petition never reached the King.

Cooper and the AAL also wrote to the heads of State Aboriginal authorities complaining of the laws operating within their jurisdictions and drawing their attention to the work of the AAL. In 1938 the AAL and APA joined forces to call on Indigenous people throughout Australia to 'observe a DAY

- 30 Aboriginal Welfare: Initial Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities Held at Canberra, 21st to 23rd April 1937 (Canberra: Commonwealth Printer, 1937), p. 2.
- 31 Wayne Atkinson, 'The Schools of Human Experience', in Perkins and Langton (eds), The First Australians, pp. 291–304.
- 32 Bain Attwood and Andrew Markus, *Thinking Black: William Cooper and the Australian Aborigines' League* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2004), p. 81.

²⁹ Russell McGregor, Indifferent Inclusion: Aboriginal People and the Australian Nation (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2011), p. 3.

OF MOURNING concurrently with the white man's DAY OF REJOICING to celebrate the 150th year of the coming of the white man to Australia³³. This action brought together Koori leaders of the south-east of Australia including Cooper, William Ferguson, Jack Patten, Fred Maynard and Pearl Gibbs. The National Day of Mourning was launched on 26 January 1938 with a proclamation:

We, representing THE ABORIGINES OF AUSTRALIA, assembled in Conference at the Australian Hall, Sydney, on the 26th day of January, 1938, this being the 150th Anniversary of the white man's seizure of our country, HEREBY MAKE PROTEST against the callous treatment of our people by whitemen during the past 150 years, AND WE APPEAL to the Australian Nation of today to make new laws for the education and care of Aborigines, and we ask for a new policy which will raise our people to FULL CITIZEN STATUS and EQUALITY WITHIN THE COMMUNITY.³⁴

This event marked the beginning of a national Indigenous consciousness that would inspire culturally diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, bound under similar State controls, to unite in a shared vision of freedom and equality.

Tensions between assimilation and citizenship rights

Indigenous leaders pursued equality through a campaign for citizenship rights, but there was also a desire for recognition of rights to diverse cultures, land, reparation for discriminatory treatment and advancement of living conditions. For most non-Indigenous Australians during the 1950s, equality came to mean assimilation, or the removal of difference to secure national unity and harmony. Returned Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen, motivated by their often positive experiences of mixing with Australian and American servicemen while fighting to defend democracy, sought secure legal entitlement to the equality that some had experienced in war, expressed by many at the time as the 'right to drink' in hotels with their soldier mates.³⁵

³³ Quoted in Atkinson, 'The Schools of Human Experience', pp. 307, 310.

³⁴ J.T. Patten and W. Ferguson, Australian Aborigines Conference: Sesqui-centenary Day of Mourning and Protest (Sydney: Aboriginal Progressive Association, 1938), handbill.

³⁵ Peter Biskup, Not Slaves, Not Citizens: The Aboriginal Problem in Western Australia, 1898– 1954 (Brisbane: UQP, 1973), p. 206.

The cherished ideals of a white Australia came under the scrutiny of new international standards set by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. This became a key point of contention for Australia's Indigenous people as leaders mobilised campaigns for equality in the post– World War 2 era. There was agreement on the need for recognition of equality within the context of individual universal human rights, yet the issue of Indigenous difference based in collective rights and responsibilities to land and cultural governance would remain a sticking point.

Government sensitivity to the new climate forced it to act and the international stakes were too high for action to be left to the States. There was also an ambitious federal Minister for Territories from 1951 to 1963, Paul Hasluck, who had taken an interest in Aboriginal disadvantage as a journalist in Perth during the 1930s and gained knowledge of human rights through his role as a diplomat at the United Nations in the 1940s. Burdened with its policy of white Australia and discriminatory legislation, the Australian government faced humiliating charges of racism and even genocide, including condemnation by the Soviet Union, China and decolonising states in Africa and Asia.³⁶ There was also criticism at home from a public swept up in the new humanitarianism.

Assimilation has a complex genealogy as a global ideology and strategy of nationhood that has played a vital role in the formation of settler societies. In mid-twentieth century Australia it provided a powerful vision of a modern, prosperous nation united by culture rather than race, its citizens participating as equals in the Australian way of life. Wary voters were promised that these changes could be achieved within the parameters of a modified white Australia that would not threaten the status quo. Government policies of assimilation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and immigrant families into mainstream society and culture were publicised to reassure the public.

Through a unilinear process of cultural and structural uniformity, assimilation would, in theory, set in train the absorption of Indigenous people into the nation as equal citizens. The mechanism for achieving assimilation seemed quite straightforward: the repeal of all discriminatory laws and practices; the granting of equal rights and responsibilities; improved living conditions for families through proper housing, schooling and employment; and access to all mainstream State and Commonwealth services and benefits. These were considered readily achievable goals given that the

36 Haebich, Spinning the Dream, pp. 35-6

nation's estimated Indigenous population in the 1950s was only 75,000.³⁷ In short, Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander people would acquire 'the political, legal and social rights that are integral to a person's membership of a political community'.³⁸ The official expectation was that Indigenous Australians would abandon their diverse cultures for 'the Australian way of life', settling as nuclear families in the suburbs of the nation's cities and towns. This was spelled out in the Commonwealth government's 1961 definition of assimilation, which stated that 'all aborigines and part-aborigines are expected to eventually attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians'.³⁹ Such a policy favoured the Aboriginal movement's goals for equal citizenship, but diverged from repeated Indigenous assertions of diversity and difference.

Hasluck, who negotiated the 1961 definition of assimilation with State leaders, sought to transform the Northern Territory into an assimilation showpiece. The government also issued pamphlets and films representing Aboriginal people leaving an apparent Stone Age behind to settle as suburban families. These artefacts were riddled with racialist sentiments that escaped the attention of their creators but not sophisticated international readers, and caused considerable embarrassment in diplomatic circles. At home they contributed to public awareness, if not always acceptance, of the goals of assimilation and, ironically, to a growing fascination with the contrast of ancient and modern Australia represented in popular magazines and news-reels and in works by visual and performing artists. Government publicity and public ignorance covered over the gap between assimilation's promises and lived reality.⁴⁰

Despite Hasluck's efforts to provide national leadership, the States pursued their own objectives – in part because they were unwilling or unable to invest sufficient money or effort for change. New South Wales had moved to assimilation in 1938, while Western Australia followed in 1949 and recalcitrant Queensland, committed to segregated settlements, prevaricated into the late 1970s. Indigenous people responded in various ways to the rhetoric and

- 38 John Chesterman, Civil Rights: How Indigenous Australians Won Formal Equality (Brisbane: UQP, 2005), p. 37.
- 39 Cited in Haebich, Spinning the Dream, p. 80.
- 40 Ibid., ch. 3.

³⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book Australia, 1994*, cat. no. 1301.0 (Canberra: ABS, 1994).

practice of assimilation. Some resisted it as another attack on a distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity. Grasping at an opportunity to be free of prejudice and controls, a small number sought to deny their Indigenous ancestry by laying claims to other ethnic identities, or passing for white. The majority response was to engage at some level in the process of assimilation and advocate its promised benefits without surrendering their Indigenous identity. Central to this response was a strategy of harnessing the rhetoric of assimilation in order to achieve Indigenous aspirations for improved health, education and employment and to secure the same democratic rights as other citizens, while retaining distinctive identities as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

Assimilation to self-determination to self-management

Moving beyond assimilation proved to be an incremental and conflicted process. While many of the earlier Indigenous-controlled community organisations were successful, they also encouraged and accepted help from the wider society. Religious bodies, trade unions and other organisations formed groups in the post-war period with the intention of achieving equal rights and treatment for Indigenous Australians. Other progressive organisations took up the cause. The Australian Communist Party, with its 'plank of complete economic and legal equality for aborigines', mobilised support for the pastoral strike in the Pilbara region in 1946.⁴¹

The Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement (FCAA) emerged as the most prominent of these advocacy groups. Instigated in 1958 following discussions between the Aboriginal Advancement Leagues of South Australia and Victoria, it became the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI) in 1964. The membership comprised unions, church organisations, the Communist Party, philanthropic bodies and a minority but growing Indigenous representation. They shared the belief that 'Aboriginal legal, economic, and social equality, guaranteed by statute and accepted by Europeans, was the touchstone of a just society'.⁴² Aboriginal delegates to the February 1958 meeting included Jeff Barnes of South Australia, Pastor Doug Nicholls of Victoria and Bert Groves of New

⁴¹ Biskup, Not Slaves, Not Citizens, p 211.

⁴² Peter Read, 'Cheeky, Insolent and Anti-White: The Split in the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders – Easter 1970', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 36, 1 (1990): 74.

South Wales.⁴³ Although Indigenous people argued within FCAATSI for the right to choose their own language, culture and community, the principal objective remained civil rights.⁴⁴ Non-Indigenous support was considered essential to creating the momentum necessary to sway the broader community to support the cause.

The 1960s saw strikes, protests and walk-offs that used media interest to capture public opinion. In 1965 an eloquent and passionate Arrente/ Kalkadoon law student, Charles Perkins, ignited national attention as president of a group of students at the University of Sydney who undertook a 'Freedom Ride' through rural New South Wales.⁴⁵ By protesting against segregation in country towns, the Freedom Riders exposed the reality of outback conditions. Their action also increased contact between participants drawn from the student movement and rural Aboriginal people keen to begin political action.⁴⁶

National attention was also drawn to the Gurindji walk-off from Wave Hill pastoral station. Located approximately 600 kilometres south of Darwin in the Northern Territory, the Wave Hill pastoral lease occupied the lands of the Gurindji people, who were employed to work the property by Vesteys, a British cattle company. In 1966 the Arbitration Commission awarded Aboriginal stockmen equal pay with their white counterparts, but delayed implementation of the decision until the end of 1968. In protest, the Gurindji elder and spokesman, Vincent Lingiari, led 200 Aboriginal stockmen, women and families off the Wave Hill station. The protesters camped at Wattie Creek, where they petitioned the governor-general for return of traditional lands, and leaders travelled around Australia to raise awareness of their cause.⁴⁷ The Gurindji strike became a call for land rights, expressed in the petition as the 'desire to regain tenure of our tribal lands in the Wave Hill–Limbunya area of the Northern Territory, of which we were dispossessed in time past, and for which we received no recompense'.⁴⁸

A growing awareness of disadvantage forced the federal government to accede to demands for amendments to the Constitution that would allow the Commonwealth to make laws for Indigenous people. A referendum in

- 44 Sue Taffe, Black and White Together. FCAATSI: The Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders 1958–1973 (Brisbane: UQP, 2005).
- 45 Peter Read, Charles Perkins: A Biography (Melbourne: Viking, 1990).
- 46 Attwood and Markus (eds), The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights, p 172; Ann Curthoys, Freedom Ride: A Freedom Rider Remembers (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2002).
- 47 Attwood and Markus (eds), The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights, p. 20.
- 48 Gurindji Petition to the Governor General, March 1967, in ibid., p. 224.

⁴³ *'Smoke Signals*, October 1959. The AAL and Integration', in Attwood and Markus (eds), *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights*, p. 176.

1967 secured support from 90.7 per cent of Australian voters. This success persuaded many white Australians that the 'Aboriginal problem' had been solved, but younger, urban Indigenous people held that 'equality with whites was no longer an aim, but a stepping stone'.⁴⁹ A new generation of leaders was campaigning for Indigenous rights. They were influenced by the more assertive demands and tactics adopted by African Americans in the 1960s. A 1969 visit to Australia by Dr Roosevelt Brown, an organiser of the Black Power conference in Bermuda that year, ignited younger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activists. Tired of slowly shepherding Australia into acceptance, they challenged FCAATSI to throw off the tutelage of non-Indigenous members, even those who had been long-time supporters, in the name of self-determination.

While younger leaders such as the Murri community leader, Denis Walker, advocated meeting violence with violence in the name of self-defence, an increasingly influential Charles Perkins argued for peaceful use of Black Power as the only way to overcome Australia's 'ignorant, pathetic, complacent population whose middle class and vested interests – political and economic – have combined to keep it so'.⁵⁰ His comments reflected frustration that the euphoria of 1967 had not achieved expected improvements – since the Coalition government of Harold Holt did not use its new power to override discriminatory State practices – and signalled the coming years of intense local and national political campaigns. Tensions were increased by a boom in resource extraction in Australia, which drew attention to the lack of recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights to land.

Incursions by the mining industry precipitated action in the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory by the Yolngu people of Gove Peninsula in Arnhem Land against the Nabalco mining company and the Commonwealth government, claiming ownership of the lands leased to Nabalco by the Commonwealth. The Yolngu people had already prepared two bark petitions in 1963 protesting against Nabalco's proposal to mine bauxite on their lands.⁵¹ These petitions, 'with their painted designs of the ancestral narratives of the creation of the Yolngu clans, languages and land and sea estates, and text in both English and Gumatj languages', were a striking contrast to conventional

⁴⁹ Read, 'Cheeky, Insolent and Anti-White' p. 74.

⁵⁰ Margaret Ann Franklin, *Black and White Australians* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1976), p. 203.

⁵¹ Marcia Langton and Noel Loos, 'The Dawn Is at Hand', in Perkins and Langton (eds), The First Australians, p. 349; J. Gardiner-Garden, 'Aboriginality and Aboriginal Rights in Australia', in Mabo Papers (Canberra: Parliamentary Research Service, 1994), pp. 19–23.

forms of protest.⁵² After their representations were denied, the Yolngu brought the case in 1969 asserting their continuing ownership of traditional lands by challenging the Commonwealth's right to grant mining leases over their territory.⁵³

In 1971 Justice Blackburn ruled against the Yolngu and in favour of the Commonwealth government and Nabalco, finding that while the Yolngu had established systems of law and a spiritual connection with the land, this did not constitute collective rights in, or ownership of the land, in common law.⁵⁴ The Yolngu responded that 'the Australian Law has said that the land is not ours. This is not so. It might be right legally but morally it's wrong.'⁵⁵ The controversial Blackburn judgment, which upheld the notion of *terra nullius* – a land belonging to no-one – became the catalyst for transformation of Indigenous political movements seeking economic, political, cultural heritage and land justice. Their struggle fused urban, rural and remote people in a fight for land rights, and gave birth to Black Power.⁵⁶

On the morning of 27 January 1972 Aboriginal protestors gathered and erected tents on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra: this was the Aboriginal Tent Embassy. Spearheaded by three Koori men, Billy Craigie, Michael Anderson and Tony Coorie, members of the Redfern group of mostly young Indigenous leaders, this was a response to statements by the prime minister, William McMahon, which rejected the principle of land rights.⁵⁷ The Tent Embassy symbolised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remained 'stateless' within the Australian nation while their land rights were denied. Land rights might have been the rallying point, and rejection of the Yolngu claim the catalyst, but the central issue was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination. The Aboriginal Tent Embassy became a focal point for disenchantment with non-Indigenous political institutions. Originally using the black, green and red flag of pan-African movements, the Tent Embassy later adopted the Aboriginal flag of red, black

⁵² Langton and Loos, 'The Dawn Is at Hand,' p. 349.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 350.

⁵⁴ Treaty: Let's Get It Right! (Canberra: ATSIC, 2001), p. 3.

⁵⁵ Yolngu Statement to the Prime Minister, 6 May 1971, quoted in Attwood and Markus (eds), *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights*, p. 236.

⁵⁶ Gary Foley, 'Black Power in Redfern, 1968–1972', The Koori History Website, 5 October 2001 http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/essays/essay_1.html, accessed 20 November 2012.

⁵⁷ Scott Robinson, 'The Aboriginal Embassy: An Account of the Protests of 1972', in Valerie Chapman and Peter Read (eds), *Terrible Hard Biscuits: A Reader in Aboriginal History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996), p. 242.

and gold created by the Luritja artist Harold Thomas for the 1971 National Aboriginal and Islander Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC).⁵⁸

Among those who visited the Tent Embassy was the leader of the Labor Party, Gough Whitlam, who was elected prime minister at the end of 1972. In the following year he announced his government's policy 'to restore to the Aboriginal people of Australia their lost power of self-determination in economic, social and political affairs'.⁵⁹ A National Aboriginal Consultative Committee was established to provide an advisory Indigenous voice in national policy and a range of service organisations were created to improve health, housing and living conditions. Mainly through the new Department of Aboriginal Affairs, expenditure on Indigenous services rose dramatically from \$23 million in 1971–72 to \$141 million in 1975–76. These initiatives had mixed results and the Department was accused of imposing culturally inappropriate controls on Indigenous service delivery. Having achieved recognition and some form of integration into government processes, Indigenous activists discovered the tension of working within the system while attempting to represent communities that felt alienated from that same system. The Whitlam government expected that community-controlled organisations would promote development and employment, but its declared policy of self-determination remained a distant goal.

The centrepiece of the Whitlam government's Aboriginal affairs policy was the 1973 inquiry into land rights headed by Edward Woodward, who had previously represented the Yolngu in the Gove case and was now asked to advise on how to legislate land rights in the Northern Territory. After six months of consultation he recommended a mechanism for the transfer of Aboriginal reserves and vacant crown lands to the control of land councils, with rights to royalties from mining companies. The Whitlam government introduced a land rights bill in June 1975, but it had not passed through both Houses before the November 1975 dismissal. The Fraser government, after revising the bill to narrow the grounds for land claims, completed the passage of the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* in 1976. The legislation was restricted to the Northern Territory, where the Commonwealth had administrative responsibility, since neither Whitlam nor Fraser was prepared to impose land rights on the States. Several States passed their own land rights laws, although Premier

⁵⁸ Coral Dow, Aboriginal Tent Embassy: Icon or Eyesore? (Canberra: Parliamentary Library, 2000), p. 3.

⁵⁹ Statement to Aboriginal Affairs Council, 6 April 1973, quoted in Lorna Lippman, 'The Aborigines', in Allan Patience and Brian Head (eds), *From Whitlam to Fraser: Reform and Reaction in Australian Politics* (Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 174.

Joh Bjelke-Petersen in Queensland took preventive action in 1982 to abolish all Aboriginal reserves by legislating that they were shires subject to State powers over local government. Western Australia also opposed Aboriginal land rights. Tensions there were exacerbated by Premier Charles Court's decision to allow drilling for oil on Noonkanbah Station. The Yungnora Aboriginal traditional owners and leaseholders objected that the planned site was sacred and drilling a violation of their law. In 1980 the premier took the unprecedented step of sending a convoy of 50 trucks under police escort to the site. Despite Indigenous protests on national television and union bans, the drilling went ahead but found no oil. The failure of the Commonwealth to bring land rights to the States contributed to the movement in favour of a treaty.⁶⁰

The Fraser government changed its predecessor's policy of selfdetermination to self-management, implying that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would have more say in running their communities within a framework laid down by government. In 1977 the government replaced the earlier Consultative Committee with an elected but still only advisory National Aboriginal Conference (NAC) and in 1980 it created the Aboriginal Development Commission, headed by Charles Perkins, to promote Indigenous enterprise and home ownership with grants and favourable loans. A Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) scheme was established in 1977; it enabled members of a community to pool their unemployment benefits into a wage fund, and it funded capital and administration, enabling community organisations to undertake what they considered to be projects of 'useful employment'.61 CDEP became a vital element in the survival of many remote and rural as well as urban Indigenous communities. When such projects could be implemented in conjunction with a thriving customary economy, or with clear engagement with the mainstream economy, CDEP became a locally controlled form of self-determination. But many in government expected CDEP to be a pathway to education, training and employment in the mainstream economy. To the extent that CDEP did not serve as this 'mainstreaming' pathway and was used to serve a less orthodox economy and culture, it was criticised for contributing to 'welfare dependency'.62

⁶⁰ Quentin Beresford, *Rob Riley: An Aboriginal Leader's Quest for Justice* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006), p. 116.

⁶¹ Tim Rowse, Indigenous Futures: Choice and Development for Aboriginal and Islander Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002), pp. 65–6.

⁶² Robert Riley, 'Aboriginal Self-Determination: Can State Laws Cope?', in Christine Fletcher (ed.), *Aboriginal Self-Determination in Australia* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1994), p. 172.

In 1979 the annual conference of the NAC called on the government to enter into negotiations for a treaty with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and shortly afterwards the Aboriginal Tent Embassy was re-established. The NAC adopted the Yolngu word 'Makaratta', meaning coming together after dispute, and in 1980 proposed that it encompass recognition of prior Indigenous ownership, restitution of land rights and incorporation of Indigenous culture. While prepared to enter into negotiations, the Fraser government indicated that it would not accept a treaty because of its connotations of sovereignty and would not override the States. Speaking for the new Federation of Aboriginal Land Councils, Yawuru leader Patrick Dodson said in 1982 that there could be no agreement between Indigenous Australians and white Australians until the Commonwealth government 'comes to terms with the fact that we are a sovereign people, not a subjugated people'.⁶³

Upon its election to office in 1983, the Labor government led by Bob Hawke sought to make a new start. It proposed to introduce national land rights legislation, but gave way in the face of a campaign conducted publicly by the mining industry and behind the scenes by the Labor government of Western Australia. The Hawke government argued that opinion polls some commissioned by the government - revealed a lack of public support for land rights. Dissatisfied with the NAC on the grounds that it was merely an advisory body, the government canvassed opinion in designing an elected Indigenous commission that would control the funding of certain programs. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was legislated in 1989. Some saw it as an embryonic form of Indigenous parliament.⁶⁴ But while ATSIC absorbed the functions of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Aboriginal Development Corporation, it remained subject to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, and it did not control all Commonwealth programs (such as health, after 1995) that were relevant to Indigenous Australians. A number of inquiries during the 1980s into Indigenous education, deaths in custody and the legacy of nuclear testing at Maralinga increased awareness of past and present disadvantage. Although the Labor platform committed the party to pursue a treaty, the government gave it little attention until the prospect of protest during the 1988 Bicentenary of the First Fleet's arrival. In June of that year the prime minister gave an undertaking at the Barunga Festival in the Northern

⁶³ Aboriginal Treaty News, 4 (February 1982): 1.

⁶⁴ Beresford, Rob Riley, p. 215.

Territory that the government would begin negotiations. In 1991, following a recommendation by the royal commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody (1988–91), the government established a Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation to commence consultations for an agreement. ⁶⁵

The Barunga sports and cultural festival was part of an upsurge in Indigenous activity. There had been accomplished Indigenous sportspeople (Doug Nicholls played Australian rules football at the highest level and Charles Perkins was a professional soccer player in England), but it was in this period that they achieved recognition. Lionel Rose won the world bantamweight boxing title in 1968, Evonne Goolagong the women's tennis championship at Wimbledon in 1971, and from the 1970s Indigenous people became prominent in all codes of football. Indigenous artists attracted increasing attention, along with similar developments in music, theatre, dance and literature. The growing non-Indigenous appreciation of Indigenous culture sat uneasily alongside the continuing disadvantage in living conditions and life chances.

Moving between calls for autonomy and the unresponsive government policies, Indigenous governance remained a point of contention throughout this period. The failure of government to work with Indigenous leadership caused a shift towards alternative forms of organisation and representation. Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s Aboriginal Land Councils represented traditional owners in their struggle for recognition of land rights. The Land Councils in the Northern Territory had been established in parallel with the Commonwealth land rights legislation, and worked within an evolving framework of accountability to traditional owners and government. Along with similar Land Councils in the States, they were embattled as they sought to represent the interests of the community while working within a complex array of heritage legislation, land tenure regimes and land management authorities. At the same time a small group of Torres Strait Islander traditional owners sought recognition of their common law rights to lands and waters through the courts; their action would result in a judgment that for the first time recognised native title in Australia.

Mabo and the removal of the fiction of terra nullius

Eddie Koiki Mabo was born in 1936 on the island of Mer, one of the Murray Islands in the Torres Strait, and moved as a young man between the islands and the Queensland coastal city of Townsville. As a community leader, traditional

⁶⁵ The Barunga Statement, 12 June 1988, in Attwood and Markus (eds), *The Struggle for Aboriginal Rights*, pp. 316–17.

owner and activist, he joined with the Meriam leaders David Passi and James Rice to seek native title rights for the Mer Islanders. Following a ten-year battle in the courts, in 1992 the High Court of Australia ruled in their favour, finding that 'the Meriam people were entitled as against the whole world to the possession, occupation, use and enjoyment' of their island. Justice Brennan stated that

The common law of this country would perpetuate an injustice if it were to continue to embrace the enlarged notion of *terra nullius* and to persist in characterising the indigenous inhabitants of the Australian colonies as people too low in the scale of social organisation to be acknowledged as possessing rights and interests in land.⁶⁶

Tragically, Eddie Mabo died of cancer six months before this judgment was handed down.

The *Mabo* decision required a legislative response from the Australian government since the doctrine of 'native title' applied all over Australia. Wherever governments had not lawfully extinguished native title (and from 1975, this had to include paying compensation), it was open to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to assert their rights of possession. In 1992 no-one was sure where this applied, and a clarification of rights was needed to restore certainty to Australia's laws of real property. This codification of native title (the *Native Title Act* of 1993) was negotiated between the Commonwealth and the States, and between the Commonwealth and a representative team of Indigenous negotiators. In dealing with the Indigenous interest, the Keating government also undertook to provide a 'social justice package' to redress past acts of dispossession, including a land acquisition fund (created in 1995).

Before the negotiations over native title commenced, in launching Australia's celebration of the United Nations Year of Indigenous Peoples on 10 December 1992 the prime minister, Paul Keating, had delivered a speech in Redfern Park, Sydney, to a predominantly Aboriginal audience. He had stated that the government would only support legislation that respected the *Mabo* decision as an 'historic turning point' and provided the basis 'for a new relationship between indigenous and non-Aboriginal Australians'. That relationship must be founded on active recognition that the problem began with 'we non-Aboriginal Australians':

We took the traditional lands and smashed the traditional way of life. We brought the disasters. The alcohol. We committed the murders. We took the

^{66 (1992) 175} Commonwealth Law Reports 1 at 58, cited in Native Title, 10 years (Perth: National Native Title Tribunal, 2002).

children from their mothers. We practised discrimination and exclusion. It was our ignorance and our prejudice.⁶⁷

Praised for that declaration, the Keating government was fortified to resist the intense pressure from mining and pastoral interests, and from the Opposition, to extinguish native title. Indigenous leaders met at the Eva Valley station in the Northern Territory in August 1993 to formulate their position, but they were faced down by a government that had entered into agreement with the States to limit the impact of native title on resource industries. The legislation not only validated prior dispossession but also imposed narrow limits on the valid bases of future native title claims. A Native Title Tribunal was established to hear those claims.

In a further case brought by the Wik people of Queensland, the High Court found in 1996 that the granting of a pastoral lease did not fully extinguish native title: it was possible for native title and pastoral rights to coexist. Most pastoralists feared coexistence and the *Wik* decision brought a storm of criticism as vitriolic as that directed at the High Court after *Mabo*. By this time the Howard government had won office and the prime minister promised to amend the *Native Title Act* to protect pastoralists and others who claimed their interests were threatened. Lacking a majority in the Senate, the government had to abandon some of the more draconian provisions of its legislation.⁶⁸

Long before he became prime minister, John Howard indicated his lack of sympathy for Indigenous rights on the grounds that all Australians should be treated alike. There was nothing new in his reluctance to acknowledge the troubling foundations of the nation-state and the lasting effects of dispossession, but after two decades in which this legacy became apparent his resistance took on an abrasive stridency. He refused to apologise to the Stolen Generations – a recommendation by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) in 1997 – and his government contested HREOC's findings. He urged that Australians 'not join those who would portray Australia's history since 1788 as little more than a disgraceful record of imperialism, exploitation and racism'. Participants in a convention held by the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation turned their backs on Howard when he addressed them.⁶⁹ His

⁶⁷ Mark Ryan (ed.), Advancing Australia: The Speeches of Paul Keating, Prime Minister (Sydney: Big Picture Publications, 1995), p. 228.

⁶⁸ Lisa Strelein, *Compromised Jurisprudence: Native Title Cases since Mabo* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006), p. 7.

⁶⁹ Paul Kelly, The March of Patriots: The Struggle for Modern Australia (Melbourne University Press, 2009), p. 355.

government advanced the notion of 'practical reconciliation' in place of what it dismissed as 'symbolic reconciliation'. The Indigenous leadership insisted that both were necessary. The Howard government, with Opposition support, struck a blow against many Indigenous leaders when it abolished ATSIC in 2004.

Distrust increased in 2007 when the government responded to a report into allegations of child abuse among Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. Under what it called a 'National Emergency Response' and without consultation with community leaders, alcohol was banned, a portion of welfare payments was quarantined for the purchase of essential goods, the CDEP scheme was abolished, and the military was mobilised for the rapid delivery of 'emergency services'. Directed specifically at Indigenous communities these measures required exemption from the *Racial Discrimination Act*. Professor Mick Dodson, a Yawuru man and former Indigenous Social Justice Commissioner with HREOC, described the Northern Territory intervention as 'storm-trooper tent diplomacy of health providers dressed in battle fatigues'.⁷⁰

Support for what became known as the Intervention came from some Indigenous leaders such as Noel Pearson, a lawyer and activist whose father was from the Bagaarrmugu clan and mother from the Guggu Yalanji people; and Marcia Langton, a Wiradjuri/Bidjara woman and academic. They argued that social trauma – external (imposed by non-Indigenous society) and internal (fomented by 'lateral' violence) – arose from a pattern of social dysfunction that required reinstating personal responsibility as a foundation of community viability. Pearson acknowledged the effects of past policies and racism as catalysts for the breakdown of social norms in Indigenous communities, as had many national Indigenous leaders before him, but gave great weight to personal responsibility as the solution to collective ills. Pearson's key message for his own region was 'if we are to survive as a people, we have to get passive welfare out of Aboriginal governance in Cape York Peninsula. We have to get rid of the passive welfare mentality that has taken over our people.'⁷

Patrick Dodson believed that continuing policy failure, flawed program delivery and disengagement of Indigenous representative organisations also contributed significantly to welfare dependency. He cautioned that 'some Indigenous voices in this debate, motivated by the urgency of ending the

⁷⁰ Stuart Rintoul, 'Dodson Lashes "Sinister Intervention", Australian, 13 September 2007.

⁷¹ Noel Pearson, Up from the Mission: Selected Writings (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2009), p. 143.

suffering in indigenous communities, have been recklessly naive in aiding and abetting the Howard Government's agenda'.⁷²

With the defeat of the Liberal–National Party government at the election of 2007, John Howard's persistent refusal to make a formal apology was no longer an obstacle. On 13 February 2008, in direct response to recommendations of the *Bringing Them Home* report, his successor, Kevin Rudd, delivered an apology to Australia's Indigenous people:

For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry. To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry. And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry.⁷³

The Labor governments that he and the subsequent prime minister, Julia Gillard, led embraced the policy of 'Closing the Gap'. Developed in 2006 by Indigenous and non-Indigenous human rights and health organisations, the policy was adopted by the Council of Australian Governments in 2007. The goal is to improve Indigenous health, wellbeing, education, employment and housing to non-Indigenous levels, through programs calibrated to baseline indicators of disadvantage. In 2011 the national census recorded a population of 548,000 people who identified as Indigenous, more than double the 265,000 recorded in 1991. They now make up 2.5 per cent of the total population and the proportion is likely to increase. Their median age of 21 years was significantly below the 37 years for non-Indigenous Australians.⁷⁴ Closing the Gap reports show the life expectancy of Indigenous men is 11.5 years below that of non-Indigenous men, and that of Indigenous women 9.7 years below their counterparts, despite a 36 per cent decline in mortality rates between 1991 and 2010. There were also gradual improvements in Indigenous student outcomes in numeracy and literacy, and further education. Between 1994 and 2008 the proportion of Indigenous men employed in urban and regional centres rose from 36 per cent to over 62 per cent, yet employment prospects in remote areas remained low.75 A feature of the indicators was that those

⁷² Patrick Dodson, 'Whatever Happened to Reconciliation', in Tony Jones (ed.), *The Best Australian Political Writing* 2008 (Melbourne University Press, 2008), p. 138.

⁷³ Kevin Rudd, 'Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples', Parliamentary Debates, House of Representatives, 13 February 2008, pp. 167–3.

⁷⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing – Counts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2011, cat. no. 2075.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2011).

⁷⁵ Closing the Gap: Prime Minister's Report 2012, pp. 47–89 http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/indigenous-australians/publications-articles/closing-the-gap/closing-the-gap-prime-ministers-report-2012, accessed 20 November 2012.

Indigenous people in cities (and a third live in the State capitals) fare much better. The disadvantage of those living on country remains and confronts all Australians.

The story of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia during the twentieth century is one of resurgence of cultural and political governance, collective cultural identity and engagement with the nation-state of Australia. Having weathered the first 50 years of segregation, attempted biological absorption and assimilation, Indigenous Australians emerged strengthened following World War 2. They did so as distinct collectives of people with foundations in traditional cultural groups with responsibility to land and sea, and as individuals who fought for and achieved full citizenship and human rights. Indigenous leaders then utilised their rights to assert recognition of land rights, native title, customary law and unique cultural heritage.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders survived the machinery of segregation to organise politically, at times in resistance but ultimately as negotiators and transformers of the nation-state. Indigenous Australia exists today as a diverse and complex network of people engaged with the modern state, yet founded in shared cultural and historical experience. The 1967 referendum and 1996 *Wik* decision, recognising coexistence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous rights to land, stand as high points in a century punctuated by struggles rich in complexity and driven by the desire for social justice and a reconciled nation. Despite this continuing struggle, successive movements have created opportunities to reclaim personal and collective responsibility through an engagement with rights and opportunities beyond the comprehension of most at the beginning of the twentieth century.

15

Class

STUART MACINTYRE AND SEAN SCALMER

In the Harvester judgment of 1907 Henry Higgins laid down the principles that would guide him as president of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration. Asked to determine a 'fair and reasonable' wage, he decided that those words must mean something more than the level set by the market. It was understandable that an employer, who was 'a purchaser of labour as a commodity', should seek to economise on its cost but not 'at the expense of human life'. A fair and reasonable wage could not depend on whether the profit of the employer was high or low, but must be a first charge on industry. Nor should it be a mere subsistence wage, but rather one that would provide for the 'normal needs of the average employee, regarded as a human being living in a civilized community'.¹

At the time Higgins handed down this decision the labour market was crucial to the fortunes of an overwhelming majority of the population. Three-quarters of the 1.5 million men in the workforce and more than four-fifths of the 360,000 women were employees.² Higgins took the reliance of most women on the earnings of a male breadwinner as justification for his decision that a man's wage should be sufficient to support a wife and children. Most employees, moreover, were manual workers who worked long hours with no job security. Their vulnerability had been driven home in the Depression of the 1890s when many were thrown out of work.

Higgins was called upon to make his judgment when the new Commonwealth devised measures to reduce this vulnerability. Seeking a remedy for the conflict that occurred as workers and employers organised to increase their bargaining power – and mindful that strikes and lock-outs affected the community at large – the parliament created a Court of

I Commonwealth Arbitration Reports, 2 (1907): 3–17.

² M. Keating, *The Australian Workforce* 1910–11 to 1960–61 (Canberra: Department of Economic History, Research School of Social Sciences, ANU, 1973), pp. 60, 68.

Conciliation and Arbitration with powers to make legally binding awards.³ Wanting to protect local industries and jobs, it imposed tariffs on manufactured imports; and in order to ensure that workers shared the benefits of protection, it required the employer to convince the Court that he or she was paying a fair and reasonable wage. These and other measures gave Australia the reputation of a social laboratory, a place of progressive state experiments that recognised the rights of wage earners and in so doing ameliorated the class divisions that wracked other countries.

The institutional innovations were made possible by the advanced nature of Australian democracy: all white men were entitled to vote in the first federal election and all white women in the second. From the very beginning of the twentieth century Australia was therefore a capitalist democracy, combining the market with the ballot. Democratic capitalism has two principles of decision making. In one of them property rights prevail; in the other decisions are based on social need or entitlement as determined by the collective choices of democratic politics – and, in the Harvester judgment, as interpreted by an independent arbiter. The task of government has been to reconcile these two principles: a representative government that fails to attend to democratic claims for protection risks rejection by the electors, while one that alienates investors can suffer a flight of capital.

This chapter suggests how the competing claims operated during the twentieth century to shape class relations. It distinguishes three periods. The first, which lasted from 1901 to World War 2, saw the mobilisation of labour as an industrial and political movement. The rapid advance of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) secured substantial concessions and caused its opponents to create their own party organisation, while the strengthened status of trade unions under the system of industrial arbitration was answered by determined action on the part of employer associations. Moreover, the new institutions that were meant to protect the national economy from external shocks and safeguard workers' living standards failed to withstand the Depression, and the Australian economy suffered during this period from patchy growth.

These difficulties were overcome after World War 2 in a new national settlement that lasted until the 1970s. It was characterised by strong growth, full employment and increased welfare provision. Together with a progressive system of income tax, this brought greater equality of income and

³ Stuart Macintyre and Richard Mitchell (eds), Foundations of Arbitration: The Origins and Effects of State Compulsory Arbitration 1890–1914 (Oxford University Press, 1989).

opportunities. Business flourished and a strong labour movement secured jobs and wage increases, until mounting inflationary pressures undermined the success of Keynesian economic management.

Government responded with higher interest rates, tighter monetary policies and greater resistance to union claims. In the 1980s it embarked on deregulation, exposing the Australian economy to global competition in order to improve productivity. The contraction of older industries saw a decline of union power, stagnant wages and reduced job security. By the 1990s there was a determined effort to reduce public borrowing, curb social outlays and flatten tax rates. Business took advantage of the new financial system to borrow and expand, while households also assumed substantial debt for housing, education and further consumption. This third period was punctuated by the global financial crisis (GFC) of 2007-08, when governments assumed much of the unrecoverable debt accumulated by financial institutions. A beneficiary of the explosive Asian demand in the new century for mineral and energy exports, Australia did not have to adopt the new round of austerity measures imposed elsewhere, but it shared in the consequences of the third period: widening inequality, a labour market stripped of many of the protections won in the previous century, a reduction of public welfare, abandonment of the earlier commitment to redistribution, and a labour movement that seemed to have exhausted its capacity.

Mobilisation and regulation

The rise of the labour movement was formative. The decision by trade unions to enter politics after their defeat in the 1890s by employers, who were backed by the colonial state, brought speedy success. The ALP won 19 per cent of the vote for the lower house of the Commonwealth parliament in 1901, 31 per cent in 1903, 37 per cent in 1906 and 50 per cent in 1910, when it became the first working-class party in the world to form a majority government.⁴ Meanwhile trade union membership recovered from 6 per cent of the workforce in 1901 to 45 per cent by 1914.⁵ It was in this decade that the distinctive institutional devices of the period were established: the tariff to protect Australian jobs; immigration control to restrict the labour supply; compulsory industrial

⁴ Colin A. Hughes and B.D. Graham (eds), A Handbook of Australian Government and Politics 1890–1964 (Canberra: ANU Press, 1968), pp. 286, 291, 296, 301.

⁵ G.W. Ford, June M. Hearn and Russell D. Lansbury (eds), Australian Labour Relations: Readings, 3rd edn (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 198–9.

arbitration to settle disputes and central wage determination to provide a living wage. Together they defined a new relationship between the state and the market.

The ALP did not create this regimen; much of it was the work of liberals seeking to guide national development, preserve social harmony and shore up their electoral base against the growing threat of organised labour.⁶ Labor was quickly won over to the measures and would have liked to go further, but until 1910 it lacked a parliamentary majority and afterwards was thwarted by the High Court, which was loath to extend the limited industrial powers available to the Commonwealth under the Constitution.

Nor was the rapid growth of the unions due solely to industrial arbitration. Its provisions certainly gave them legal standing, and under the presidency of Higgins the Commonwealth Arbitration Court provided unions with exclusive coverage, preference in employment, the right to compel employers to attend hearings, and enforceable awards. By 1914, 84 unions with 60 per cent of total union membership had federal registration; but many of the 430 unions then operating were products of local initiative or the organisational efforts of peak bodies as they took advantage of the upswing in employment opportunities.⁷ The fragmentation of coverage along craft and occupational lines, the compliance expected by the Arbitration Court and the constraints that the High Court imposed on its powers over employers also brought a growing industrial impatience with arbitration in the years leading up to World War I.

Even so, the fortunes of the industrial and political wings of the labour movement were interlinked. The Labor Party was composed of affiliated trade unions that, together with local branches, selected its parliamentary candidates. The unions and branch members also elected delegates to annual state conferences, which determined the ALP platform and chose an executive to enforce it – though a federal executive was not formed until 1915. All parliamentary candidates were required to pledge their loyalty and bound by the decisions of the parliamentary party or caucus. Labor was a party like

⁶ John Rickard, *Class and Politics: New South Wales, Victoria and the Early Commonwealth,* 1890–1910 (Canberra: ANU Press, 1976); Stuart Macintyre, *The Labour Experiment* (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1989), pp. 20–32.

⁷ Malcolm Rimmer, 'Unions and Arbitration', in Joe Isaac and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The New Province for Law and Order: 100 Years of Australian Conciliation and Arbitration* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 282; Peter Sheldon, 'The Missing Nexus? Union Recovery, Growth and Behaviour during the First Decades of Arbitration: Towards a Re-evaluation', *Australian Historical Studies*, 26, 104 (1995): 415–37; Ray Markey, 'Explaining Union Mobilisation in the 1880s and Early 1900s', *Labour History*, 83 (2002): 19–42.

no other in Australian political history, applying collective discipline to bind its parliamentary representatives to a mass base. Both the electoral efficacy and almost tribal loyalty of the new party confronted the existing ones. 'Everywhere in Australia', wrote Alfred Deakin in 1904, 'the riddle of politics is what to do with the Labour movement. It can neither be cajoled, ignored, nor dissipated, but must be faced.'⁸

The nature of this loyalty has been keenly debated. It found expression in a polarisation of social relations that pitted the employer against the employed, capital against labour. The new dichotomy was superimposed on earlier, more consensual formulations in which honest labour was seen as a virtuous activity performed by all productive members of society - labourers, craft workers, clerks, farmers and the ranks of the self-employed - industrious citizens whose natural enemies were the idle class of landlords, usurers and monopolists. Hence Labor propagandists often spoke of eliminating class distinctions. Increasingly, however, they appealed to working-class men specifically men – as a class apart.⁹ The figure of the worker deployed in the imagery of the labour movement was a manual wage earner combating the Fat Man, a grotesque caricature of the capitalist employer. This worker was masculine since both the unions and the Labor Party were dominated by men; they associated their struggle with manliness and sought to entrench the prerogatives of the male breadwinner. The Labor man was also white, since white Australia was a plank of Labor's original platform along with 'the cultivation of a national sentiment based upon the maintenance of racial purity'.10

A flourishing press assisted the spread of these ideas: more than 100 labour newspapers commenced publication by the beginning of the century. They took root in working-class communities that nestled in the major cities, especially round the ports and industrial inner suburbs. It was here that ties of work, residence, recreation and kinship made for a close working-class culture and here too that the labour movement built up its strength in local government. Similar patterns were apparent in industrial towns and mining centres, where the labour movement set up cooperative stores, workingmen's

⁸ Alfred Deakin, *Federated Australia: Selections From Letters to the* Morning Post 1900–1910, ed. J.A. La Nauze (Melbourne University Press, 1968), p. 136.

⁹ Frank Bongiorno, *The People's Party: Victorian Labor and the Radical Tradition 1875–1914* (Melbourne University Press, 1996), ch. 8.

¹⁰ Brian McKinlay (ed.), A Documentary History of the Australian Labor Movement 1850–1975 (Melbourne: Drummond, 1979), pp. 34, 43; Nick Dyrenfurth, Heroes & Villains: The Rise and Fall of the Early Australian Labor Party (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2011).

clubs and union halls." The polarisation of politics and everyday life was evident on the sporting field. Working-class players sought the payment of wages foregone to participate in Saturday competitions, while private schools and those who passed through them venerated an amateur ideal of manly athleticism. In the northern States, the conflict brought outright separation, and the professional Rugby League formed in Sydney in 1909 soon outstripped its amateur rival. In the southern States, a distinctive local version of football was already played, and working-class clubs were able to establish the professional principle. Here the clash of class communities was expressed in the weekly conflict of rival teams.¹²

When Deakin first considered the rise of the Labor Party, he comforted himself that it was only a sectional movement. It claimed to represent labour but in fact was restricted to manual wage earners whose ideals of higher pay, shorter hours and easier conditions 'cannot be realised by the great bulk of them'.¹³ It pursued their 'special interests so indefatigably' that it estranged the farmers, working proprietors, shopkeepers and white-collar workers and thus could never win office. As the leader of the liberal Protectionist Party in the early Commonwealth parliament, Deakin's strategy was to hold together this combination of interests with a program of progressive reform. Unable to entice the Labor Party into coalition, he decried its class prejudice and subjection of individual conscience to the tyranny of caucus and pledge, while establishing the institutions that would protect workers' living standards.¹⁴

His chief rival was George Reid, the leader of the Free Traders. After bidding unsuccessfully for Labor support, Reid turned in 1906 to an anti-socialist crusade against excessive interference with the market. He was encouraged to do so by employers, who had established a national body by 1904 and became increasingly active in legal challenges to arbitration.¹⁵ Their composition,

- 11 R.W. Connell and T.H. Irving, Class Structure in Australian History: Poverty and Progress, 2nd edn (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1992), ch. 4; Janet McCalman, Struggletown: Public and Private Life in Richmond 1900–1965 (Melbourne University Press, 1984); Andrew Metcalfe, For Freedom and Dignity: Historical Agency and Class Structures in the Coalfields of NSW (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988).
- 12 Chris Cunneen, 'The Rugby Wars: The Early History of Rugby League in New South Wales, 1907–15', in Richard Cashman and Michael McKernan (eds), Sport in History: The Making of Modern Sporting History (Brisbane: UQP, 1979), pp. 294–306; Andrew Moore, 'Opera of the Proletariat: Rugby League, the Labour Movement and Working-Class Culture in New South Wales and Queensland', Labour History, 79 (2000): 57–70.
- 13 Deakin, Federated Australia, pp. 89-90.
- 14 Judith Brett, Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard (Cambridge University Press, 2003), ch. 2.
- 15 T.V. Matthews, 'Business Associations and the State, 1850–1979', in B.W. Head (ed.), *State and Economy in Australia* (Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 115–49.

aims and methods have received far less attention than the labour movement. The Australian economy was already characterised by a marked concentration of ownership: the assets of the largest 25 enterprises amounted to a fifth of the gross domestic product (GDP), which was double the proportion of larger economies such as the United States, Britain and Germany – though the largest of all were public enterprises, notably the railways and the postal service.¹⁶ While pastoral and mining companies were oriented to export markets, and those in manufacturing, commerce and financial services were confined to the limited domestic market, business groups found common ground in defence of property rights.

The employer associations assisted the organisation of farmers, worried about their increased costs of production, and supported conservative women who had opposed the female franchise but now used it to resist the demands of the labour movement. The Australian Women's National League, with a membership of 52,000 by 1914, was the largest of all non-Labor organisations and reached down from the salons of society ladies into the suburban villas of the well-to-do. It signalled the presence of a large and diverse middle class that neither possessed substantial capital nor relied on the sale of its labour. Aspiring to financial security, it disapproved of the conspicuous consumption of the rich. Fearful of sliding into the ranks of the workers, it deplored their improvident turbulence. This middle class was defined by manners and standards, its social networks and conscience shaped by high rates of church attendance. Well into the twentieth century, it would be the fulcrum of national politics.¹⁷

Reid was unsuccessful in the 1906 election but the crumbling liberal Protectionist constituency forced a fusion of the two non-Labor parties by 1909.¹⁸ And while Labor maintained momentum as Australia entered World War 1, the split over conscription consigned it to the political wilderness. Between 1917 and 1940 the ALP won only a single federal election, and that with a minority vote. Its fortunes held up better in the States, which were responsible for most government services – transport, education, health, social welfare – and where the labour movement was better able to reap their

¹⁶ Grant Fleming, David Merrett and Simon Ville, The Big End of Town: Big Business and Corporate Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 29, table 2.11.

¹⁷ Brett, Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class; Janet McCalman, Journeyings: The Biography of a Middle-Class Generation 1920–1950 (Melbourne University Press, 1993), chs 2–3.

¹⁸ Rickard, *Class and Politics*, chs 6, 8; Paul Strangio and Nick Dyrenfurth (eds), *Confusion: The Making of the Australian Two-Party System* (Melbourne University Press, 2009).

electoral benefits. Union membership was also resilient: the lowest level of coverage was 42.6 per cent in 1934. But the lengthy industrial disputes – over 4 million working days were lost in 1919 and again in 1929 – as well as endemic factional conflict narrowed the labour movement's appeal.¹⁹

World War I had created a mass base for conservative politics, the emphasis of the Nationalist and then the United Australia Party on order and civic duty attracting majority support in a period of conflict and uncertainty. The new Country Party won control of rural electorates that had once been Labor's, and worked in coalition with its urban partners. For both of them class was an alien and divisive force, class conflict a threat to be suppressed; an amendment to the *Crimes Act* in 1920 created a new definition of sedition that included exciting 'feelings of ill will and hostility between different classes'.²⁰

The failure of these coalition governments to undo the pre-war settlement is striking. There was no reduction of industrial protection: on the contrary, tariffs were extended in 1921 to the new industries created during World War 1, and further duties were imposed in 1926 and 1928 to support the growing manufacturing sector.21 Industrial arbitration was equally resilient. The autocratic William Morris Hughes overrode the Arbitration Court to settle some of the major disputes in the aftermath of the war, and Stanley Melbourne Bruce, his successor, first strengthened the Court and then threatened to abandon this federal jurisdiction when faced by mounting industrial turmoil in 1929. His proposal divided the employers and its decisive rejection by the voters in the election at the end of the year dissuaded his successors from any further attempt.²² The same was true for central wage determination. Partly because of the limited jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court and partly because wage awards lagged behind inflation, it was not until 1921 that the living wage Higgins laid down in his Harvester judgment was generally applied; but from then the Court made regular adjustments based on the cost of living to determine a basic wage to which all were entitled.

¹⁹ Ford, Hearn and Lansbury (eds), *Australian Labour Relations*, p. 199; Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians: Historical Statistics* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987), p. 165.

²⁰ Geoffrey Sawer, Australian Federal Politics and Law 1901–1929 (Melbourne University Press, 1956), p. 195.

²¹ Peter Lloyd, '100 Years of Tariff Protection in Australia', *Australian Economic History Review*, 48, 2 (2008): 99–145.

²² Stuart Macintyre, *The Oxford History of Australia. Volume 4, 1901–1941: The Succeeding Age* (Oxford University Press, 1986), ch. 10.

When these protective devices were put to their most severe test, however, they proved hopelessly inadequate. A small trading economy that was dependent upon commodity exports and capital inflow was powerless to withstand the onset of the world Depression at the end of the 1920s. It was no longer possible to redistribute income from the rural sector by means of the tariff and to pass on the benefits to wage earners through industrial awards; instead, the collapse of prices for rural export products forced a general reduction of costs. The new Labor government led by James Scullin lifted tariffs further, to no avail, and then accepted a 10 per cent reduction in the basic wage. Having raised large public loans to finance development projects, Australia was now faced with demands from British bankers that it retrench. The deep cuts to public expenditure in 1931 were politically suicidal, creating a new split in the ALP and electoral defeat at the end of the year. Unemployment among trade unionists peaked at 30 per cent in mid-1932, while the 1933 census revealed that most of the self-employed had incomes below the basic wage.23 Moreover, there was minimal public assistance, Australia having rejected the provision of social security in favour of job protection and wage regulation. Yet apart from devaluation of the Australian currency, there was no departure from the fixtures of public policy during the slow recovery.

As Australians struggled to understand the collapse of old certainties, the world of sport promised escape but in fact confirmed the hard times. In the Ashes series of cricket matches against England in 1932–33, Australia's champion batsman, Donald Bradman, was met by a new style of bowling aimed at the body. The 'bodyline controversy' occurred after British bankers had imposed deep financial economies on Australian governments, and was interpreted widely as an assault on national honour. It followed earlier episodes. Les Darcy, a champion middleweight boxer from Maitland, had been denied bouts during World War I, and died a few months after he stowed away to the United States. Phar Lap, an unpromising gelding that won the Melbourne Cup in 1930 and fourteen races in the next year, died in mysterious circumstances in the same country. Australia's local champions emerged from humble origins only to be cut down by powerful foreign forces. Adored and mourned, they symbolised the travails of the Australian battler.²⁴

²³ Ian McLean and Sue Richardson, 'More or Less Equal? Australian Income Distribution in 1933 and 1980', *Economic Record*, 6, 1 (1986): 68, 75.

²⁴ Ric Sissons and Brian Stoddart, *Cricket and Empire: The 1932–33 Bodyline Tour of Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984).

Class

Renovation

The war emergency brought about deep and far-reaching change. From the end of 1941, when Japanese forces advanced on Australia, the immediate needs of national defence overrode all other considerations. A new ALP government exercised wartime powers to control exports and imports, banking and foreign exchange, profits, prices and wages. In building up the armed services and war industries, it redirected production and labour, suspended house construction and rationed consumption. An acute shortage of labour overrode established gender boundaries and women's employment increased from about half a million to 800,000; those in war industries received up to 100 per cent of the male rate.²⁵ The willingness of the male-dominated unions to accept industrial discipline under conditions of over-full employment depended heavily on appeals to their loyalty from the Labor government led by John Curtin, as well as the widespread belief that this was a people's war fought for a new order.

The starting point of Labor's planning for post-war reconstruction was the need to convert wartime industries to peacetime production and avoid a return to pre-war unemployment. In doing so it sought to consolidate the recent advances in manufacturing; this in turn required substantial public works, training programs, large-scale immigration and a rapid expansion of housing and social infrastructure.²⁶ The implementation of these plans was hampered by the expiry of wartime powers; the government's failure to pursue them by referendum until the second half of 1944, a year after it had won a sweeping electoral victory, was a costly error. The lack of these powers in a period of acute shortages made it all the more important to control inflation, and the government's determination to keep down wages and delay the introduction of the 40-hour week brought increasing difficulties with the industrial wing of the labour movement. The Communist Party had made rapid advances in a number of key unions during the war, and as the Cold War intensified, a series of major strikes culminated in the government gaoling the leaders of the coalminers' union in 1949.27

Despite these setbacks, the government gained fiscal supremacy over the States when it assumed control of income tax in 1942, and was able to

²⁵ S.J. Butlin and C.B. Schedvin, *War Economy 1942–1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1977), ch. 2.

²⁶ E. Ronald Walker, *The Australian Economy in War and Reconstruction* (Oxford University Press, 1947), chs 14–16.

²⁷ Tom Sheridan, *Division of Labour: Industrial Relations in the Chifley Years, 1945–49* (Oxford University Press, 1989).

reconstruct the Commonwealth Bank with ample reserve banking powers. While private interests resisted a scheme of public health, Labor introduced a substantial measure of social security. Above all, it was successful in the adoption of new methods of Keynesian economic management to maintain full employment.²⁸ Superimposed on the earlier protective mechanisms of the tariff and centralised wage determination, this represented a new settlement between labour and capital – an Australian version of the broader settlement that emerged after the war in most of the western world, whereby the organised working class accepted the operation of capitalist markets in return for full employment, social security and a rising standard of living.

Having secured this settlement, the labour movement failed to consolidate its advantage. Discredited by his earlier failure of leadership and out of step with the heightened expectations of national reconstruction, Robert Menzies staged a remarkable comeback. His resurrection is commonly attributed to the series of radio broadcasts he gave in 1942 in which he appealed to the 'Forgotten People'. These were the self-reliant and virtuous families squeezed between the vested interests of business and labour - the farmers, shopkeepers and salary earners – who had no political voice and yet sustained the injuries of class conflict.²⁹ This masterful invocation of the middle class became a lodestone of the Liberal Party that arose from the ashes of the inter-war conservative ascendancy. More broadly based than its predecessors and with more than 120,000 members by 1946, it was indisputably a mass party; but its formation required assiduous cultivation of business leaders and press magnates.³⁰ Menzies campaigned on a platform of free enterprise, capitalising on the defeat of the Labor government's attempt to nationalise the banks, continuing restrictions and shortages, and the communist menace. But his government did not abandon the new methods of economic management.³¹ Rather, the Liberal-Country Party Coalition adjusted the settlement to help those who helped themselves, so that in housing the earlier emphasis on public provision gave way to assisting purchasers, and the rate of home ownership grew rapidly to 70 per cent by 1961.³² Nor was

29 Judith Brett, Robert Menzies' Forgotten People (Sydney: Macmillan, 1992).

31 Geoffrey Bolton, The Oxford History of Australia. Volume 5, 1942–1988: The Middle Way (Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 77.

²⁸ Paul Smyth, Australian Social Policy: The Keynesian Chapter (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1994).

³⁰ Ian Hancock, National and Permanent? The Federal Organisation of the Liberal Party of Australia 1944–1965 (Melbourne University Press, 2000), p. 81.

³² Patrick Troy, Accommodating Australians: Commonwealth Government Involvement in Housing (Sydney: Federation Press, 2012), p. 140.

there a retreat from the commitment to full employment. Over two decades the economy grew at an annual rate of 4.8 per cent as Australia benefitted from rapid industrial development.³³

The new government benefitted also from the corrosive effect of the Cold War. The failure of Menzies' attempt to ban the Communist Party allowed him to exploit communist influence in trade unions and, through them, on the ALP. After Communist Party delegates prevailed at the 1945 congress of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), their opponents formed Industrial Groups to capture a number of unions, and used similar methods of organisation in the ALP to press for anti-communist measures. Labor's unity cracked under the pressure of the 1954 Petrov royal commission into espionage; the Catholic right was driven out and formed an Anti-Communist (later Democratic) Labor Party. In Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia the split drove Labor from office. In federal politics, it became a permanent opposition with an ageing leadership.

The industrial labour movement held up better, building its organisation of the expanding white-collar occupations to reach a peak coverage of 63 per cent of all employees by 1953. Although the ACTU claimed equal pay for women in the 1949–50 basic wage case and won 75 per cent of the male rate, it was slow to respond to the growth in women's employment – union coverage of female employees was just 40 per cent in 1953 and did not improve until the 1970s when women's interests and activism found fuller support.³⁴ Many of these female wage earners were migrants, and similar criticisms have been made about the marginalisation of immigrant factory workers; the most detailed study notes that they were fully incorporated into the system of industrial awards and suggests they were also active in their unions.³⁵

The post-war immigration program operated from the beginning under a tripartite system of employers, unions and government, as indeed did the system of arbitration and industry policy. Labour was in a strong bargaining position during this period of full employment and the principal cause of conflict was the failure of the tribunal to maintain indexation of wages. Strong unions in key industries – metals, mining and maritime transport – that were able to take direct action incurred fines and other penalties, but for the most

34 Ford, Hearn and Lansbury (eds), Australian Labour Relations, pp. 199-200.

³³ Rodney Maddock and Ian W. McLean (eds), *The Australian Economy in the Long Run* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 16.

³⁵ Constance Lever-Tracy and Michael Quinlan, A Divided Working Class: Ethnic Segmentation and Industrial Conflict in Australia (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1988).

part the tripartite system found acceptance.³⁶ These were the circumstances under which previously casual jobs became permanent, with shorter hours, paid leave and other entitlements. That was acceptable to most employers since they benefitted from industrial peace in a period of rising prosperity. Australia enjoyed an export boom in the early 1950s but remained highly dependent on commodities. The government sought to industrialise by import substitution in the expectation that this would broaden its economic base and augment the service industries. The established method of assisting local industry by tariff duties was reinforced by direct import controls in the 1950s, encouraging foreign companies to set up operations in Australia. Foreign direct investment replaced overseas borrowing as a source of capital, bringing new technologies and management practices. The increasing concentration of ownership meant that many sectors were dominated by a handful of firms. In the absence of restrictions on monopolies and without the spur of competition, they were free to adopt restrictive practices - and also able to accommodate the union presence.³⁷

With the expansion of the economy there was a shift in the occupational structure. Managers and professionals made up a sixth of the workforce by 1961, clerical workers and skilled trades each another sixth.³⁸ By then most Australian households owned a car, bringing an increasing separation of work and residence.³⁹ One of the ironies of Menzies' appeal to the 'forgotten people' was that he began it by recalling Robert Burns' poem 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' in which a Scottish rural labourer takes comfort with his wife and bairn in their homely cottage at the end of six days behind the plough in blithe disregard of the fact that the cotter or cottar was a tenant dependent on the favour of his landlord. The suburban house purchaser, on the other hand, was paying off a mortgage, and quite possibly a refrigerator, washing machine and, after 1956, a television. For those wage earners who were able to take on such commitments, it was very different from the cramped streets of the inner cities, thick with the grime of industry and the ghosts of past struggles; the sense of new beginnings encouraged many in the view that class divisions were no longer significant.

³⁶ Tom Sheridan, Australia's Own Cold War: The Waterfront under Menzies (Melbourne University Press, 2006).

³⁷ P.H. Karmel and Maureen Brunt, *The Structure of the Australian Economy*, rev. edn (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1966), ch. 3.

³⁸ L. Broom and F.L. Jones, *Opportunity and Attainment in Australia* (Canberra: ANU Press, 1976).

³⁹ Graeme Davison, Car Wars: How the Car Won Our Hearts and Conquered Our Cities (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2004), p. 15.

Back in 1942 a young English economist working in the public service submitted an article on post-war reconstruction to his departmental head. This was the redoubtable Roland Wilson, who would head the Treasury from 1951 to 1966, and Wilson pronounced the article to be satisfactory, subject to deleting references to the 'working class' in favour of 'wage-earners' - 'a bit of Australian snobbery that was new to me', the Englishman noted.40 A blurring of class, occupation and wealth was apparent in the public opinion polls that began at this time. An early poll on whether government should build and rent houses distinguished four categories of respondent: 'the well-to-do', 'better off', 'artisans' and 'lowest'. A pioneering sociological study of residents in the Melbourne suburbs of Hawthorn and Kew at the end of the 1940s found that the overwhelming majority of respondents believed there were class differences in Australia, but used a hierarchy of upper, middle and working; 55 per cent described themselves as middle class and 37 per cent as working class. A minority, 11 per cent, divided society between workers and capitalists, with complete agreement to which they class they belonged.⁴¹

Thinking about society in terms of stratification rather than class division gained plausibility from the growing importance of education as a determinant of careers and life opportunities. The post-war extension of secondary schools and the growth of universities fostered meritocratic values that Menzies promoted and the ALP neglected, at least until Gough Whitlam became leader in 1967. The first Labor leader to have been born into middle-class comfort, he challenged the established forms of working-class politics by embracing the mass media, elevating the importance of the parliamentarian over the executive, and reaching out to trained experts in the formulation of policy. Labor's new policies promised to equalise access to public resources, expand the quality and the scope of government provision, break down inequalities of race and gender, and articulate a more independent and confident national identity. This was European social democracy, reimagined for the Australian Commonwealth.⁴²

It coincided with growing strains in the post-war settlement. As the terms of trade turned against Australia's commodity exports in a world economy increasingly dominated by advanced manufactures, the weakness of its

⁴⁰ Gerald Firth, diary, 6 June 1942, Firth Papers, NLA Acc. 01/273.

^{41 (}Melbourne) Herald, 22 January 1944; O.A. Oeser and S.B. Hammond (eds), Social Structure and Personality in a City (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), part 5.

⁴² Terry Irving and Sean Scalmer, 'The Public Sphere and Party Change: Explaining the Modernisation of the Australian Labor Party in the 1960s', *Labour History Review*, 65, 2 (2000): 227–46.

domestic industries became apparent. Indiscriminate protection had created a derivative, fragmented and inward-looking manufacturing sector with modest rates of productivity, yet the strength of the labour movement made it difficult to resist wage increases, while rising expectations required government to redistribute income through progressive taxation and welfare provision. The global recession following the oil shock at the end of 1973 made it impossible to maintain these policies. In its first two years of the Whitlam government earnings grew by 43 per cent for men and 60 per cent for women, while prices rose by 33 per cent and government outlays by more than 30 per cent.⁴³ Unemployment rose along with inflation. After business interests and the conservative parties mobilised against the government, it was dismissed by the governor-general and then defeated at election. Australia's experiment with social democracy was short.

Deregulation and denial

The circumstances of Whitlam's dismissal in 1975 revived class polarisation. Malcolm Fraser, the new prime minister, was a wealthy pastoralist easily portrayed by the unions as an aloof, unbending Tory. He sought a remedy for the new problem of stagflation (a stagnant economy with high inflation) using levers that no longer brought the desired response. Attempts to control inflation by changes to the wage-fixing powers of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission brought an upsurge in union militancy, and the cost of social security in a period of persistent unemployment made it difficult to reduce government outlays. In Britain, the United States and elsewhere, conservative governments were reducing taxation, dismantling their regulatory and protective devices to allow the market to allocate resources.

It was the Labor government elected in 1983 that followed this path in Australia by floating the currency, abolishing controls on capital flows and progressively removing tariff protection. Financial deregulation was introduced in agreement with the ACTU, through a Prices and Income Accord that kept wage rises low in return for tax and social policy benefits as well as involvement in plans to restructure the iron and steel, car manufacture and textile industries. The turnaround in economic fortunes was slow and painful. There were persistent problems with the balance of payments; foreign debt increased between 1981 and 1992 from 11 to 50 per cent of the GDP; much of

⁴³ Francis G. Castles (ed.), Australia Compared: People, Policies and Politics (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), pp. 110, 126.

it was used recklessly to build corporate empires that crashed; and a severe recession in the early 1990s took the unemployment rate to 11 per cent.⁴⁴

With the decline of manufacturing industries there were far-reaching changes in work practices. The post-war system of production used large-scale, integrated factories and offices employing large numbers of workers to produce standardised goods: these secure, well-paid jobs had been the heartland of the labour movement. The new system was more specialised and flexible, outsourcing many of its operations and extending supply chains to low-cost providers. The fast-growing service sector made use of low-paid, part-time and casual employment with low rates of unionisation. Capital was more mobile than labour in the globalised economy, and no longer prevented from exploiting its advantage. As union coverage dropped from half the workforce to just 30 per cent by 1996, the power of the labour movement dissolved.⁴⁵

After its incorporation into the reform plans of the Labor government at a National Economic Summit in 1983, business organised to regain the initiative. The National Farmers Federation, formed in 1979, abandoned the earlier protectionism of the rural sector and became closely involved in attacks on unions. The Business Council of Australia, formed in 1983, lobbied strongly for labour market deregulation, as did a growing number of privately funded think tanks and lobby groups. After 1996 the Howard government regularly consulted business on economic reform and many other measures; it appointed corporate executives and board members to a range of regulatory, administrative and advisory bodies, from the Reserve Bank to the Australian Broadcasting Commission. The conspicuous absentee was the trade union movement since it was seen as no longer representative of labour, while organised labour was in any case condemned as a cause of rigidity in the operation of the market.

New legislation in 1993 marked the formal end of the national system of wage fixation. While the reconstituted Industrial Relations Commission would continue to settle disputes and make wage determinations, there was now provision for enterprise bargaining. This was taken much further by the Howard government, following its election victory in 1996, in legislation that strengthened the non-union bargaining stream and restricted the scope of the Commission. Subsequently the Commission was stripped of its

⁴⁴ Barrie Dyster and David Meredith, Australia in the Global Economy: Continuity and Change, 2nd edn (Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 256, 292.

⁴⁵ Stephen Bell, Ungoverning the Economy: The Political Economy of Australian Economic Policy (Oxford University Press, 1997), ch. 5.

wage-fixing powers and the right to strike was narrowly circumscribed. As employment contracts replaced awards and collective agreements, security of employment, leave, overtime and other entitlements were all subject to negotiation.⁴⁶ The ACTU's campaign to defend 'Your Rights at Work' from these changes assisted the election of the ALP to office in 2007. The new government restored bargaining rights and the protection of minimum work conditions, without arresting the decline of union coverage or rescuing the ALP and the ACTU from their morbid condition of mutual dependence.

The decline in vitality of the labour movement spanned a period of sustained prosperity. The economy expanded by 80 per cent between 1991 and 2008, with an average annual growth rate of nearly 4 per cent. The fastest growth was in the services sector, which by 2008 contributed four-fifths of the GDP. Farm products had shrunk to just 2.5 per cent and manufacturing to 10 per cent, but mining expanded to 8.3 per cent as the result of Asian industrialisation; even so, finance, property and business services outweighed the entire primary and secondary sectors. The wage share of national income, which had risen to 62.5 per cent in 1975, declined to 53.4 per cent; the profit share grew from 16 to 26.5 per cent.⁴⁷

These transformations were symbolised by changes in sport. Once a diversion from the world of work, sporting competitions were increasingly reconfigured as a means of creating wealth. The right to broadcast sporting contests on television and pay television became a valuable commodity, and from the middle 1970s this triggered bitter struggles over the ownership, administration and form of the major sports. In a series of conflicts – journalists dubbed them 'wars' – fundamental changes were imposed or negotiated: private ownership and relocation of teams; new rules and even versions of the sport; reconfigured stadiums and scheduling; sponsorship, licensing and merchandising.⁴⁸ The new arrangements elevated the elite practitioners' income and mobility and enhanced the spectacle of the major events. But a tradition of sporting excellence was now reconstructed as a willingness to consume: Australians were celebrated as supporters of sport, not as active participants.

⁴⁶ Anthony Forsyth and Andrew Stewart (eds), Fair Work: The New Workplace Laws and the Work Choices Legacy (Sydney: Federation, Press, 2009).

⁴⁷ Tom Conley, The Vulnerable Country: Australia and the Global Economy (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009), pp. 116, 256–7.

⁴⁸ Gideon Haigh, *The Cricket War* (Melbourne: Text, 1993); Peter FitzSimons, *The Rugby War* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2005); Mike Colman, *Super League: The Inside Story* (Sydney: Pan Macmillan, 1996).

Class

The way we live now

The apparent conclusion that after 100 years the ghost of Higgins had finally been laid to rest will not withstand closer consideration. Expectations of protection against the market and support of social needs remain, and are evident in the minimum wage (which is set well above the floor in most other countries) as well as transfer payments. With its progressive system of taxation and means-tested, non-contributory benefits, Australia directs more of its social security to those in need. A recent international study found that income inequality is significantly lower in Australia than in the United States and the United Kingdom, and falls under the average of all Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries.⁴⁹

A number of studies have tracked the distribution of incomes across the twentieth century. These reveal a reduction of inequality that lasted into the 1980s. Whereas in 1922 the lowest half of income earners received just 10 per cent of all income, by 1972 their share was 29 per cent; the share of the top 5 per cent of income earners fell over the same period from 42 to 16 per cent.⁵⁰ Thereafter inequality increased, especially among the highest income earners: in 1992 the chief executive of one of the largest 50 companies had a salary 27 times that of the average wage earner; a decade later this had jumped to 98 times.⁵¹ A growth of inequality occurred across all of the OECD countries from the mid-1980s, with the richest 10 per cent of house-holds increasing their income to nine times that of the poorest 10 per cent as globalisation weakened labour market regulation. In contrast to the common experience, however, the income of poorest 10 per cent rose in Australia between the mid-1980s and late 2000s, by an average of 3 per cent per annum.⁵²

The most dramatic change is the way that protection is provided. From the early years of the last century it was in the form of state regulation protecting jobs and employment conditions, and through institutions that acknowledged the collective activity of the labour movement. At the end

⁴⁹ Peter Whiteford, 'Is Australia Particularly Unequal?', in Paul Smyth and Bettina Cass (eds), Contesting the Australian Way: States, Markets and Civil Society (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 197–214; Growing Unequal? Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries (Paris: OECD, 2008), p. 25.

⁵⁰ M.J. Berry, 'Inequality', in A.F. Davies, S. Encel and M.J. Berry (eds), *Australian Society:* A Sociological Introduction, 3rd edn (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1977), p. 23; McLean and Richardson, 'More or Less Equal?', pp. 67–81.

⁵¹ Anthony B. Atkinson and Andrew Leigh, 'The Distribution of Top Incomes in Australia', *Economic Record*, 83, 262 (2007): 254.

⁵² Divided We Stand: Why Inequality Keeps Rising (Paris: OECD, 2011).

of the century it was through state intervention to protect families and individuals as income recipients and consumers.⁵³ The shift was registered in the names and roles of the key institutions: the Tariff Board became the Industries Assistance Commission in the early 1970s, then the Industries Commission and finally the Productivity Commission. The original Court of Conciliation and Arbitration turned into the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, then the Industrial Relations Commission and now the Fair Work Commission. As part of the same transformation the Fat Man became a captain of industry, and the term 'boss' was transferred to the elected officials of trade unions. In the words of the Roman historian Tacitus on the baleful effects of imperial conquest, they make a desert and they call it peace.

⁵³ Peter Sheldon and Louise Thornthwaite, 'The State, Labour and the Writing of Australian Labour History', *Labour History*, 100 (2011): 88.

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The rapid expansion and diversification of the economy in the twentieth century brought immense wealth and new opportunities to many Australians. Real per capita income grew nearly sixfold in the century following Federation. When the first federal parliament met on 9 May 1901, Australia was still suffering the effects of the 1890s downturn, and it would wait another seven years until average incomes returned to their pre-Depression peak of 1891. The following four decades were marked by the uncertainty surrounding two world wars and an inter-war Depression. Higher levels of real income began to be achieved by the mid-1930s but it was not until the second half of the century that incomes rose sharply over a long period that was briefly interrupted by the minor recessions of the early 1980s and early 1990s. (See Figure 16.1.)¹

Accompanying substantial improvements in wealth were advances in wellbeing more broadly. Working conditions for many employees improved,

1 Australian GDP estimates are contested terrain. The original aggregations of N.G. Butlin (Australian Domestic Product, Investment and Foreign Borrowing 1861-1938/39 (Cambridge University Press, 1962) to World War 2 have been modified and updated especially by Matthew W. Butlin (A Preliminary Annual Database 1900/01 to 1973/74', Discussion Paper 7701, Reserve Bank of Australia, May 1977), and Ian W. McLean and Jonathan J. Pincus ('Living Standards in Australia 1890-1940: Evidence and Conjectures', Working Papers in Economic History, no. 6 (Canberra: Department of Economic History, ANU, 1982). Bryan Haig ('New Estimates of Australian GDP: 1861–1948/49', Australian Economic History Review, 41, 1 (2001): 1–34) contests N.G. Butlin's figures. Angus Maddison (The World Economy: Historical Statistics, Paris: OECD, 2003) drew extensively on Butlin but chose Haig's revised data for 1911-12 to 1938-39. Leandro Prados de la Escosura ('International Comparisons of Real Product, 1820-1990', Explorations in Economic History, 37, 1 (2000): 1-41) criticises Maddison's use of a recent constant prices base year, but the latter receives support from Stephen Broadberry and Douglas A. Irwin ('Lost Exceptionalism? Comparative Income and Productivity in Australia and the UK, 1861–1948', Economic Record, 83, 262 (2007): 262–74). The benefit of the Maddison data is that they enable cross-country comparisons using a consistent methodology.

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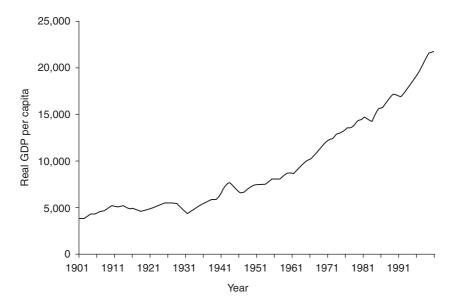


Figure 16.1. Australian real gross domestic product per capita (\$), 1901–2000 Source: Groningen Growth and Development Centre (GGDC) – Angus Maddison Homepage, 'Statistics on World Population, GDP and Per Capita GDP, 1–2008 AD', table 3 <http:// www.ggdc.net/MADDISON/oriindex.htm>, accessed 1 April 2012. Constant prices in 1990 International Geary–Khamis dollars.

partly as a result of industrial restructuring and innovation, but also because of greater attention to health and safety practices that were codified into statutes in most States by the 1970s. Across the twentieth century, the length of time that employees were required to spend at the workplace was also reduced with the shortening of the working day, working week and even working life.² Households benefitted from a widening range of new consumer durables, which removed much of the physical labour and reduced the time of many daily chores.³ People thus had more spare time to spend outside the working day, which spurred much greater consumption of leisure services such as professional sport, theatre and cinema.⁴

² Ian McLean, 'Economic Wellbeing', in Rodney Maddock and Ian W. McLean (eds), *The Australian Economy in the Long Run* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 321–7; Michael Carter and Rodney Maddock, 'Leisure and Australian Wellbeing, 1911–81', *Australian Economic History Review* 27, 1 (1987): 30–43.

³ Tony Dingle, 'Electrifying the Kitchen in Interwar Victoria', *Journal of Australian Studies*, 22, 57 (1998): 119–27.

⁴ Richard Cashman, Paradise of Sport: A History of Australian Sport (Sydney: Walla Walla Press, 2010); Wray Vamplew and Brian Stoddart (eds), Sport in Australia: A Social History

More time and more money generated a third improvement in wellbeing: greater choice. Higher incomes achieved through shorter hours of work put individuals and households in a position where they could choose between work and leisure, knowing that a preference for more of the latter would not risk putting them below the poverty line. There is some evidence to suggest that leisure preferences were stronger in the first half of the century. especially among men, than in the second, although part-time work has become more common in recent decades.⁵ The growth of branding and mass retailing meant Australians could make more choices as consumers as well as producers.⁶ Improvements in choice have been particularly important for women, whose role in the economy has diversified from primarily household managers to increased participation in the workforce and higher education.7 Indeed, some of the apparent improvement in wealth represented by rising gross domestic product (GDP) reflects women entering the workforce and hiring professional services for help with domestic tasks that were formerly part of the non-monetised household economy. In a similar fashion, the professionalisation of sport commercialised formerly amateur activities. Underpinning these improvements was a significant increase in average life expectancy, which enabled higher levels of income, leisure time and choice to be enjoyed over a longer period. Between 1901-10 and 2004-06 male and female life expectancy at birth increased by 42 and 43 per cent respectively, from 55 to 78 and 58 to 83 respectively.8

Modern comparative measurements of national wellbeing rank Australia highly. The United Nations Human Development Index, calculated annually since 1990 and based on longevity, knowledge and standard of living, has consistently ranked Australia among the top few nations.⁹ The Index has been

(Cambridge University Press, 1994); John Tulloch, Australian Cinema: Industry, Narrative and Meaning (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1982).

- 5 Carter and Maddock, 'Leisure and Wellbeing, 1911–81'; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'Work', in *Measures of Australia's Progress, 2010*, cat. no. 1370.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2010).
- 6 Greg Whitwell, Making the Market: The Rise of Consumer Society (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1989).
- 7 Alison L. Booth and Hiau Joo Kee, 'A Long Run View of the University Gender Gap in Australia', *Australian Economic History Review*, 51, 3 (2011): 254–76; Glen Withers, Anthony M. Endres and Len Perry, 'Labour', in Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians: Historical Statistics* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987), p. 145.
- 8 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Australian Social Trends, March* 2011, cat. no. 4102.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2011).
- 9 United Nations Human Programme (UNDP), 'Human Development Index (HDI)' <http://hdr.undp.org/en/statistics/hdi/>, accessed 21 October 2011; Nicholas Crafts, 'The Human Development Index, 1870–1999: Some Revised Estimates', *European Review of Economic History*, 6, 3 (2000): 395–405.

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projected backwards, using historical data, an exercise that ranks Australia very high in 1870, somewhat lower for most of the twentieth century, before rising again by 1999. The Economist Intelligence Unit's quality of urban life indicator regularly ranks Australian cities very highly.¹⁰ Finally, Australia has fared well in international surveys of happiness conducted since the 1940s.¹¹

Australia's story since Federation is ostensibly a process of rapid, transformational economic modernisation, but the narrative is a complex and often dichotomous one. Figure 16.1 shows that much of the income growth occurred in the second half of the century, which was less affected by major disruptive events. However, the inclusion of a broader wellbeing spectrum tempers this story – much of the reduction in working hours, the introduction of household innovations, and increases in life expectancy occurred in the first half of the century. The inter-war Depression, for example, belies the expansion in consumer industries and services, while World War 2 motivated advances in the organisation and technology of manufacturing in Australia, as it did elsewhere. Finally, the impact of improved nutrition on living standards is suggested through anthropometric studies showing rising heights among army recruits when comparing the two world wars.¹²

Everyone did not share equally in this enhanced wellbeing. Income, and particularly wealth, continued to be unevenly distributed, although progressive taxation regimes and the growing social wage associated with public provision of services appear to have helped to narrow the income gap. The historical evidence to measure inequality is limited by few data points and differing forms of measurement over time. The conclusions of different writers are not always consistent but point to a secular decline in inequality between the 1930s and 1970s.¹³ Anthony Atkinson and Andrew Leigh's study of the income share of the wealthiest 10 per cent broadly confirms these trends. They also find that in the final two decades of the century inequality appears to have risen slightly due to lower top marginal tax rates, skill-based technological change and shifting attitudes to inequality.¹⁴

- 10 Economist Intelligence Unit, 'Liveability Ranking Report August 2011' https://www.eiu.com/public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=liveabilityAug2011>, accessed 21 October 2011.
- 11 Andrew Leigh and Justin Wolfers, 'Happiness and the Human Development Index: Australia Is Not a Paradox', *Australian Economic Review*, 39, 2 (2006): 176–84.
- 12 Greg Whitwell and Stephen Nicholas, 'Weight and Welfare of Australians, 1890–1940', Australian Economic History Review, 41, 2 (2001): 159–75.
- 13 Ian McLean, 'Economic Wellbeing', pp. 331-5.
- 14 Anthony B. Atkinson and Andrew Leigh, 'The Distribution of Top Incomes in Australia', *Economic Record*, 83, 262 (2007): 247–61.

Notable for their absence, however, are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who appear not to have shared substantially in most of the improvements in both income and wellbeing. Indeed, it was not until after the 1967 constitutional amendment that serious attempts were made to collect widespread information about the Indigenous population. The census of 1971 confirmed Indigenous people had been left behind on most wellbeing indicators. Analysis of census returns over the following 30 years has revealed evidence of a slow process of 'closing the gap' on most key indicators, significantly in unemployment rates, school attendance and post-school qualifications.¹⁵

Finally, in spite of the rapid advances of the last 100 years, Australia's relative economic standing internationally has declined for most of the century. In the middle of the nineteenth century, Australia, along with New Zealand, had the highest per capita income in the world. By the 1920s it had been matched or surpassed by New Zealand, the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.¹⁶ This 'lost exceptionalism' has been widely debated among economic historians who seek to understand whether this was merely an expected adjustment as the small population denominator grew rapidly or if Australian competitiveness was in decline.¹⁷ However, there has been some reversal since the early 1990s with Australia's per capita GDP growing more quickly than the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average.¹⁸ Table 16.1 compares Australia's twentieth-century growth performance with some key advanced industrial or resource-based economies. It shows a mixed picture, with Australian incomes growing more quickly than the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Argentina but more slowly than the United States, Canada and Norway.

The debate is of broader significance because understanding the country's role in the international or global economy is rightly a key concern of Australian economists and economic historians. Australia's characterisation

¹⁵ Jon C. Altman, Nicholas Biddle and Boyd H. Hunter, 'A Historical Perspective on Indigenous Socio-Economic Outcomes in Australia, 1971–2001', *Australian Economic History Review*, 45, 3 (2005): 273–95.

¹⁶ Ian W. McLean, 'Australian Economic Growth in Historical Perspective', *Economic Record*, 80, 250 (2004): 332, table 1b.

¹⁷ Broadberry and Irwin, 'Lost Exceptionalism?', pp. 262–74; Bryan Haig, 'Real Product and Productivity of Industries since the Nineteenth Century: A Comment on "Lost Exceptionalism" by Broadberry and Irwin', *Economic Record*, 84, 267 (2008): 511–14.

¹⁸ Charles Bean, 'The Australian Economic "Miracle": A View from the North', in David Gruen and Sona Shrestha (eds), *The Australian Economy in the 1990s* (Canberra: Reserve Bank of Australia, 2000), p. 74.

Year	Argentina	New Zealand	UK	Australia	USA	Canada	Norway
1901	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
1913	132	122	III	134	119	144	129
1929	152	125	124	137	155	164	178
1938	141	153	141	153	137	147	224
1950	173	200	156	193	214	235	286
1973	277	294	270	336	374	447	595
1991	242	316	363	442	512	590	1,001
2000	298	385	457	566	638	726	1,320

Table 16.1. Index of comparative real gross domestic product per capita, 1901–2000

Source: Groningen Growth and Development Centre (GGDC) – Angus Maddison Homepage, 'Statistics on World Population, GDP and Per Capita GDP, I–2008 AD', table 3 <http://www. ggdc.net/MADDISON/oriindex.htm>, accessed I April 2012. Based on constant prices in 1990 International Geary–Khamis dollars.

as a highly internationalised economy is confirmed by figures that measure international trade's share of GDP, the migrant proportion of the population and the magnitude of foreign investment.¹⁹ Exponents of staple theory have emphasised the importance of export-led growth through the foreign earnings from key commodities, while the consequences of protection for the Australian economy have generated equal discussion. Among recent major contributions to Australian economic history, Barrie Dyster and David Meredith used Australia's role in the international economy as the organising framework for their textbook.20 More specifically, Ian McLean has referred to the 'synchronous behaviour' that has linked vicissitudes in Australia's economic performance to events in the international economy.²¹ Thus the inter-war Depression, the post-World War 2 boom, the recessions of the early 1980s and 1990s, and the boom that followed into the new century were all global economic trends. As a small player, Australia has been largely beholden to trends in the global economy as a receiver rather than a transmitter of economic linkages. Of importance in this relationship are both the direct economic linkages through factor and product markets such as the

¹⁹ Ian McLean, 'Growth in a Small Open Economy: An Historical View', in Bruce Chapman (ed.), *Australian Economic Growth: Essays in Honour of Fred H. Gruen* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1989), p. 16, table 1.2.

²⁰ Barrie Dyster and David Meredith, Australia in the Global Economy: Continuity and Change 2nd edn (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

²¹ McLean, 'Growth in a Small Open Economy', pp. 7–10; Ian W. McLean, Why Australia Prospered: The Shifting Sources of Economic Growth (Princeton University Press, 2013), pp. 18–19, 100–1.

international flows of labour, capital and technology, and linkages through public policy in response to conditions in the increasingly global economy. The geographic locus of those linkages has moved over time.

The shifting focus of economic and business activity

Economic expansion involved changing patterns of economic activity geographically, organisationally and across sectors. At a broad sectoral level, manufacturing's share of economic activity progressed in the form of an inverted 'U' shape, rising through the first half of the century but thereafter falling by 2000 to a share similar to that at Federation. The resource industries, despite cyclical volatility associated with overseas demand, generally lost share of GDP but continued to dominate exports. The diverse and under-recorded services sector held the largest broad share at the beginning of the century and continued to increase its dominance as the century progressed. This increase was due in part to the growth of specialist firms providing services previously hidden within vertically integrated corporations.²² While different measures of economic activity, such as output, employment and capital formation, provide some variations in the magnitude and timing of these trends, the overall conclusions remain the same. As one might expect, the services and manufacturing sectors have dominated employment, while most farms and mines have been more land and capital-intensive.

This pattern of structural change is consistent with generalisations of the way economies develop: that is, a shift occurs from primary to secondary industry as economies industrialise, with the latter in turn yielding ground to services in the post-industrial age. It also broadly approximates the distribution of economic activity across the twentieth century in other developed economies such as the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada.²³

The contribution of the sectors to international trade, however, sets Australia apart from many economically developed nations. Resource exports have remained dominant (about 75–95 per cent of visible exports), far exceeding the sector's diminishing share of GDP (about 10–25 per cent) and helping to pay for negative balances from manufacturing imports.²⁴ At its

²² Michael Carter, 'The Service Sector', in Maddock and McLean (eds), *The Australian Economy in the Long Run*, pp. 222–3.

²³ Ibid., pp. 198–200.

²⁴ John W. Freebairn, 'Natural Resource Industries', in Maddock and McLean (eds), *The Australian Economy in the Long Run*, p. 160; Ian McLean, 'Why Was Australia So Rich?', *Explorations in Economic History*, 44, 4 (2007): 635–56.

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mid-century peak, manufacturing's approximately 30 per cent share of GDP was similar to many industrialised nations but its share of exports remained much lower.²⁵ The non-tradable nature of many services meant that their contribution to the international sector was much less than to the domestic economy. Exceptionally, education services expanded rapidly in the final two decades of the century to become the biggest export earner after coal and iron ore as large numbers of foreign students studied in Australia. Australia is thus part of a small group of developed resource-based economies that include Norway, New Zealand and Canada.

The broad sectoral trends conceal significant innovation and change at a higher level of disaggregation, which has generally been more difficult to measure with precision. Within manufacturing, individual industries and their products rose and fell in response to innovation, the entrance of foreign multinationals, changing consumer tastes, and trade policy. In the early years of the century, manufacturing was clustered in bulky, low-value goods that used basic technology, such as in building materials, clothing and primary metals - though some continuous process, mass-production technology was emerging in food processing industries such as milling, brewing and distilling. Manufacturing's expansion after 1918 was broadly based, drawing on traditional industries such as foods and textiles, and emergent sectors, particularly electrical equipment and vehicle construction and use. The disruption to sea trade during World War 2 provided the opportunity to expand through import substitution into sectors such as machine tools, in which producers had previously been uncompetitive compared with large-scale foreign enterprises.

In the 1950s and 1960s industrial expansion was viewed as the path to further economic development in Australia, which fostered increases in protection through quotas and local content requirements to support import substitution in particular industries. Symptomatic of this were the government incentives in favour of local production of engines and chassis that motivated the first entirely Australian-built car in 1948 by Holden.²⁶ By the end of the 1960s, manufacturing's share of GDP had begun to decline. Tariff policy played a complex role: on the one hand, the shelter provided by persistently high tariff levels, peaking in the 1970s, weakened underlying international competitiveness; on the other,

²⁵ Kym Anderson, 'Tariffs and the Manufacturing Sector', in Maddock and McLean (eds), The Australian Economy in the Long Run, pp. 166–9.

²⁶ Robert Conlon and John Perkins, Wheels and Deals: The Automotive Industry in Twentieth-Century Australia (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 115–23.

subsequent tariff reductions pushed domestic producers out of business. Other factors included the emergence of new industrial nations in Southeast Asia with lower labour costs, while the rising global scale of manufacturing made it difficult for a nation with a small labour force and market to build international competitiveness in many industries.²⁷ By the final decades of the twentieth century, a smaller but technologically more sophisticated manufacturing sector found a competitive niche in sub-industry sectors such as vehicle components. As a result, manufacturing raised its share of merchandise exports, particularly elaborately transformed products that have gone through several manufacturing stages.²⁸

The resources sector diversified similarly. The nineteenth-century staples of wool, wheat, coal and gold yielded share to the exploitation of a widening range of resources including refrigerated food products, oil, gas, uranium, iron ore, bauxite, alumina, nickel, manganese, fertilisers and fish farming. These advances drew upon high levels of technological innovation brought about by interaction between the resources sector and enabling institutions such as universities, government research institutes and the capital goods industries. This ability to develop new resource industries and products on a regular basis goes a long way to explaining why Australia dodged the so-called resource curse that causally links resource intensity to retarded economic growth.²⁹

The pattern of development across the twentieth century confirms the notorious cyclical instability of resource industries, dependent both upon the vagaries of nature for production and the whims of industrialising nations for demand. The heavy reliance on resource exports consequently led to significant vicissitudes in the terms of trade across the century.³⁰ Agricultural and pastoral output was enduring the tail end of the drought and economic crises of the 1890s at the time of Federation. The two world wars brought boom conditions for Australia's pastoral industries due to the British government's acquisition of Australian wool at generous official prices. Curtailment of overseas demand between the wars adversely affected Australia's resources industries. In the 1950s and 1960s, innovation, further wars in Korea and Vietnam, and

²⁷ Colin Forster, 'Economies of Scale and Australian Manufacturing', in Colin Forster (ed.), *Australian Economic Development in the Twentieth Century* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), pp. 123–68.

²⁸ Dyster and Meredith, Australia in the Global Economy, pp. 12-13.

²⁹ Jeffrey D. Sachs and Andrew M. Warner, 'The Curse of Natural Resources', European Economic Review, 45, 4–6 (2001): 827–38.

³⁰ Dyster and Meredith, Australia in the Global Economy, pp. 65, 103, 183, 227, 254, 320.

Japanese industrialisation contributed to a restoration of healthy conditions and a spike in the terms of trade. The 1970s and much of the 1980s witnessed a return to difficult international trading conditions. More recently, the secular boom of the 1990s and the industrialisation of China have provided enormous opportunities for Australian miners.

The services omnibus includes business, personal, leisure and public services. The mix within each of these subsets varied across the century. Business activities, originally designed to support the supply chain of primary industries, such as finance, auctioneering and shipping, broadened with the economy to include more accounting, law, communications, property and consultancy or advice activities. Leisure services grew, aided by shorter working hours. Wholesale and retail services remained relatively important but with some major changes in form, particularly the growth of mass retailing through department and chain stores. Public services grew with the expanding role of government in health, education and defence.

Transport services, vital for an expansive and distant nation like Australia, were transformed by new technologies. Land-based public transport yielded ground to the family car by the 1950s, while the rising provision and falling cost of air travel overwhelmed shipboard passenger travel from the 1960s, although seaborne freight remains the dominant mode of conveyance.³¹ Within the household budget, new technologies led to shifts in service provision – whitegoods replacing domestic service from the interwar period, live theatre and music giving way following World War 2 to 'entertainment systems' and, more recently, computers. Ironically, the effect in each case has been to increase the demand for manufactured goods that use the general-purpose technologies of electricity, the internal combustion engine and the microchip.

In spite of Federation, Australia remained firmly within the sphere of British economic influence for several decades as Australia's principal trade, investment and migration partner. Up to World War I, 44–47 per cent of Australian exports went to Britain, from where Australia received 53–61 per cent of its imports. This reflected the complementary relations between a merchandise and a commodity-based economy, so that Australia exchanged wool and wheat for British manufactures.³² By 1914, 44 per cent of Australia's

³¹ Graeme Davison, Car Wars: How the Car Won Our Hearts and Conquered Our Cities (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2004); Jim Davidson and Peter Spearritt, Holiday Business: Tourism in Australia since 1870 (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2000), ch. 10.

³² Dyster and Meredith, Australia in the Global Economy, p. 68, table 3.1.

long-term stock of international capital had come from the United Kingdom.³³ Finally, nearly 80 per cent of immigrants arriving in Australia on the eve of World War I came from the United Kingdom and Ireland.³⁴ Australia's subservience to the needs of the British Empire was apparent in other ways – it was part of the 'sterling bloc' of countries that was established following devaluation of the pound in 1931, all of which linked their currency to that of Britain, kept their gold reserves in London, and participated in the 1932 Ottawa Agreement of an 'imperial preference' customs union.

Yet Australia gradually broke away from British mediation of its international economic relations to build trade and investment with most major economies, including the USA, Canada, Japan, China and the principal Western European countries. Reorientation occurred in several phases. By the inter-war years the USA was increasing its share of Australian exports and imports, a trend that continued through to the 1960s. By then, though, Australia's export market had begun to shift again – towards Japan, whose steel mills became eager consumers of Australian coal and iron ore as a result of that nation's rapid industrialisation. Similarly, China had become the principal destination of Australian exports by the 1990s.³⁵

These trading shifts were mirrored relatively closely by investment, particularly with the arrival of large numbers of American manufacturing multinationals into Australia from the 1920s including Ford (1925), General Motors (1926) and Monsanto (1928), followed in turn by Japanese firms such as Mitsubishi (1926), Toyota (1958) and Sumitomo (1961). American and Japanese firms transferred skills, technology and organisational thinking that were vital to the modernising Australian economy. By the 1980s there were major investment flows in the opposite direction as Australian firms engaged in resources, services and manufacturing expanded overseas, particularly in Europe and the United States but also to smaller affiliates in New Zealand and Asia.³⁶ Australia's outward stock of foreign direct investment increased in

- 34 David Pope and Glenn Withers, 'Wage Effects of Immigration in Late-Nineteenth Century-Australia', in Timothy J. Hatton and Jeffrey G. Williamson (eds), *Migration and the International Labour Market*, 1850–1939 (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 242.
- 35 Dyster and Meredith, Australia in the Global Economy, p. 192, table 8.4; Kym Anderson, 'Australia in the International Economy', in John Nieuwenhuysen, Peter Lloyd and Margaret Mead (eds), Reshaping Australia's Economy: Growth with Equity and Sustainability (Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 38–9.
- 36 David Merrett, 'Australian Multinationals in Historical Perspective: "Do You Come from a Land Down Under?", in Howard Dick and David Merrett (eds), The Internationalisation Strategies of Small Country Firms: The Australian Experience of Globalisation (Cheltenham: Elgar, 2007), pp. 26–7.

³³ Ibid., p. 45, table 2.2.

nominal terms from \$2 billion to \$117 billion between 1980 and 2003; as a share of GDP, this was a remarkable rise from less than 2 per cent to 23 per cent.³⁷

Within Australia, the key geographic shifts in economic activity were associated with rising levels of urbanisation. The urban share of population rose from 49 to 86 per cent between 1901 and 1981 before declining slightly in the following two decades.³⁸ Sydney and Melbourne consolidated their leadership as the principal economic and demographic conurbations. This trend, related largely to rising manufacturing output and the growing services sector, motivated heavy investment in urban utilities such as water, gas, electricity and sewerage. While the rural sector's share of output gave up some ground, the relocation of the international wool market from London to the Australian port cities required substantial new investments in sale rooms, display and storage warehouses to support the new auction system.³⁹ Many foreign buyers from Europe and Japan set up offices in Sydney and Melbourne to be close to the market. Sydney and Melbourne's growing domination of urban manufacturing and services reflected an increasing regional specialisation in economic activity as Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland developed their resource-based industries, particularly mining, timber and agriculture.

Big business, both Australian and foreign-owned, became an essential part of the landscape of the Australian economy in the twentieth century. Initially, the largest enterprises were government-owned, a consequence of public responsibility for major forms of infrastructure such as railways and postal communications originating in the colonial socialism of the late nineteenth century. The Victorian Railways and New South Wales Railways managed the largest portfolios of capital and labour before 1914. Some utility industries, such as electricity, came under government ownership from the 1920s and a further, though temporary, phase of public ownership occurred after World War 2.

However, the predominant feature of the emergent business economy was the rise of large-scale corporations reaching out across a national landscape. Multinationals flocked to Australia, attracted by the growing local consumer market and the need to jump tariff barriers. Domestic firms responded to

³⁷ Ibid., p. 25, table 2.3.

³⁸ J.C. Caldwell, 'Population', in Vamplew (ed.), *Australians*, p. 40; Graeme Hugo, 'A Century of Population Change', in Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book Australia*, 2001, cat. no. 1301.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2001).

³⁹ David Merrett, Stephen Morgan and Simon Ville, 'Industry Associations as Facilitators of Social Capital: The Establishment and Early Operations of the Melbourne Woolbrokers Association', *Business History*, 50, 6 (2008): 781–94.

similar impulses and were able to seek funding from the emerging local capital market as new issues became easier to raise and more firms were regularly traded on the state-based stock exchanges. As was the case in other nations, the largest firms tended to cluster in the expanding manufacturing sector, although diversifying resource firms provided an additional dimension to corporate expansion in Australia: for example, the miner Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP) began steel production in Newcastle (1915) and Port Kembla (1935), while the Colonial Sugar Refining Company (CSR) diversified into building materials, beginning with vinyl flooring (1949) and hardboard (1959). Large-scale enterprise also moved increasingly into farming as the number of family farms halved to little more than 100,000 in the second half of the century, but their average size rose to meet scale imperatives and competition from corporate producers.

While minnows compared with the leading firms of Britain or the United States, the largest firms were mammoths within Australia. For better or worse, they cast shadows over local business longer than those of their overseas counterparts.40 The quintessentially Australian term 'big end of town' intimates a group of collusive and self-seeking corporate leaders. In practice, however, these large firms drove cost-reducing scale efficiencies in production, served as receptacles for technical change and labour training, and achieved transaction cost economies through internalising many business transactions. The smallness of the domestic economy made it impossible for more than one or two firms in most industries to attain the scale to be internationally competitive. In most cases, looking to build scale through overseas expansion was problematic due to distance and an emphasis upon resource industries often unsuited to internationalisation. From about the 1980s, however, more Australian firms expanded abroad, motivated by a mix of country and firm-specific advantages: the increased competitiveness of Australian firms through domestic economic reform and the opportunity to exploit expanding overseas markets. This unfinished story remains one of limited achievement as firms across various sectors, including finance, banking, mining, communications, brewing and construction, pulled back investment by the end of the century.

The economic benefits wrought by large-scale enterprise were entirely consistent with a culture of cooperation and collusion. As early as 1914 H.L. Wilkinson drew attention to the large number of trusts covering many

⁴⁰ Grant Fleming, David Merrett and Simon Ville, *The Big End of Town: Big Business and Corporate Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 29, table 2.11.

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sectors of the economy, including coal, tobacco, flour, fruit and shipping, many of which were colluding to raise prices or limit output.⁴¹ Despite the passage of the *Australian Industries Preservation Act* eight years earlier, partly to combat such practices, and Wilkinson's desire to see government act decisively, collusion continued. By 1969 over 1,000 trade associations had been registered under the terms of the *Trade Practices Act* of 1965.⁴² Cooperation among firms also brought broader benefits, particularly through sharing know-how and capital equipment, a significant consideration for a small and distant economy, as the federal government came to recognise by the 1990s.⁴³

The largest corporations at Federation were typically both owned and managed by the same small group of entrepreneurs, often family-based. By the final decades of the century Australia had belatedly followed the common pattern of modern corporate development of divorcing ownership from control with the expansion of small shareholders and large institutional investors. Foreign multinationals provided local exposure to best overseas practices in organisational structure and governance.44 There were also points of difference from the experience of other nations. The vast distance of the Australian continent presented challenges of coordination for service industries such as banking, pastoral agency, and retailing. This encouraged a form of 'organic' multidivisional organisation whereby the company leveraged its core competences in branches spread far and wide but ultimately relied upon a significant degree of autonomy at each location.⁴⁵ That they chose their local staff carefully benefitted the largest firms, which could draw upon an internal labour market of known and trusted employees seeking to build their career within a single firm.

Drivers of economic growth

The sources of a nation's economic growth and development can be examined at different levels. Increases in the scale of supply and demand will generate expanded economic activity. The sources of supply and demand, though, rarely remain unchanged: as was seen in the previous section, the patterns of activity

⁴¹ H.L. Wilkinson, The Trust Movement in Australia (Melbourne: Critchley Parker, 1914).

⁴² R.D. Freeman, 'Trade Associations in the Australian Economy', in Colin A. Hughes (ed.), *Readings in Australian Government* (Brisbane: UQP, 1968), pp. 38–42.

⁴³ Bureau of Industry Economics, Beyond the Firm: An Assessment of Business Linkages and Networks in Australia (Canberra: AGPS, 1995).

⁴⁴ Donald T. Brash, American Investment in Australian Industry (Canberra: ANU Press, 1966).

⁴⁵ Fleming, Merrett and Ville, The Big End of Town, p. 161.

altered as the Australian economy grew. Productivity, an increase in outputs relative to a given level of inputs, plays a key role in several respects. Higher levels of output can often be achieved more efficiently through economies of scale. New combinations of factor inputs, often the result of technical change, can also increase production efficiency. Innovations in one sector may spill over to the benefit of other parts of the economy through production linkages or shared learning environments. Economies are unlikely to achieve sustained expansion over time without productivity gains as well as increases in inputs. One study estimates that two-thirds of Australian economic growth from Federation to 1979 was attributable to factor accumulation and one-third to increased productivity.⁴⁶

At a deeper level of analysis, why have some economies fared better than others at responding to the opportunities available in the international economy and in achieving growth-inducing productivity improvements? Comparative economic history has recorded much, but agreed little, on the critical set of growth-inducing conditions for an economy, debating the role of government policy, the natural environment, social-cultural relations and the influence of institutions. While this level of analysis of causality is more profound than estimates of factor accumulation and productivity change, it is far more difficult to reach universally accepted conclusions. The deeper determinants of economic development in Australia, as in any nation, are a complex and contested terrain.

Australia's population grew steadily through the twentieth century. While expanding more slowly than in the nineteenth century, Australia stood out among most developed countries for its rapid demographic expansion.⁴⁷ Natural increase provided most of the overall growth in population, but immigration made an important contribution to the development of the workforce. Immigration's share of population increase moved in a strongly pro-cyclical manner with economic fluctuations, suggesting its importance in filling labour market shortages in upturns while not increasing unemployment rates during downturns such as in the 1930s. Government policies of selective skill criteria, assisted passages and facilitated settlement all assisted the needs of the domestic labour market. Migration contributed as much as 45 per cent to the growth of the labour force in the post–World War 2 years when the manufacturing sector, with its heavy demand for labour, grew

⁴⁶ Andre Kaspura and Geoff Weldon, 'Productivity Trends in the Australian Economy 1900–01 to 1978–79', Working Paper 9 (Canberra: Department of Productivity, 1980).

⁴⁷ Angus Maddison, The World Economy. A Millennial Perspective (Paris: OECD, 2001), p. 188.

quickly.⁴⁸ The gradual shift away from the white Australia policy provided a wider pool of foreign labour on which to draw. The earlier policy had been premised partly on the potential threat to the employment of domestic workers if large numbers of migrants had arrived from low-wage countries. David Pope and Glenn Withers have drawn attention to the contribution of migrants to aggregate demand as consumers, as well as being part of the workforce.⁴⁹

The labour force participation rate – the share of those aged between 15 and 64 working or seeking work – has remained fairly steady since Federation at between about 60 and 70 per cent, reflecting the economy's ability to continually absorb new workers as the population expanded. This aggregate statistic conceals significant changes in workforce composition, mainly since 1945, with the growth of female workers (especially married women), the reduced participation of older male workers, and the expansion of part-time and casual employment. Reflecting broader economic trends, much of this growth occurred in manufacturing and the large, labour-intensive service sector. Employment in farming stagnated while mining's decline reflected the growing capital intensity of the sector.

Increased labour productivity was achieved mostly by improvements in the human capital of the workforce, the effectiveness with which skills were assigned to relevant tasks, and changes in the organisation and technology of production. Literacy rates were already comparatively high in the late colonial period. The growth of secondary school participation rates and increases in per capita funding of education occurred largely in the decades after 1945. Technical training and tertiary education expanded most markedly in the final years of the century. This supports the view that factor accumulation rather than factor productivity growth predominated in Australia for much of the century and created a lag compared with nations such as the United States, which had already invested more heavily in human capital.⁵⁰

Internal labour markets, as receptacles of training and of appropriate career progression and task assignment, provided an alternative avenue for improved labour productivity. Several large organisations, including the Union Bank of Australia and Victorian Railways, operated internal labour

⁴⁸ Withers, 'Labour', in Maddock and McLean (eds), *The Australian Economy in the Long Run*, pp. 262–3.

⁴⁹ David Pope and Glenn Withers, 'Do Migrants Rob Jobs? Lessons of Australian History, 1861–1991', Journal of Economic History, 53, 4 (1993): 719–42.

⁵⁰ Mary MacKinnon, 'Schooling: Examining Some Myths', in David Pope and Lee Alston (eds), Australia's Greatest Asset: Human Resources in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Sydney: Federation Press, 1989), pp. 102–29; Withers, 'Labour', pp. 265–7.

markets by the beginning of the twentieth century, although these practices emerged more belatedly among other major firms.⁵¹ American multinationals infused the latest thinking on the bureaucratic organisation of large-scale enterprise. From the late nineteenth century, American unidivisional (U-form) enterprises organised specialist career managers into functional departments (such as finance, marketing, research and production). From about the 1920s, multidivisional (M-form) enterprises decentralised operations into product or geographic divisions that competed for the firm's resources. Both structures derived primarily from the American corporate economy, which they served well in employee motivation and skill specialisation.⁵² Hybrid forms were adopted in Australia, for example, by CSR, but generally not until after World War 2. Insufficient scale and the persistence of family ownership constrained earlier development. By the mid-1970s most leading Australian manufacturers had adopted the M-form.⁵³

Rapid increases in the capital stock similarly emphasised factor accumulation as a driver of Australian economic growth.⁵⁴ Capital formation in the early decades extended the heavy investments in pastoralism, the railways and urban infrastructure, which had dominated expenditure prior to Federation. The railway network almost doubled in length from 20,240 kilometres in 1901 to 37,492 kilometres in 1921.⁵⁵ By the inter-war period, manufacturing was a growing consumer of capital for the construction of factories and production of modern machinery. New technology, mostly from the United States and Europe, altered the nature of production. Innovation in both new and old industries relied upon the twin general-purpose technologies of electricity and automobiles to drive growth. Scale economies through mass-production methods reduced costs and enabled market leaders to emerge such as Tooth (brewing), Henry Jones (jam), Australian Glass Manufacturers, and Herald and Weekly Times (newspapers).⁵⁶ Thus manufacturing was much better

- 51 Andrew Seltzer and André Sammartino, 'Internal Labour Markets: Evidence from Two Large Australian Employers', Australian Economic History Review, 49, 2 (2009): 107– 37; Gordon Boyce and Simon Ville, The Development of Modern Business (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 127, 142–3.
- 52 Alfred D. Chandler, Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of the Industrial Enterprise (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962), ch. I.
- 53 Robert H. Chenhall, 'Some Elements of Organisational Control in Australian Divisionalised Firms', Australian Journal of Management 4, 1 (supplement) (1979): 6, 24.
- 54 W.A. Sinclair, 'Capital Formation', in Forster (ed.), Australian Economic Development in the Twentieth Century, p. 12.
- 55 Wray Vamplew and Ian McLean, 'Transport and Communication', in Vamplew (ed.), Australians: Historical Statistics, p. 168.
- 56 Helen Fountain, 'Technology Acquisition, Firm Capability and Sustainable Competitive Advantage: A Case Study of Australian Glass Manufacturers Ltd, 1915–39',

placed to contribute to the war effort in World War 2 and in turn received a greater boost than in World War 1, with substantial investments in new or existing factories by the Department of Munitions.

The critical mass achieved by some corporate leaders enabled them to invest in intangible forms of marketing capital such as branding and advertising. This was particularly the case among firms in food and drinks products such as Carlton United Brewery and Goodman Fielder. Henry Jones was using the IXL brand as early as the 1890s to build market share and generate production scale economies. In the 1920s Bert Appleroth used a series of gimmicks and saturation advertising to promote 'Aeroplane Jelly', while Berlei focused on marketing women's undergarments that were designed scientifically to fit more comfortably.⁵⁷ In general, though, Australian firms were slow to develop brands compared with American or British ones.⁵⁸

The boom decades of the 1950s and 1960s raised investment levels in the public and private sectors. Businesses sought to overcome the paucity of wartime investment, catch up with overseas developments in the new consumer durable industries and fill the pent-up demand for their products. Productivity surged ahead, driven by the expansion of innovative sectors in chemicals, metals and engineering – manufacturing output per employee grew at levels of above 4 per cent in the 1950s and 1960s compared with barely 1 per cent in earlier decades.⁵⁹ The suburbanisation of cities and the growth of vehicle ownership in turn motivated new public infrastructure investments in roads, utilities and telecommunications. The upshot of all this was that the 'investment ratio' of capital formation to GDP rose to the very high level of around 25 per cent.⁶⁰ Although economic growth slowed after about 1970, investment remained high and shifted towards mining, and financial, business and property services.

The growing services sector generated a series of productivity-enhancing innovations. From the 1960s a stream of advances in information technology benefitted business services by developing electronic systems for processing

in David Merrett (ed.), Business Institutions and Behaviour in Australia (London: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. 89–108; Bruce Brown, I Excel! The Life and Times of Sir Henry Jones (Hobart: Libra Books, 1991).

- 57 Boyce and Ville, Development of Modern Business, p. 190.
- 58 Nancy F. Koehn, Brand New: How Entrepreneurs Earned Consumers' Trust from Wedgwood to Dell (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2001).
- 59 Graeme Snooks, 'Manufacturing', in Vamplew (ed.), Australians: Historical Statistics, p. 287.
- 60 D.T. Merrett, 'Capital Markets and Capital Formation in Australia, 1945–90', Australian Economic History Review, 38, 2 (1998): 148–9.

and storing data. This was clearly evident in the banking industry. At Westpac the milestones were electronic data storage from the 1960s and electronic processing from the 1970s, which facilitated automatic teller machines from 1980, electronic funds transfer from 1984, telephone banking from 1994 and internet banking from 1998.⁶¹ These changes improved labour productivity and refocused capital needs from the bricks and mortar of branches to modern information and communications technologies (ICT) systems. The 1990s were a tipping point for the uptake of ICT more generally: vast improvements in computer capabilities and the demand for them transformed price–performance ratios.⁶² Australians benefitted from this shift of the terms of trade in favour of user nations. Construction and wholesale and retail trade, as well as finance, became major users. Supply chains operated more efficiently through innovations such as electronic tagging, which enabled firms to reduce inventory holdings.

Domestic personal savings emerged in the twentieth century as the principal source of investible funds for new capital formation as foreign investors responded warily to the economic turmoil of the 1890s and the local capital market began to take shape. Government banks, especially savings banks, filled the gap left by private trading banks and helped to mobilise individual savings. World War 1 brought further opportunities for individual savers through subscription to war loans.⁶³ The State-based stock exchanges, formerly drawing largely upon mining stock, diversified into manufacturing. Aided by investment advice from stockbrokers such as J.B. Were, and the growth of a financial press, investors were enticed to purchase new issues in firms that promised to make the most of exciting, occasionally dubious, overseas innovations such as sound and motion pictures, vehicle components, optical and x-ray equipment, and cordial and aerated drinks. The number of securities traded on the Melbourne Stock Exchange rose from 149 to 562 between 1907 and 1939, while the average number of shareholders in the thirteen largest companies across Australia rose from 1,029 in 1912 to 6,102 in 1954.⁶⁴ The growing maturity of capital markets provided an effective response to the high post-World War 2 investment ratio. Stock market listings grew and institutional investors (insurance companies and pension funds) exercised

⁶¹ L. Sharon Davidson and Stephen Salsbury, Australia's First Bank: Fifty Years from the Wales to Westpac (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2005).

⁶² Robert J. Gordon, 'Does the "New Economy" Measure up to the Great Inventions of the Past?', *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 14, 4 (2000): 49–74.

⁶³ Merrett, 'Capital Markets and Capital Formation in Australia, 1945–90', pp. 192–3.

⁶⁴ David T. Merrett and Simon Ville, 'Financing Growth: New Issues by Australian Firms 1920–1939', Business History Review, 83, 3 (2009): 569, 574.

increasing influence, while privatisations attracted growing interest from small individual investors. The bond market matured considerably; issues became more regular, provided a more varied set of maturity dates and attracted an active secondary market.⁶⁵

That the Australian economy was blessed with high rates of capital formation is unquestioned. Measuring the productivity of this capital is a lot more difficult, particularly the social overhead capital required in a rapidly developing economy for communications, urban utilities and housing. Railways are a case in point: they absorbed substantial volumes of investment in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but there is little agreement on how best to assess productivity of the railways due to their indirect and lagged impacts on output.⁶⁶

An alternative approach is to ask whether the best choices were made between investment alternatives and how these decisions were reached. W.A. Sinclair drew attention to the weaknesses in public investment decision making due to inadequate appraisal of, and insufficient coordination between, projects.⁶⁷ The contested opinions of policy makers at the time, and among historians more recently, have polarised into two schools of thought. The pursuit of urban-based manufacturing with the supporting infrastructure as the path to economic modernisation in most developed nations is set against the comparative advantages of primary industries based in rural communities as the traditional backbone and wealth generator of the developing Australian economy. Timothy Coghlan, government statistician for New South Wales, had warned as early as 1904 that 'the abnormal aggregation of the population into their capital cities is a most unfortunate element in the progress of these states'.⁶⁸ This can be extended to include the idea that policy as a whole was slanted in favour of the cities due to their demographic and electoral dominance. Tariffs favoured urban manufacturing at the expense of rural exports and 'tapered' railway freight rates favoured large urban manufacturers at the expense of smaller rural firms in the same industries. Finally, the urban economic expansion was seen as crowding out factor markets, particularly through higher wages.

⁶⁵ Merrett, 'Capital Markets and Capital Formation in Australia, 1945–90', pp. 140–3.

⁶⁶ For example, see B.R. Davidson, 'A Benefit Cost Analysis of the New South Wales Railway System', Australian Economic History Review, 22, 2 (1982): 127–50; H.M. Boot, 'Government and the Colonial Economies', Australian Economic History Review, 38, 1 (1998): 74–101.

⁶⁷ Sinclair, 'Capital Formation', pp. 16-23.

⁶⁸ T.A. Coghlan, A Statistical Account of the Seven Colonies of Australasia, 1901–1902 (Sydney: Government Printer, 1903), p. 155.

In practice, there was greater balance since tariffs were offset by substantial rural industry assistance. By lowering average charges on longer hauls, tapered freight rates also helped rural exporters and fostered a pattern of regional specialisation within States. Capital markets were often segmented, with rural funds derived from specialist providers such as stock and station agents and local banks, while urban infrastructure was typically funded by government bonds. At the heart of modern Australian economic development has been the synergistic relationship between rural production and urban services (such as finance, insurance, marketing and transport), both vital to export-led development.

Land, as a factor of production, is often excluded from the modelling of developed economies on the grounds that it is insignificant to the manufacturing and services sectors. However, a broader notion of geography and environment is important to the development of all economies.⁶⁹ The rural versus urban debate is an example of the influence of geography but there is far more to be said about its role in Australia. The most enduring thesis from this perspective is Geoffrey Blainey's Tyranny of Distance, which emphasises the impact of Australia's remote geographic location on the country's pattern of economic development.70 The remoteness felt by settlers in the nineteenth century began to fade in the twentieth. Steam, then motorised shipping, together with the ocean cable, shortened and regularised external and internal communication times by the early twentieth century. Subsequent technological developments, including motor vehicles, air transport, telephones and information technology, brought down the cost and improved the ease and effectiveness of transport and communications to a degree that enabled Australians to mitigate many aspects of the tyranny of distance. At the same time, key economic activities were increasingly repatriated to Australia, including commodity markets, capital markets and corporations. Finally, the industrialisation of much of East Asia in the second half of the twentieth century, along with changing immigration patterns and cultural attitudes within Australia, brought the geography of the global economy much closer to Australian shores.

Environmental challenges continued to shape the Australian economy in the twentieth century, including a harsh climate (inconsistent or low rainfall,

⁶⁹ Jeffrey Sachs, 'Institutions Don't Rule: Direct Effects of Geography on Per Capita Income', NBER Working Paper 9490 (2003) http://www.nber.org/papers/w9490, accessed 21 October 2011 .

⁷⁰ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History*, rev. edn (Sydney: Macmillan, 2001).

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temperature extremes) and geology (sparse river systems, semi-arid interior), which limited population settlement and agricultural expansion. These challenges were met with some carefully considered responses. Modern farming technology made better use of limited water supplies, while financial innovations helped to spread the risk between years of dearth and plenty. Our understanding of the role of the natural environment should also be appreciated through its munificence: the natural resource industries have continued to occupy a central place in Australian prosperity and development in the twentieth century.

Underpinning Australia's continued progress were the institutional arrangements governing economic development. Institutions are perhaps best understood as 'rules of the game' that help to constrain and encourage behaviour. As Douglass North has shown, optimal institutions must be dynamic by adapting to change as well as helping to drive it.⁷¹ The colonial institutions imported into Australia from Britain had been adapted to meet local conditions. The economic, financial, labour and climatic crises of the 1890s, together with the unification of the colonies through Federation, necessitated further institutional adaption. British investors turned their back on many Australian companies following losses on speculative mining ventures, while the London boards of freestanding companies in Australia began to understand the growing ineffectiveness of management by remote control. Strikes by shearers, miners and maritime workers asserted the egalitarian aspirations of the Australian workforce, while colonial institutions offered no effective response to the drought. Federation provided the opportunity to design national solutions that would allow a more independent role for Australia in the global economy.

Institutional change favoured the growth of national capabilities directed largely by the regulatory hand of government. The Lyne tariff schedule of 1908 initiated a long period of import protection designed to boost domestic manufacturing. Further major increases in protection occurred with the Greene Tariff of 1921 and the Scullin Tariff of 1929–31. Many other adjustments were orchestrated by the Tariff Board, which was established in 1921 and remained influential into the second half of the century.⁷² Import

⁷¹ Douglass C. North, Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance (Cambridge University Press, 1990).

⁷² David Merrett and Simon Ville, 'Tariffs, Subsidies and Profits: A Re-assessment of Structural Change in Australia, 1901–39', Australian Economic History Review, 51, I (2011): 49–51; Peter Lloyd, '100 Years of Tariff Protection in Australia', Australian Economic History Review, 48, 2 (2008): 122–30.

quotas were also used in the 1950s. By the late 1960s the effective rate of protection for manufacturing (allowing for the impact of the tariffs on inputs as well as outputs) had reached 36 per cent.⁷³ Attempts were also made to protect domestic industry from foreign competition through the *Australian Industries Preservation Act* of 1906. Succour was similarly provided to agriculture from the 1920s through marketing boards, price support schemes, and international commodity agreements.

Labour markets and industrial relations became highly centralised and regulated. The industrial unrest of the 1890s fostered arbitration between employer and employee groups. The 1904 *Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Act* established the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration to prevent and settle industrial disputes covering two or more States; by 1929 it presided over 59 per cent of wage changes.⁷⁴ A range of regulatory and conciliation bodies continued to exist at the State level.

The hand of government regulation was prominent in financial markets, particularly through the Commonwealth issue of currency from 1910, the publicly owned Commonwealth Bank in 1912, and the powers conferred on the Loan Council in 1927 to determine the volume of public sector borrowing. From World War 2 the Commonwealth Bank assumed the role of central banker and regulator of monetary policy; the central banking function was hived off to form the Reserve Bank of Australia in 1960. Government regulation of financial markets increased, particularly as a result of wartime controls in 1942 and two banking acts in 1945. As David Merrett has noted, 'At the end of the war, the Australian privately-owned banking system was tightly regulated in almost every respect'.⁷⁵

Australians took a major leap forward in seeking to design institutions oriented towards the needs of national development. To say that these institutional arrangements built scale more than they did efficiency would be consistent with the story of factor accumulation over increased productivity. The combination of subsidised agriculture, tariffs, centralised wage fixing and regulated financial markets created a significant misallocation of resources in a high-cost, high-price economy. Besides the misallocation of resources through a heavily regulated environment, such policies became increasingly bureaucratic over time with a plethora of rules and enforcement bodies at different levels of government that made them difficult and costly to enforce.

⁷³ Andrew Leigh, 'Trade Liberalisation and the Australian Labor Party', *Australian Journal* of Politics and History, 48, 4 (2002): 491.

⁷⁴ Withers, 'Labour', pp. 250–1.

⁷⁵ Merrett, 'Capital Markets and Capital Formation in Australia, 1945–90', p. 137.

A.G. Kenwood's analysis of Australian institutions has drawn attention, for example, to the existence by the 1920s of 10 federal and in excess of 50 State agricultural marketing authorities.⁷⁶

While not the only reason for manufacturing's expansion, tariffs sheltered domestic firms from overseas competitors long after the infant industry argument had expired. The OECD's 1973 annual survey of the Australian economy attributed faltering economic performance to weak competitiveness brought on in part by protectionist policies. The Crawford Committee reached a similar conclusion six years later in support of reduced protection. Centralised wage agreements based primarily upon social justice were criticised for failing to align rewards with skills and thus discouraging human capital investment. Competition policy was criticised more for its absence, the 1906 Act having become a dead letter. During the inter-war downturn governments encouraged firms to cooperate to share costs and reduce oversupply in production, a pattern taken much further by the Department of War Organisation of Industry (1941-45), which forced rationalisation. The 1981 Australian Financial System Inquiry drew attention to distortions created by segmentation among different types of provider and the mismatch between official and market rates of interest. In addition, there was a confusing set of exchange controls, while competition from foreign banks was prohibited.

A shift in institutional arrangements began to occur in response to these pressures, bringing a change from a regulated towards a deregulated environment. Governments were also conscious of similar moves in major economies such as the United States and the United Kingdom. Centralised wage determination was under pressure from the 1950s as actual wages pushed ahead of those centrally determined. However, the principal changes emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as it became clear that the Australian economy needed to become more competitive. Centralised wage policies were gradually abandoned: indexation for the cost of living was removed in 1981 by the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission and by 1993 a half of salary and wage earners were covered by enterprise-based agreements at the individual workplace.⁷⁷ Financial reforms relaxed exchange controls and the permissible activities of financial institutions, and attracted greater involvement by foreign lenders. Dismantling of the tariff regime began in the 1970s and continued through the next two decades, so that the effective rate of

⁷⁶ A.G. Kenwood, Australian Economic Institutions since Federation: An Introduction (Oxford University Press 1995), p. 51.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 129, 135.

protection had fallen to around 5 per cent by 2000.⁷⁸ Competition policy was revitalised from the 1960s, initially directed against inter-firm collusion under the 1965 *Trade Practices Act*. Major changes occurred with 1974 legislation that established a Trade Practices Commission, concentrated on broad general guidelines rather than individual cases, with powers that included consumer protection and substantial penalties. Subsequent legislation defined anti-competitive behaviour, initially by a dominance (market share) test and then by use of economic theory to predict the consequences of particular types of behaviour. The establishment of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission in 1995 was the culmination of these policies under a principal federal authority.

Contemporary resilience or dependent fragility?

This chapter began with the story of economic achievement in twentieth-century Australia that has enabled people, on average, to become much wealthier and have a far greater choice over how to spend their longer lives. Progress came in fits and starts, and not everyone shared equally in these advances. While the century began with a belated recovery from the crises of the 1890s, it ended on the crest of an extended period of prosperity that ran for a decade and a half from 1992 until the global financial crisis (GFC) of 2007–08. Australia not only performed better than most in the 1990s, it was less seriously affected by the subsequent economic and financial crisis. Such progress and then resilience might suggest that the achievements of the twentieth century have taken on a self-sustaining nature; that an optimal set of institutions had emerged iteratively to temper regulation with market incentives; that a balanced and receptive view of Australia's role in the world economy had been achieved by casting off both dependency on Britain and a national fortress mentality; that the tyranny of distance had been tamed by modern communications and Asian industrialisation; that a modern national innovation system will sustain productivity improvements into the future; and finally that the angst of constrained industrialisation and reliance upon unpredictable resource industries had been dismissed as a falsehood.

It may be possible to talk in terms of economic maturity in some of these respects, although the story of robust future proofing reveals some sensitive fault-lines. While productivity appears to have had an enhanced role in economic progress in the second half of the twentieth century, its growth has

78 Leigh, 'Trade Liberalisation and the Australian Labor Party', p. 491.

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been irregular and most recently has begun to tail off once more.⁷⁹ Recent reports on the innovation system that underpins productivity have identified some key problems. These include low investment in research compared with most OECD nations, particularly in business investment. Similarly, comparatively low levels of public investment in education will restrict the vital contribution of human capital to innovation. It has also been suggested that weak communication and collaboration exists among key parts of the innovation system, especially between public bodies and industry.⁸⁰ The most recent and comprehensive analysis of innovation, *Venturous Australia*, listed 72 recommendations.

The tyranny of distance has been mitigated and Australia has engaged more independently with global society. Yet Australia remains geographically remote and there is no true substitute for face-to-face connection. Full engagement with recently industrialised and industrialising East Asia throws up sociocultural challenges as well as crystallising a dependency, for better or worse, on exporting resources and importing manufactures. Australia seeks to find its place in a plethora of regional trade blocs, none of which perceive Australia as core to its modus operandi. Australian firms continue to struggle to make an impact in their overseas ventures, as witnessed by Foster's recent drawback of its American wine interests.

At home Australia continues to espouse a fragmented form of federalism with the associated risks of a multitude of diverse, sometimes conflicting, official bodies. As economic institutions look to respond to future shifts in economic development, it is not clear whether policy reforms will be any speedier in their response than in previous eras. Such bureaucratic pluralism is symptomatic of a broader continuity of regionalist attitudes or State-based particularism, an outlook that stifles the development of a unified national economy and outlook. Socioeconomic challenges facing many developed nations are likely to operate on the Australian economy, particularly the need to respond to the effects of climate change, an ageing society, and the unfinished business of disadvantaged Indigenous communities.

^{79 &#}x27;Australia's Productivity Performance', Productivity Commission Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Economics (September 2009), p. xiii indicates that productivity has been in decline since 2003.

⁸⁰ Mapping Australian Science and Innovation (Canberra: Department of Education Science and Training, 2003), pp. 28, 33, 52; Venturous Australia: Building Strength in Innovation (Melbourne: Cutler & Company, 2008), p. 6.

¹⁷Government, law and citizenship

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There are clear trends across the fields of government, law and citizenship in twentieth-century Australia, and significant convergence in the arcs they trace. The century began with innovation, to a large extent associated with the act of Federation itself and the task of nation building. Within a decade came a lapse into stasis, accounted for by the formalisation of opposed political interests, a cultivation of traditions intended to lift justice and administration above such claims, and the settling of a policy orthodoxy aimed at ameliorating the causes that might advantage one or other of those interests. At several points – most notably in the 1940s, the 1960s and the 1980s – a surge of initiative returned, often in recognition that the balancing and bargaining points of political legitimacy had shifted.

The federal compact

The 'people' were remarkably active in setting the form of the new nation's government. The delegates to the conventions that framed the Constitution were popularly elected, and popular referendums were required to approve their work. Endorsed by nearly three-quarters of those who voted, the document presented to Queen Victoria in 1900 to 'unite' Australia's five colonies (it was a reflection of the extent of debate that Western Australia had not yet agreed to join) can be contrasted to the constitution bestowed on Canada from London in 1867. Where earlier historians emphasised the mundane economic interests weighed in the scales of Australia's prospective nationhood, recent revisionists have reclaimed the enthusiasm of the 'people's constitution' and the rich 'vernacular culture' it expressed.¹

I Helen Irving, To Constitute a Nation: A Cultural History of Australia's Constitution (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 23–4.

Federation, then, reflected a 'high point in Australian history', at which belief in popular processes allowed many causes to coalesce under 'the sovereignty of the people' and find a place in the structures and cultures of government and law.² Yet while the idea of the nation galvanised imaginations at the turn of century, it was equally and enduringly clear that the colonies-turned-States retained a resilient place. The framers of Australia's Constitution sampled widely to achieve a federal covenant – a mix some have argued to be its most 'home-grown' element.³

In this compact, a model of the Senate in name and composition was taken from the United States, if in purpose continuing the function of the colonies' legislative councils as bulwarks against popular government.⁴ The functions of this upper house were to guarantee equality of representation for each State, irrespective of population, bolstered by six-year terms to give members relative independence in their review of legislation. From the British parliament came the concept of responsible government: that ministers were to be appointed from, and accountable to, parliament. Westminster also provided the model for the House of Representatives, the members of which were to be elected from roughly equal population-based constituencies for three years, and whose majority would determine the formation of government. Again unlike the Canadian Constitution, the Australian document carefully enumerated the fields 'surrendered' to national government, including defence, taxation, external affairs, and postal services and telecommunications. The aim - as Henry Parkes, a leading 'father' of Federation, put it - was to keep 'intact' the remaining 'powers and privileges and territorial rights' of the States.⁵

In short, these balances, or compromises – sometimes termed 'Washminster' – centred on the concept of a 'federal Commonwealth' as a composite rather than unitary entity. This model has proved fundamental to the practice (and much of the politics) of Australian government. Provisions such as the requirement that referendums to amend the Constitution must be passed in a majority of States as well as by a majority of voters, and the

² John Hirst, *The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth* (Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 124–5.

³ Campbell Sharman, 'Governing Federations', in Michael Wood, Christopher Williams and Campbell Sharman (eds), *Governing Federations: Constitutions, Politics, Resources* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1989), pp. 9–10.

⁴ Sylvia Marchant, The Historical Traditions of the Australian Senate: A Bastion against Democracy? (Saarbrucken: Lambert, 2011).

⁵ Patrick Parkinson, *Tradition and Change in Australian Law* (Sydney: Lawbook, 2005), pp. 137, 139.

Senate power to block the financing of a government's program, are not from this perspective impediments to Australian democracy but expressions of its inherent 'compactual' rather than 'republican' character.⁶ The distribution of responsibilities between State and national governments, and between a majority-based lower house and a State-based upper house, has also promoted prevalent identities among Australian citizens, not least a resistance to entrusting final power to central government.⁷

Such caution was also reflected in the legal structures provided for the nation, particularly the role invested in the High Court. As a third arm of government, the Court sat alongside the legislature and a loosely defined executive, to be composed of ministers, served by departments, and advising a governor-general 'as the Queen's representative'. In addition to being a court of appeal, the High Court's role – as expressed by Alfred Deakin, who was responsible for the legislation that set it up – was to protect the Constitution from 'assaults' against its 'distribution of powers'. Each State had particular areas in which it felt vulnerable to competition or intrusion from its fellows, or from above. A large part of the Court's function was to hold all accountable to the federal compact.⁸ As a consequence, the life of the Constitution came to reside more in the authority of 'law' and the High Court's interpretation of it, than in the deliberative voice of 'the people': only 8 out of 44 referendums have been passed so far.⁹

The preservation of final appeal from the High Court to the British Privy Council, if by the Court's permission in constitutional cases, also reflected distrust of overweening national power. Until 1968 federally and 1986 for the States, while the option of appeal remained, the Court was symbolically if not in effect 'merely an intermediate court...on general law'. Not only did the legal culture that developed under its authority lack independence, but it had an inbuilt tendency to conservatism.¹⁰ Owen Dixon, a justice of the High Court from 1929, chief justice from 1952 to 1964, and long regarded as

- 7 Brian Galligan, Rainer Knopff and John Uhr, 'Australian Federalism and the Debate over a Bill of Rights', *Publius*, 20, 3 (1990): 56.
- 8 Deakin, quoted in Brian Galligan, Politics of the High Court: A Study of the Judicial Branch of Government in Australia (Brisbane: UQP, 1987), p. 70.
- 9 A.R. Blackshield, 'Reinterpreting the Constitution', in Judith Brett, James Gillespie and Murray Goot (eds), *Developments in Australian Politics* (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 23–4; Clement Macintyre and John Williams, 'Australia: A Quiet Revolution in the Balance of Power', in R. Blindenbacher and A. Ostien (eds), A Global Dialogue on Federalism (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), p. 4.
- 10 Bruce Kercher, An Unruly Child: A History of Law in Australia (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p. 160.

⁶ Nicholas Aroney, The Constitution of a Federal Commonwealth: The Making and Meaning of the Australian Constitution (Cambridge University Press, 2009).

Australia's exemplary jurist, reflected in retirement that in contrast to legal doctrine in the United States, where the 'organs of government' are treated as 'agents for the people who are the source of power', in Australia government comprised 'institutions established by law', including the Constitution as itself an imperial act." Such legalism set its own stamp on the relations of government, law and citizenship.

The prominence of women in the petitioning, deliberative and experiential dimensions of the federation movement was another testament to its initial democratic spirit. The colonies of Western and South Australia had already granted female suffrage, reflecting the rise of women's organisations and their influence across a range of philanthropic and civic issues. These precedents required acceptance that the new Commonwealth could not strip the franchise from women who already held it, nor deny it to those in other States.¹² Catherine Helen Spence argued further for a voting system that would secure the 'effective' representation of minorities. While the 'rules for representation' settled on a simple majority model, the grant of full adult suffrage in 1902 added around 750,000 voters to the Commonwealth rolls, following only New Zealand in this provision.¹³ Vida Goldstein, in 1903, was the first woman in the British Empire to contest an election. That it would be nearly 20 years (in Western Australia) and 40 before women won a place in the Commonwealth parliament suggests that such citizenship, however active in seeking influence, remained circumscribed in direct access to government.

A vast public utility

Taken together, the new nation's institutions and modes of citizenship were shaped by a 'startling modern' combination of factors, and the dynamic between them would long influence Australian political culture. Together, these factors expressed a precocious, if selective, amalgam of the standard elements of citizenship: the civil mode of liberties and protection, the

II Dixon quoted in John M. Williams, 'Deliberative Democracy and the People: The Australian Experience', in Pierre Boyer, Linda Cardinal and David Headon (eds), From Subjects to Citizens: A Hundred Years of Citizenship in Australia and Canada (University of Ottawa Press, 2004), p. 49.

¹² Marilyn Lake, 'Personality, Individuality, Nationality: Feminist Conceptions of Citizenship 1902–1940', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 9, 19 (1994): 25–38.

¹³ Helen Irving, 'Fair Federalists and Founding Mothers', in Helen Irving (ed.), A Woman's Constitution? Gender & History in the Australian Constitution (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1996), p. 17.

political mode of capacity to influence government, and the social mode of building opportunities to share in access to a common wealth.¹⁴ A partnership between public and private interests to attract capital and labour in the name of development was coupled to social policies in fields such as means-tested old-age and invalid pensions, which raised support from the domain of charity into public provision.¹⁵ The Constitution foreshadowed the creation, in 1904, of a Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, with jurisdiction over interstate industrial conflict. In its 1907 Harvester judgment this Court formalised the concept of a 'basic wage' as corresponding to 'the normal needs of the average employee living in a civilised community', premised on a male worker supporting a wife and family, and underpinned by enforceable awards. This was a significant move into the domain of social citizenship, a basis for the distinctively Australian 'wage earners' welfare state'. In pre-empting a European preference for contributory social insurance with this model of income support, a choice was made with ramifications for government, law and citizenship.16

By the end of the Commonwealth's first decade a comprehensive linking of wages, tariffs, preferences in trade, industrial regulation, the restraint of open market competition and extensive public investment all came under the rubric of 'protection'. An 'Australian Settlement' encompassed assured returns on capital, legislated standards for labour, the assistance of desired immigrants and the exclusion of the racial, moral or hygienic taint of others.¹⁷ It also rested on a propensity to turn to government agencies to pursue programs of 'state socialism' with independence from the flux of politics. The colonial practice of creating statutory authorities to compensate for private deficiencies continued in areas from railways to education. The Commonwealth Bank, for example, was established in 1911 as both a savings and general bank, issuing a government-backed national currency. In 1915 the intergovernmental River Murray Commission was charged with regulating river flows to ensure that New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia received agreed shares of water. The Tariff Board, created as an independent

¹⁴ Francis G. Castles, Australian Public Policy and Economic Vulnerability: A Comparative and Historical Perspective (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1988), p. 112; T.H. Marshall, Citizenship and Social Class, and Other Essays (Cambridge University Press, 1950).

¹⁵ N.G. Butlin, A. Barnard and J.J. Pincus, *Government and Capitalism: Public and Private Choice in Twentieth Century Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 13, 150–1.

¹⁶ Francis G. Castles, 'The Wage Earners' Welfare State Revisited', Australian Journal of Social Issues, 29, 2 (1994): 120–45.

¹⁷ Paul Kelly, The End of Certainty: Power, Politics and Business in Australia (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994), pp. 1–2.

agency within the Commonwealth Treasury in 1921, acquired – and held well into the 1960s – almost transcendent authority in industry assistance.¹⁸

There was continuity also in the appointment of commissions of inquiry to advise on issues of policy innovation. Fifteen such inquiries were established in the Commonwealth's first ten years, seeking a form of statecraft rising above the vacillations of a parliament and electorate that together delivered nine governments in that period. This recourse in itself produced 'a unique institution of Australian government' and a distinctive process of 'political and public learning'.¹⁹ Ranging from the tariff to insurance provision, and reflecting aspirations to extend public intervention rather than question it, these commissions garnered expertise to the work of the state.

The turn to such advice also reflected the limitations of a public service strong on process but often weak on specific qualifications for the tasks at hand. Established in 1902, the Commonwealth Public Service began with a commitment to break with the colonial taint of offering 'asylum for the indolent or incompetent' but soon showed that strict discipline, lean economy and policy responsiveness could make uncongenial partners.20 The heads of the Commonwealth's first seven departments served for long terms, presiding with integrity over the steady expansion of government functions. But when the inefficiencies of the postal service became the subject of a royal commission in 1908, it was evident that the strains of discontent and inefficiency needed systematic attention.²¹ Only slowly would the public service, as an arm of executive government, be accorded the respect, resources and independence required to foster 'the type of judgement or mental training which is necessary for the conduct of such huge concerns'.²² Amid this innovation and constraint, two trends were obvious by 1910, and would not go away. The first was the centralisation of government power. The second was a polarised party system.

In ending trade barriers between the colonies, the Constitution had vested customs and excise revenue – then the main source of income for most States – in the Commonwealth, providing a formula (the 'Braddon clause') to determine the allocation of funds for the first ten years. The future of that distribution was soon a point of friction. Deakin in 1902 saw

¹⁸ Butlin et al., Government and Capitalism, p. 89.

¹⁹ Scott Prasser, Royal Commissions and Public Inquiries in Australia (Sydney: LexisNexis Butterworths, 2006), p. 5; Ian Marsh, 'The Federation Decade', in John Nethercote (ed.), Liberalism and the Australian Federation (Sydney: Federation Press, 2001), p. 88.

²⁰ Serving the Nation: 100 Years of Public Service in Australia (Canberra: AGPS, 2001), p. 11.

²¹ Gerald E. Caiden, Career Service (Melbourne University Press, 1965), p. 107.

²² F.W. Eggleston, State Socialism in Victoria (London: P.S. King, 1932), p. 144.

the issue clearly: the States might have been sovereign entities under the Constitution, but they were 'financially bound to the chariot wheels of the Central Government'.²³ In 1901–02 the States received 93 per cent of government revenue; between 1909–10 and 1918–19 the figure fell to 55 per cent. The early vision of the Commonwealth as 'an agent for the States' was twisting the other way.²⁴

State premiers consulted fitfully on shared concerns, seeking to regularise their approaches to the Commonwealth and uniformity in basic areas such as food standards, immigration assistance, banking, company law and transport (although, famously, railway gauges continued to differ between them).²⁵ Western Australia in 1910 and Tasmania in 1912 sought special grants to alleviate the unequal burdens protection imposed on those most reliant on the export of primary production.²⁶ The demands of World War 1 accelerated the flow of money to the centre, and so did those of peace. Taxation was 5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1915; it approached 20 per cent by the mid-1930s. The Commonwealth's introduction of estate duties and progressive income taxation in 1915 marked the beginning of competition in vital areas of revenue collection. With a High Court vigilant in policing any internal impost on trade, the States were left in a remarkably weak position in comparison to other federal systems.²⁷

Wrestling with the arithmetic of a per capita distribution of revenue, in 1923 the States formed a voluntary Loan Council (itself a federal statutory authority after 1929) to coordinate debt issues and searches for funds. This integration of government finances only increased the Commonwealth's ability to exercise influence in areas beyond its jurisdictional authority by the tied allocation of grants. In these determinations, a concept of 'the national dividend' added statistical sophistication to the terms in which the population was defined as a subject of policy, and to the often pioneering alignment of social sciences such as economics with the tasks of government.²⁸ After 1933 the Commonwealth Grants Commission transformed this 'horse trading' into innovative procedures premised on the 'equalisation' of

²³ Deakin, quoted in Parkinson, Tradition and Change in Australian Law, p. 148.

²⁴ Equality in Diversity: History of the Commonwealth Grants Commission (Canberra: AGPS, 1995), pp. 5–6; J.A. La Nauze, The Making of the Australian Constitution (Melbourne University Press, 1972), p. 2.

²⁵ K.N.J. Bernie, 'The Premier's Conferences', Public Administration, 6, 8 (1947): 410-17.

²⁶ Denis James, 'Federal-State Financial Relations', in G. Lindell and R. Bennett (eds), *Parliament: The Vision in Hindsight* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2001), p. 217.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 221.

²⁸ Peter Groenewegen and Bruce McFarlane, A History of Australian Economic Thought (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 92–142.

access to services and entitlements for citizens regardless of their location. Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and Western Australia benefitted significantly under this model, but interstate friction was far from settled.²⁹

These developments in policy ran parallel to a deepening of political division, as parties – Australia's being among the earliest and most durable modern examples – became more organised. In 1910 Labor formed the world's first national majority labour government, its program centring on advancing the rights of workers. Affiliated trade unions provided most of the party's first generations of parliamentarians. After 1909 a fusion of Protectionist and Free Trade parties found common cause in antipathy to Labor's rise. Aligned to 'capital' – employers, manufacturers, landowners and traders – these parties also tapped a more diffuse middle-class alarm at the collectivism and regulation inherent in Labor's aims. 'Reform and retrenchment' was the gospel of Victoria's Kyabram Movement early after Federation, and its goals had enduring appeal. The emergence by 1920 of rural-based parties added another element to this divide, especially once the federal Country Party struck a generally firm anti-Labor coalition with the Nationalist Party in 1923.

The conventions and necessities of representative government contributed to this polarisation, as did the adoption of preferential voting for the House of Representatives, accentuating the dominance of the major parties and setting its composition often at variance with that delivered to the Senate.³⁰ Various forms of urban–rural imbalance in electoral representation in several States, restricted franchises for upper houses (although Labor secured the abolition of Queensland's nominated Legislative Council in 1922) and opportunist coalitions such as Albert Dunstan's in Victoria (1935–43) gave their own inflections to these developments. Yet after 1921 Labor's 'socialisation' platform made ideological contrasts easier to draw, and the party continued to be the most 'aggressive' in initiating inquiries and referendums on welfare and industrial matters.³¹ It also became more suspicious of statutory bodies once it seemed that a business model rather than public benefit premise might prevail in their operations.³²

29 Equality in Diversity, pp. 32-3.

³⁰ John Uhr, 'Rules for Representation', in Lindell and Bennett (eds), *Parliament*, pp. 262– 3; Scott Bennett and Rob Lundie, 'Australian Electoral Systems', *Parliamentary Research Paper*, no. 5 (2007–8): 7.

³¹ Geoffrey Sawer, Australian Federal Politics and Law 1901–1929 (Melbourne University Press, 1956), p. 325.

³² Geoffrey Sawer, 'Australia', in Wolfgang Friedmann (ed.), *The Public Corporation: A Comparative Symposium* (Toronto: Carswell, 1954), pp. 13–14.

Political polarisation, however, ran parallel to a tacit pragmatism that settled over the basic processes of government: the question of who should have power mattering more than fundamental differences over its extent. Largely irrespective of the party in office, the inter-war decades saw State and Commonwealth ambitions extend further into public works and settlement programs. Labor-governed States legislated on unemployment insurance and child endowment, and even the Nationalist-Country Party federal government of 1923-29 espoused 'a potent and integrated' mix of capitalist and cooperative approaches, informed from 1926 by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (after 1949, the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation).³³ Commonwealth royal commissions, nearly 30 of them in the 1920s, made other links, even taking up the plight of the nation's motion picture industry. An astute and sometimes expedient partnership between government and business leaders began finding ingenious ways of adapting protectionism, imperial ties and an evolving economic mix to the international economy.³⁴ Similarly, after 1922 a more authoritative Public Service Board tackled meagre skills among its corps. Even the halting commitment to the national capital in Canberra, where federal parliament moved rather forlornly from Melbourne in 1927, was hoped to solicit 'a keener desire to render valuable service' among officials.35

Overall, as F.A. Bland observed in 1923 in a pioneering Australian textbook on 'public administration', the tasks of government were seen to have shifted: from 'constituent (or negative)' responsibilities centring on external security and internal order to 'ministrant (or positive)' functions reflecting 'the social, intellectual, artistic and economic conditions of modern times'. Yet this change, Bland cautioned, created 'the gulf which is at present opening between the administrative expert and the citizen or his representatives'.³⁶ Concern that the 'real democracy' of 1901 had given way to the 'threats to democracy' arising from organised interests was widespread, amid a ferment of ideas about what part fell to law and citizenship in fostering capacities to adapt to such times.³⁷

³³ Michael Roe, Australia, Britain and Migration, 1915–1940: A Study of Desperate Hopes (Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 48; J.M. Powell, An Historical Geography of Modern Australia: The Restive Fringe (Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 129.

³⁴ Kosmas Tsokhas, Markets, Money and Empire: The Political Economy of the Australian Wool Industry (Melbourne University Press, 1990).

³⁵ Caiden, Career Service, pp. 174, 178; Serving the Nation, p. 89.

³⁶ F.A. Bland, Shadows and Realities of Government (Sydney: WEA, 1923), pp. 3, 7.

³⁷ John Hirst, Australia's Democracy: A Short History (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2002).

Industrial relations were central to these debates amid escalating conflict between organised capital and labour. The Commonwealth Investigation Branch, established in the Attorney-General's Department in 1919, extended a war-born surveillance of political radicalism into industrial agitation, and in 1928 the Commonwealth Arbitration Court gained enhanced powers to penalise unions for strike action and intervene in their internal affairs. This mix of political and economic functions, industrial regulation and civil order proved volatile and contributed to a change of government in 1929.³⁸ By that time a rigid defensiveness had hold of each of the fields under survey here, best symbolised by the High Court's decision in the *Engineers' Case* of 1920.

In determining that case, which related to a union claim against employers across Australia, the Court overturned the doctrine assuming State and Commonwealth governments to be 'immune' from the impact of each others' laws. The decision's significance was twofold. First, the Court legitimised the expansion of federal powers at the expense of 'States' rights'.³⁹ Second, in reading the relevant 'head of power' from the Constitution literally, and applying to it strict practices of statutory interpretation, the Court marked a break from earlier tendencies to evoke 'the grand picture of the good society', as seen by judges who themselves had shaped the compact of 1901.⁴⁰ For the next 40 years, a new generation of judges – Dixon most eminently – practised a resolute legalism, unencumbered by a consideration of the legislature's intentions. They proved ever more attentive to excess in the exercise of state power, while also entrenching deference to essentially British legal precedents and to the interests, often those of property and producers, they inherently favoured.⁴¹

At the centre of these transformations was the citizen, although this was a term the framers of the Constitution had avoided, conceding that it carried 'dignity' but worried by its republican associations. To avoid 'impropriety', they adopted instead 'the time-honoured word "subject". Accordingly, the legal status of Australians was as 'subjects of the Queen' or – as subsidiary entities – 'the people of the Commonwealth' and 'the people of a State'.⁴² This figure was defined by allegiance rather than rights (the Constitution itself mentioned only rights to acquire property on just terms, to trial by

³⁸ Sawer, Australian Federal Politics and Law 1901-1929, pp. 268-70.

³⁹ Galligan, Politics of the High Court, p. 96.

⁴⁰ Sawer, Australian Federal Politics and Law 1901-1929, p. 254.

⁴¹ Kercher, An Unruly Child, p. 167.

⁴² John Quick and Robert Randolph Garran, *The Annotated Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth* [1901], new edn (Sydney: Legal Books, 1995), pp. 954–7.

jury, to equal treatment regardless of State of residence and to not be subject to an imposed religion). It mattered a great deal to be a British subject: to draw on the glory of British institutions, and to embody and be judged by the behaviour deemed appropriate to conduct within them. It might be an affiliation with which one was lucky enough to be born. Equally importantly in a country of immigrants, it could be bestowed or withdrawn. This discretion became integral to concepts of the Australian nation.

'Naturalisation' as a British subject had been available in the colonies only to white 'alien' settlers, and withheld even from British subjects of Asian origin.⁴³ After World War 1, with its associated strains on questions of loyalty, even the white 'races' of Europe (Nordic, Alpine, Mediterranean) were scrutinised closely for their respective capacities for allegiance, and subject to quotas.⁴⁴ Commonwealth legislation reaffirmed other exclusions.⁴⁵ Indigenous peoples might have automatically been (conquered) British subjects, but the Constitution excluded them from census counts and the right to vote in federal elections unless they were already on State rolls. Papuans, subjects of Australian control after 1902 (joined by New Guineans after 1919), had even less to bargain with. The nationality of a married woman was linked to that of her husband. So while there might have been openness in access to citizen status given Australia's desire to attract new settlers, there was closure in determining their acceptability, blatant on issues of race, covert on health and character, and pervasive in upholding the attributes of British respectability and an inherently gendered defence of 'civilisation'.46

Within this framework, citizenship itself was framed as the capacity to give assent to the patterns of Australian public policy. 'The modern state', Walter Murdoch declared in a popular text of 1912, *The Australian Citizen*, 'is the greatest, the most complex, the most wonderful of all machines man has devised'. In reverence for this machine, 'the citizen's first duty is to get into the way of forming right opinion on matters that concern the welfare of the State'.⁴⁷ 'Right opinion' had many prompts. From 1911 the young male citizen was compelled to undergo military training. In 1911 it became compulsory

- 43 Helen Irving, 'Citizenship and Subject-Hood in Twentieth Century Australia', in Boyer et al. (eds), *From Subjects to Citizens*, p. 14.
- 44 David Dutton, One of Us? A Century of Australian Citizenship (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002), pp. 46-50.
- 45 John Summers, 'The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia and Indigenous Peoples 1901–1967', in Lindell and Bennett (eds), *Parliament*, pp. 152–3.
- 46 Patricia Grimshaw, 'A White Woman's Suffrage', in Irving (ed.), A Woman's Constitution, p. 93.
- 47 Walter Murdoch, *The Australian Citizen: An Elementary Account of Civil Rights and Duties* (Melbourne: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1912), pp. 13, 234.

for all eligible voters to register on electoral rolls. In 1915 Queensland introduced compulsory voting, adopted federally in 1924 as a means to instil 'a sense of responsibility as to the Government of the country'.⁴⁸ To vote was a duty, not a right, and even that could be lost, as it was by the populations of the Australian Capital Territory (1910) and the Northern Territory (1911) in their surrender to the Commonwealth.

Alongside political citizenship, social citizenship acquired its own inflections. Accorded little access to party systems dominated by capital and labour, women's organisations fought for recognition of the separate spheres of private nurture. The Commonwealth provision of a maternity allowance in 1912, paid directly to women, recognised 'the mother's maternal right' to support that was not contingent on a male 'bread-winner'. Yet this provision in itself highlighted the division between men-at-work and women-at-home that was entrenched in 1919 when arbitration rulings set the 'female basic wage' at 54 per cent of the male rate, regardless of marital or parental status. The award sat there until 1943 (although that wartime 75 per cent ruling was not made general until 1950).

Defined by these exhortations, W.K. Hancock observed in 1930 that the citizen in Australia was 'a fragment of the sovereign people' rather than a figure cast in the fire of liberty. 'Australian democracy', in Hancock's enduring formulation, 'has come to look upon the State as a vast public utility, whose duty it is to provide the greatest happiness for the greatest number'. He was uncomfortable with this disposition – it 'pulled down those lonely persons' to whom egalitarian 'mateship' did not appeal – and was not alone.⁴⁹ Where commentators such as Murdoch saw the citizen in a social contract – facing an ascending collective duty from the communal to the imperial spheres – by the 1930s this figure was often reduced to a personalised, self-interested failure to meet the responsibilities of social and industrial discipline. Three decades into the national story, the citizen became a cipher for an impasse that was as political and economic as much as it was moral.⁵⁰

A new order?

The decade of Depression and recovery began working through this impasse. Initially, the profligacy of both government and citizen were placed at the

⁴⁸ Marian Sawer, 'Inventing the Nation through the Ballot Box', in Boyer et al. (eds), *From Subjects to Citizens*, p. 77; Uhr, 'Rules for Representation', p. 271.

⁴⁹ W.K. Hancock, Australia (London: Ernest Benn, 1930), pp. 72, 74.

⁵⁰ Tim Rowse, Australian Liberalism and National Character (Melbourne: Kibble Books, 1978), pp. 93, 122.

core of the crisis, and financial stringency was accompanied by the High Court's determination to uphold freedom of enterprise against state control. The dismissal of the New South Wales Labor government in 1932 followed the premier's commitment to use revenue for welfare assistance rather than surrender it to the federal Treasury. In the 1920s aggrieved Tasmanians had already gathered under declarations of 'justice for Tasmania or secession', and a 1933 referendum in Western Australia saw 68 per cent of voters support withdrawal from a Federation which they judged served them poorly.⁵¹ Beneath such campaigns ran a deeper questioning about the need for a new map of Australian government.⁵²

Labor had long wrestled with federalism: a 1918 policy on the unification of States remained on its platform until 1971. On the other side of politics, the Country Party founder, Earle Page, denounced Australia's 'bastard constitution' in 1919, demanding that States be replaced with 'provinces...big enough to attack national schemes in a large way, but small enough for every legislator to be thoroughly conversant with every portion of the area'.⁵³ A 'new state' refrain ran through much populist campaigning until the 1950s, pushing a restive mix of anti-socialism and calls for state intervention in development and marketing. The challenge for all was to envisage a viable alternative structure.

Preoccupations with federal–State sovereignty had sidelined consideration of local government during federation debates and, for a range of reasons – the colonial dominance of pastoral elites, patterns of settlement and regimes of taxation, and the metropolitan orientations of the major parties – local government retained weak foundations in twentieth-century Australia.⁵⁴ A creation of the States, local government was often incomplete in its coverage of sparsely settled areas despite the responsibilities usually accorded to it: the provision of roads, public utilities, community and health services, engineering works, land subdivision and development. Local initiatives such as those in Victoria and South Australia, which built on a property franchise, were by nature conservative in both politics and programs. Those imposed from the capitals, in New South Wales and Queensland, drew on a more equal franchise and a preparedness for loan-financed development. Yet

⁵¹ Henry Reynolds, A History of Tasmania (Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 239.

⁵² Powell, An Historical Geography of Australia, p. 171.

⁵³ A.J. Brown, 'The Constitution We Were Meant to Have', *Democratic Experiments* (Canberra: Senate Occasional Lecture Series, 2006), p. 47.

⁵⁴ A.J. Brown, 'Subsidiarity or Subterfuge? Resolving the Future of Local Government in the Australian Federal System', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 61, 4 (2002): 36–9.

despite renewed advocacy through the 1930s, the political coordination and recognition of this sector proved elusive.⁵⁵

Financial crisis redoubled questioning of the 'ministrant' state, even with the return of thrift-driven conservative national government in 1932. Reforms in 1933 allowed for limited graduate recruitment into the Commonwealth public service, in recognition of new strains on administration, but implementation was slow, perhaps conditioned by the stop-work meeting that greeted the appointment of Roland Wilson, the service's first professionally trained economist (with two PhDs), as assistant Commonwealth statistician in 1932 (Wilson served as Secretary of the Treasury from 1951 to 1966).56 Rural industries and producer groups gained government-instituted marketing boards to shore up prices and preserve their interests.⁵⁷ Several State premiers were enterprising in filling the breach of public action: in South Australia, Tom Playford - a self-confessed 'benevolent despot' - adapted the State Housing Trust to serve industrialisation; A.G. Ogilvie in Tasmania seized on hydro-electricity for the same ends; William Forgan Smith in Queensland pledged to 'let the capitalists take the risks' while sponsoring economic research to support them.58 The role of equally determined public service leaders, such as New South Wales' Wallace Wurth, was vital in these initiatives.59

Amid these reassessments, the building of citizenship was increasingly allied to education: to inculcating among youth a personal identification with social issues in contexts that regularised – in fitness regimes, school cultures or assessment processes – a sense of worth that could not be guaranteed in an older generation's experience of work. The establishment of the Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) in 1932 reflected a parallel commitment to boost access to 'uplifting' radio services in the home, without competing with the commercial spread of a technology that exemplified the changing ways in which people experienced their place in the world. Of the few royal commissions appointed in the decade, the 1935–37 inquiry into

- 56 Serving the Nation, p. 45; Caiden, Career Service, p. 245.
- 57 Butlin et al., Government and Capitalism, p. 75.
- 58 Dean Jaensch, 'The Playford Era', in Dean Jaensch (ed.), The Flinders History of South Australia: Political History (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), pp. 250–1; Reynolds, A History of Tasmania, p. 244; Raymond Evans, A History of Queensland (Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 190.
- 59 Beverley Kingston, A History of New South Wales (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 186.

⁵⁵ John Power, Roger Wettenhall and John Halligan, 'Overview of Local Government in Australia', in John Power, Roger Wettenhall and John Halligan (eds), *Local Government Systems of Australia* (Canberra: AGPS, 1981), pp. 20–2.

banking clearly signalled a new direction in public policy. Premised on the need for federal control of monetary policy – including the operations of private banks – it also envisaged economic management that would recast relationships between governments and citizens.⁶⁰

As welcomed by H.C. Coombs – whose public service career would exemplify the transformation of government into the 1980s – the arrival of Keynesian economics in the mid-1930s dismissed views of the economy as a 'self-adjusting' mechanism. Instead, governments had a responsibility to shape economic relationships in the pursuit of social goals, through the macro-economics of managing public investment more than the micro-economics of regulating private enterprise.⁶¹ Already predisposed to intervention, Australians took readily to this approach, particularly as the firming of economic recovery in the late 1930s was coupled to marshalling resources for another war.

Mobilisation for World War 2 made a slow start from a fragile base, but the *National Security Act* of 1939 conferred sweeping powers on the Commonwealth government to deal with 'all matters which...are necessary or convenient...for the more effectual prosecution' of war.⁶² By October 1941 – when government passed to Labor, two months before Japan surged south – it was clear that war would accelerate the centralisation of allocative and directive policies. Controls reached into areas from 'manpower' to rationing, censorship to travel. Conceding the legitimacy of such regulations for the duration and purposes of conflict, the High Court upheld the keystone of such centralisation in the *Uniform Tax* case of 1942, which saw the transfer to the Commonwealth of all income tax to meet wartime demands. Chief Justice John Latham allowed that the result could be the effective erosion of the States' independence, but – in true legalism – added that while this might be a matter of 'political controversy', it could not 'be prevented by any legal decision' alone.⁶³

Political controversy had other channels. As attorney-general, H.V. Evatt in 1942 envisaged a matrix of policies that would secure economic security and social justice. Yet attempts to carry wartime controls into post-war reconstruction, including a referendum to secure comprehensive powers, failed amid popular weariness with restrictions. Diverse professional and interest groups also sought to build on wartime precedents in programs of social

63 Parkinson, Tradition and Change in Australian Law, p. 149.

⁶⁰ Galligan, Politics of the High Court, p. 122.

⁶¹ H.C. Coombs, Trial Balance (Melbourne: Macmillan, 1981), p. 4.

⁶² Galligan, Politics of the High Court, p. 127

citizenship – in regional development and women's rights, for example – but the prospect of a 'new order' was intimidating to many and readily linked to socialism. Pragmatically, Labor balanced initiatives on unemployment benefits, invalid pensions, funeral benefits and maternity allowances against the lowering of tax thresholds to finance the war and keep watch on inflation.⁶⁴ It worked to sell its 1945 commitment to full employment as an integrated package of social and economic policies.⁶⁵ But another referendum in 1946 enabled it to legislate only in specified areas of social service provision, while the High Court and organised private industry groups zealously fought any extension of state control into areas such as free medicine, the nationalisation of air services, and banking.

Still, the 1940s decisively shifted the registers of government, and set the pattern for the next three decades. The Keynesian paradigm would prevail until the mid-1970s, building in government a new professionalism. These skills were associated with figures such as Coombs, whose expertise, geared first to wartime administration, adapted to central banking and later to support for the arts and Aboriginal affairs. The ranks of Commonwealth employees grew from 68,000 in 1939 to 182,000 by 1949, and at last Canberra's viability as a national capital seemed assured - however isolated its officials were alleged to be, and hidden behind the coveted status and standards of a permanent, impartial 'career service'. Despite the rhetoric of 'planning versus freedom', the power of national government passed undiminished from Labor to the Liberal-Country Party Coalition in 1949, and into the years of the post-war boom increasing authority was drawn from techniques of macro-economic management. These were refined by creating conditions in which expectations of growth were met through government influence (either by stimulus or restraint) over the private economy.⁶⁶ Even settled distributive practices such as those of the Loan Council were adapted to the Commonwealth's objectives in adjusting the flow of funds to meet inflationary pressures. While crying foul, the States had no real interest in reversing the centralisation of income tax in 1942 – and they proved 'ingenious' in funding their own initiatives through 'ever-more convoluted and regressive forms of indirect taxes'.67

⁶⁴ Rob Watts, The Foundations of the National Welfare State (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

⁶⁵ Paul Smyth, Australian Social Policy: The Keynesian Chapter (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1994).

⁶⁶ Butlin et al., Government and Capitalism, p. 116.

⁶⁷ James Gillespie, 'New Federalisms', in Brett et al. (eds), *Developments in Australian Politics*, p. 64. See also Richard Webb, *The Australian Loan Council*, Parliamentary Library Research Note, no. 43, 2001.

A pattern in policy summarised as 'all the restrictive practices known to man' settled over government support for the expansion of private manufacturing and, by the 1960s, mining.⁶⁸ The carefully tended 'mixed economy' kept business from foreign competition through import licences and quotas, and used statutory bodies to regulate (but not compete with) private interests through the provision of parallel services. By 1968, for example, when Western Australia emerged from being a 'claimant state' under the Grants Commission, its government was skilled in striking deals with multinational investors to develop mines, infrastructure and communities.⁶⁹

Social welfare programs expanded around the same model. Financed by a tax system that, given rising incomes, progressed deeper into lower brackets, welfare benefits often took the form of subsidies and rebates for those at the other end of the scale. An invocation of the market in supporting private options in education, health insurance and home ownership paid little attention to redistributive goals or – in the longer term – to the maintenance of public institutions.⁷⁰ These policies also positioned citizenship in the virtues of domestic responsibility and self-help.⁷¹ The contrast to Murdoch at the beginning of the century was marked. The 'welfare' and 'machinery' of the state were reduced to choices that in the paradox of post-war social citizenship were presumed to be available to all, equally, and to the assurances offered by the managed economy.⁷²

Central to this mix was government's most transformative post-war initiative. The immigration program introduced in 1945 was to be run to the maximum 'absorptive rate' as an integral dimension of national development. As part of this program, in 1948 the Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell, followed Canada and New Zealand in inaugurating 'Australian citizenship' as an independent status. The concept brought with it no new rights, and it was not until 1984 that 'Australian citizens' ceased, under law, to be simultaneously 'British subjects'. But it reflected a new purpose, or pressure, to be met. 'New Australians', Calwell stated, 'will no longer need to strive towards an intangible goal, but can aspire to the honour of Australian citizenship'.⁷³

⁶⁸ Butlin et al., Government and Capitalism, pp. 119, 125, 126-7, 141.

⁶⁹ Geoffrey Bolton, Land of Vision and Mirage (Perth: UWA Press, 2008), pp. 158-9.

⁷⁰ Butlin et al., Government and Capitalism, pp. 194, 196.

⁷¹ John Murphy, Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies' Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2000).

⁷² Marshall, Citizenship and Social Class, and Other Essays, p. 56.

⁷³ Calwell, quoted in Helen Irving, 'One Hundred Years of (Almost) Solitude: The Evolution of Australian Citizenship', paper presented in the Department of the Senate Occasional Lecture Series, Parliament House, Canberra, 22 June 2001, p. 45.

Citizenship, in this context, was a question of assimilation: of embracing the characteristics of a host community and adjusting to its values.

Given immigration's imperatives, the tests of such citizenship could hardly be stringent. In 1949 non-British nationals were required to satisfy a residency test, show good character and knowledge of English, undertake to vote and obey the law. By 1952 less than half the eligible immigrants were motivated to make this pledge. In 1955 the requirements were modified, prompting a modest increase in applications. Despite further simplifications, the introduction of compulsory military service in 1964 and the adoption in 1966 of an explicit renunciation of 'all other allegiance' saw another slump. If it became 'more easy to acquire Australian nationality', such resistance indicated that the 'honour' conferred seemed shallow.⁷⁴ At a time when pressures built to end explicit racial exclusions in immigration selection, and to moderate strict assimilationist assumptions in services provided for immigrants, it was evident that citizenship as a concept was in need of reform. Even the 'civics' taught in schools was judged too 'formal and rigid', amid a more critical popular engagement with issues of conscience and social diversity.⁷⁵

By the late 1960s, after nearly two decades of private choice in a thin culture of public provision, the Commonwealth government was responding to pressures on a range of fronts, evident in initiatives in secondary and tertiary education, in assistance to the arts, in a referendum to gain powers to legislate for the benefit of Indigenous people, in ending the bar on the employment of married women in the public service, and in moves in the Arbitration Court towards equal pay. Such pressures produced contrasting leaders, such as the strict law-and-order stance of Queensland's Joh Bjelke-Petersen (1968-87) and South Australia's reformist Don Dunstan (1967-68, 1970-79), whose government was the first in Australia to decriminalise homosexuality. In Canberra, the Senate – more open to minor parties since the introduction of proportional representation in 1948 – revived as a house of review, also engaging with such concerns. Even at the High Court, a confessed 'radical tory' chief justice, Garfield Barwick (1964–81), while seeking to free citizens from the undue impost of income tax, also declared that his Court would give precedence to its own decisions, reflecting Australian concerns. This was a small but 'fatal crack' in its strict legalism.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Alastair Davidson, From Subject to Citizen: Australian Citizenship in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 94.

⁷⁵ Kay Ferres and Denise Meredyth, An Articulate Country: Re-inventing Citizenship in Australia (Brisbane: UQP, 2001), p. 36.

⁷⁶ Kercher, An Unruly Child, p. 177.

Even so, basic structures remained resilient. Between 1949 and 1970 only six federal royal commissions were appointed, the most prominent being a 1954–55 investigation into Communist espionage, intimating only the tip of surveillance by the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), to often inconclusive but politically aligned ends. Solid in office, the Liberal-Country Party government found in its senior public service all the scrutiny it wanted, cursorily dispatching a high-level inquiry of 1965 that recommended an independent panel of economic advisers. The Tariff Board began questioning the justifications for protection, given the shift in Asian competition from cheap labour to technological innovation, but the practice remained largely untouched. In 1958 A.F. Davies diagnosed Australia's enduring 'talent for bureaucracy', adding in 1964 that the core challenge was to understand how governments 'kept the gates' against accountability. In that task, Davies added, 'knowledge politics' - not the increasing evidence of specialised expertise within and around government, but the strategy of deploying it to political ends - was coming to matter most.77

The active society

The gates gave way with the election of a federal Labor government in 1972. The new prime minister, Gough Whitlam, pledged equality of opportunity as his guiding principle, and policies followed on federal funding for schools, the abolition of university fees, the provision of universal (free) basic medical and hospital care, the creation of a separate Department of Aboriginal Affairs, and an ethos of multiculturalism to acknowledge at last the diversity characterising Australian society. The Social Welfare Commission, one of 73 inquiries and 13 royal commissions Labor initiated, pledged to enhance 'social and cultural satisfaction'. This agenda was premised on recasting the federal compact, largely untouched for two decades, as a partnership in funding and service delivery that reached past the States to empower local governments in reducing persistent disparities in access to resources and opportunities.⁷⁸ A new Department of Urban and Regional Development, and the inclusion of local government representatives on the Grants Commission, exemplified these ambitions.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Hal Colebatch, 'A "Talent for Bureaucracy": A.F. Davies and the Analysis of Government in Australia', Australian Journal of Public Administration, 64, 4 (2005): 36.

⁷⁸ Prasser, Royal Commissions and Public Inquiries in Australia, p. 46.

⁷⁹ P.D. Groenewegen, 'Federalism', in Allan Patience and Brian Head (eds), From Whitlam to Fraser: Reform and Reaction in Australian Politics (Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 57, 62.

Perceiving complacent if not hostile elements in their departments, Labor also recruited ministerial 'staffers' to offer alternative advice. Their presence encouraged industry groups to step up their own lobbying efforts in Canberra, in turn professionalising styles of 'gate keeping'. A royal commission into the public service – the first since 1919 – looked for greater responsiveness in policy development and a more balanced representation of community interests within government, which in turn would offer leadership to other areas of the economy. Concepts of equal opportunity and affirmative action entered the language of policy, accompanied by pronounced public sector growth, from 32.5 per cent of GDP to 38.3 per cent by 1974–75, fed by a significant increase in taxation.

These initiatives soon ran against the economic turbulence of the mid-1970s. Two decades of high employment had built pressures into wage fixation that by 1973 contributed to inflation running at over 13 per cent. Reluctantly convinced of the need for 'restraint', Labor abandoned principles such as comparative wage justice, which sought to preserve income relatives across the economy. With the support of the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), led since 1969 by Bob Hawke – another moderniser in approach and style – the government moved towards a tighter integration of economic and wages policies, taking increasing account of productivity trends.⁸⁰ To outrage from unions and manufacturers, Whitlam had instituted a 25 per cent tariff cut in 1973, in part responding to the costs of protection borne by consumers.⁸¹ Superseding the Tariff Board in 1974, the Industries Assistance Commission began a more coordinated, critical assessment of the comparative efficiency and competitiveness of Australian producers. By 1975 the treasurer conceded that the 'simple Keynesian world' had collapsed, and with it the primacy of full employment as a policy goal.⁸² In Australia, as internationally, the discipline of the market steadily claimed policy orthodoxies and knowledge politics.

Similar aspirations and pressures were evident in law. As Labor's attorneygeneral, Lionel Murphy advocated 'a new concept of social responsibility', evident in the creation of a Law Reform Commission, an Administrative Appeals 'Tribunal, the revision of trade practices regulations and the establishment of a Family Court, which simplified divorce procedures and

82 Barry Hughes, 'The Economy', in Patience and Head (eds), From Whitlam to Fraser, p. 29.

⁸⁰ Tom Bramble, Trade Unionism in Australia: A History from Flood to Ebb Tide (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 81–5.

⁸¹ Andrew Leigh, 'Trade Liberalisation and the Australian Labor Party', Australian Journal of Politics and History, 48, 4 (2002): 493.

markedly increased the numbers of women on senior judicial benches.83 International legal precedents were less constraining than those in economics. Murphy introduced a Human Rights Bill, invoking the international conventions to which Australia was a signatory, and noting the conspicuous lack of guarantees in Australia to basic rights such as freedom of thought and expression, public participation, and association. This turn to overseas precedents was evident in the introduction of the office of ombudsman to deal with complaints against public agencies, first in Western Australia (1971), then South Australia (1972), followed by other States (although not until 2001 in Queensland). International conventions also provided a basis for the Racial Discrimination Act of 1975, which proved central to campaigns for Indigenous rights. Legislation on human rights, however, remained beyond the government's grasp, its opponents arguing that federalism and parliamentary sovereignty provided sufficient 'veto points' to check abuse.⁸⁴ Murphy's bill lapsed in November 1975 when a more fundamental convention - that the governor-general should seek the advice of the prime minister, and offer counsel - was broken in the dismissal of the Whitlam government.

The constitutionality of Whitlam's dismissal remains controversial, and has figured centrally in campaigns for republican constitutional reform, if serving to narrow arguments for change to the powers and symbolism of the head of state. More enduringly, the 'lesson' of the Whitlam government has been reduced to one of political pragmatism and economic 'responsibility'. The Liberal–Country Party Coalition elected in its wake appeared haunted by a lack of legitimacy, locked in a stalemate between continuity in some areas of social reform (particularly multiculturalism), initiatives such as the introduction of freedom of information legislation in 1982, and expectations of an end to 'big government' and a return to federalism.⁸⁵ By the late 1970s the Australian 'settlement' was accepted as floundering, although uncertainty surrounded what would replace it.⁸⁶

With economic 'dries' in its own ranks dissatisfied by the failure to implement deregulation, cut protection and dismantle the welfare state, the Fraser government was defeated at the polls in 1983. Having moved from the ACTU to parliament, Hawke led Labor to power with an Accord between government and the unions that encompassed counter-inflationary measures

- 83 Jenny Hocking, *Lionel Murphy: A Political Biography* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 220.
- 84 Gillespie, 'New Federalisms', p. 60.
- 85 Charles Richardson, 'The Fraser Years', in Nethercote (ed.), Liberalism and the Australian Federation, p. 217.
- 86 Gillespie, 'New Federalisms', p. 80.

and wage restraint. The concept of a 'social wage' was integral to Labor's reforms, in the provision of welfare specifically 'targeted' to needs, and to creating what was identified as an 'active society' of citizens – encouraged to gain in efficiency and competitiveness through participation in education and training as well as the workforce – rather than remain in a 'passive' culture of dependency. 'Protection' was erased from the political culture, to be replaced by trends that saw social and economic inequality increase markedly, breeding a pervasive mood of insecurity.⁸⁷

The transformation continued with the return of a Liberal–National Party (as the Country Party became in 1982) government in 1996. 'Economic rationalism' was the term Michael Pusey used to characterise the 'locust strike' that ate out a nation-building ethos in Australia's public service through these years. Left in its place were doctrines demanding 'flexibility' in priorities and tenure, and measures of 'performance' more attuned to financial cost than social outcome.⁸⁸ Pusey's normative analysis generated considerable debate, and simplified the processes by which ministers reasserted control of the bureaucracy.⁸⁹ Yet it was undeniable that doctrines of 'new public management' saw public sector staff numbers on a steep fall by the early 1990s, the privatisation of public agencies – the Commonwealth Bank among the first – and a trend to buy in selected expert advice in contracts and consultancies that contributed to the accelerating concentration of executive power.

Both State and federal governments subscribed to this process regardless of party as past issues of political competition became shared 'technical' questions of micro-economic reform. From 1992 the meetings of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) marked this new phase of federalism, as did the introduction of a national competition policy, which imposed free market-based tests on the provision of public services.⁹⁰ For local government, these issues had added complexity. An emphasis on the 'targeted' delivery of services implied a greater role for local agencies.⁹¹ Nowhere was this more marked than in the 104 local councils established since the 1970s to serve

- 87 Peter Saunders, The Ends and Means of Welfare: Coping with Economic and Social Change in Australia (Cambridge University Press, 2002).
- 88 Michael Pusey, Economic Rationalism in Canberra: A Nation-Building State Changes Its Mind (Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- 89 Geoffrey Hawker, 'Executive Government', in Brett et al. (eds), Developments in Australian Politics, p. 93.
- 90 Gillespie, 'New Federalisms', p. 80; J.J. Pincus, 'Liberalism and Australia's Economic and Industrial Development', in Nethercote (ed.), *Liberalism and the Australian Federation*, p. 265.
- 91 Brian Dollery, Neil Marshall and Andrew Worthington (eds), *Reshaping Australian Local Government* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), p. 3.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as part of a move to delegate authority and responsibility. But the pressure to achieve 'economies of scale' in amalgamating local government areas or in meeting the demands of growth were frequently at the expense of the capacities required to support 'active' citizenship in inclusion and employment – and, again, these issues played out in distinctive ways in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and debates over priorities in and accountability for Indigenous policies.⁹²

Popular disillusionment with political parties was unsurprising: party membership fell from around 4 per cent of the electorate in the 1960s to 2 per cent by the 1990s. With the introduction of public funding for political parties in 1984, the 'business' of politics grew at the expense of public trust and of an effective balance between the executive and parliamentary arms of government.⁹³ The focus of several State and federal royal commissions turned from policy development to corruption, revealing the new 'legitimacy gap' facing governments. Close relationships between government and large media corporations added to these concerns.⁹⁴ Embraced by some with a zeal unmatched by experience or probity, such dealing in influence, investment and development could lead to the scandals that saw the imprisonment of two successive Western Australian premiers in the 1990s (and ministers in Queensland and New South Wales).⁹⁵ The rise of new parties, such as the Greens, in which the membership had more say, began leavening this process without substantially altering its course.

Again these developments had their parallel in law. Through the 1980s environmental legislation and litigation emerged as significant sources of legal change in Australia, raising questions about the balance of public and private rights, legal standing, political influence, and the appropriate mix of regulatory and economic incentive-based approaches in building capacities and compliance among citizens.⁹⁶ By the 1990s a 'momentous' shift also appeared to be underway in the High Court as the doctrine of 'parliamentary

⁹² Geoff Barker, 'Management Reform in Local Government', in Dollery et al. (eds), Reshaping Australian Local Government, p. 136.

⁹³ George Gilligan, 'Royal Commissions of Inquiry', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 35, 3 (2002): 293; Dean Jaensch, Peter Brent and Brett Bowden, *Australian Political Parties in the Spotlight*, Democratic Audit of Australia Report No. 4 (Canberra: ANU, 2004), pp. 12, 30, 54.

⁹⁴ Barry Hindess, *Corruption and Democracy in Australia*, Democratic Audit of Australia, Report No. 3, 2004.

⁹⁵ Bolton, Land of Vision and Mirage, pp. 178-9.

⁹⁶ Tim Bonyhady (ed.), *Environmental Protection and Legal Change* (Sydney: Federation Press, 1992).

sovereignty' - that the Court ensure only that parliament exercises its power in accordance with the Constitution - gave way to a preparedness to assess the extent to which the actions of government conformed to social values.97 Recourse to international conventions was part of this shift, marked first when the Court in Commonwealth v Tasmania (1983) upheld the Hawke government's blocking of Tasmanian plans to dam the World Heritage-listed Franklin River in 1983. 'Ultimate sovereignty', Chief Justice Mason declared in 1986 – also the year in which all legal ties to Britain ended with the Australia Act – 'resided in the Australian people'. By 1992, in overruling two attempts by the Commonwealth government to restrict criticism of its actions, Justice Brennan outlined the Court's 'supervisorial role' in determining the 'legitimacy' of 'legislative choice' with reference to the public interest.98 Most markedly in decisions on Indigenous rights - in Mabo (1992) and Wik (1996) the Court moved into what critics decried as 'judicial activism', making reference to international conventions and moral norms. This turn was not so much a reclaiming of 'popular sovereignty' - as Zines noted, the Court was in no sense accountable to electors – as an attempt to balance the distortions of politics.99

Again at the centre of these transitions was the citizen. Both the parameters and expectations of citizenship expanded greatly in the post–World War 2 decades, although as the examples of youth and immigrants suggests, the experience of such change was often a complex matter: for youth, it involved the shuffling intersection between rights and obligations in access to education, employment, consumption and welfare; for immigrants, there were the subtle discriminations contained in the proclamation of core values, even in the context of multiculturalism.¹⁰⁰ By the late 1980s, at the 'end of certainty' or, in another popular diagnosis, in an 'age of anxiety', the citizen was defined by shortcomings in knowledge and incentive.¹⁰¹ The centrality of education to these concerns was evident in the 'disturbing evidence' assembled by the government-appointed Civics Expert Group in

98 Ibid., pp. 38, 47.

⁹⁷ Blackshield, 'Reinterpreting the Constitution', p. 24.

⁹⁹ Williams, 'Deliberative Democracy and the People', p. 55.

¹⁰⁰ Geoffrey Sherington in Paul Patton and Diane Austin-Broos (eds), Transformations in Australian Society (Sydney: Research Institute for Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Sydney, 1997), p. 172; Ghassan Hage, White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1998), pp. 49–55.

¹⁰¹ Paul Kelly, The End of Certainty: The Story of the 1980s (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992); Hugh Mackay, Reinventing Australia: The Mind and Mood of Australia in the 90s (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1993).

the early 1990s that 'many Australians lack the knowledge and confidence to exercise their civic role'. The challenge of overcoming this apparent lack of capacity to engage with community and political life without being caught in the tension between a prescriptive approach to vital 'facts' and the lived realities of citizens was heightened in 'the history wars' of the later 1990s, as the Howard government sought to replace a 'guilt industry' in education and public commentary attributed to the influence of special interest groups with the promotion of 'mainstream' values held by 'all of us'.¹⁰²

More generally, the Labor and Liberal governments that saw out the century agreed on a crisis of 'dependency', the Liberals framing a corrective welfare program around 'participation, obligation, responsibility'.¹⁰³ That Labor responded to the Mabo judgment by recognising native title as a new form of law for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, while the Liberal government responded to Wik by reasserting the property rights of pastoralists, revealed one area in which the approaches of the parties were not the same. Yet both agreed in 2002 that the prohibition on Australians holding dual citizenship had become indefensible given the international mobility of labour and capital: about 5 per cent of Australia's citizens then lived overseas, and Australia's immigration program heavily favoured the attraction of skills and capital to enhance economic competitiveness in place of selection premised on race and social integration. In this, as in many areas, government, law and citizenship had responded to globalisation with a success evident in managing the impact of the global financial crisis (GFC) after 2007-08, and a doctrinaire determination, as evident in the agreement of both parties, if with varying levels of severity, to withhold from refugees and asylum seekers the rights accorded to them under international law.

It is unlikely that future historians will find in Australia at the beginning of the twenty-first century the vibrant civic culture rediscovered at the beginning of the twentieth. It is possible that they will remark on the persistence of federalism in government, despite the dynamics of centralism and the economic, demographic and environmental trends that increasingly strain the principle of national 'equalisation'.¹⁰⁴ The emergent 'creativity' of law, and the 'policy oriented constitutional interpretation' evident in the High Court

¹⁰² Civics Expert Group, Whereas the People...Civics and Citizenship Education (Canberra: AGPS, 1994), p. 3; Ferres and Meredyth, Articulate Country, p. 22.

¹⁰³ John Roskam, 'Liberalism and Social Welfare', in Nethercote (ed.), *Liberalism and the Australian Federation*, p. 284.

¹⁰⁴ Gillespie, 'New Federalisms', p. 73.

of the 1990s, will certainly strike those historians, but still beg questions of what became of 'the people's constitution'.¹⁰⁵ That citizenship continued to be seen as deficient, passive rather than active, will prompt reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the utilitarianism, legalism and positivism inherent in Australian political culture.¹⁰⁶

105 Kercher, An Unruly Child, p. 189.

¹⁰⁶ Hugh Collins, 'Political Ideology in Australia: The Distinctiveness of a Benthamite Society', *Daedalus*, 114, 1 (1985): 148.

¹⁸ Education

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Formal education developed and expanded in twentieth-century Australia, responding constantly to the needs of an increasingly complex society. Different sectors with their roots in the nineteenth century became parts of a system conceived as a 'ladder of opportunity' carrying students from the earliest stages of learning to the most sophisticated. At the beginning of the century the state primary school had only recently been established, and the idea of progression to secondary school was still novel. Over the century Australia, in common with much of the developed world, moved from elementary to universal secondary education, and then to mass higher education.

By the century's end a progressively more global orientation in a networked world had come to shape a pattern of educational provision and of increased competition. New constituencies sought secondary and higher education: girls and women, children of the working class, and successive waves of immigrants keen to climb the ladder of opportunity that education promises. While the story is one of increasing participation, persistent patterns of exclusion remain. Indigenous children and young people, rural and regional students, and those from the poorest social groups still find educational qualifications elusive. These qualifications are vital as the youth labour market for unskilled workers has collapsed. Since the 1980s educational institutions of all kinds have been shaped by market competition and 'quality assurance'. How did these changes take place, and in what circumstances?

1901 to World War 2

At the beginning of the twentieth century nearly all non-Indigenous children experienced at least five years of basic education. Each of the Australian colonies had established and consolidated government-run, mass, compulsory elementary schooling. Queensland was the last to legislate for compulsion, in 1900, and New South Wales and Tasmania were the last to remove public school fees, in 1906 and 1908 respectively.¹ While school attendance was not enforced until the 1910s, the public elementary school was a fixture in nearly every suburb and town across the nation, and the routines of 'efficient' schooling an entrenched feature of Australian social life. 'Efficiency' meant education that was governed by orderly, regular routines to produce measurable effects in literacy and numeracy. By 1900 the favoured method of instruction was the organisation of children into classes, each group taught by a single teacher in a classroom, working through a staged system of teaching and learning organised around the calendar year. Several States began to provide for training of teachers in teachers' colleges from the 1870s, while some learned on the job, as 'pupil teachers'.

The increasing confinement of young people into schools transformed family life. It became progressively more difficult for children to work and this almost certainly influenced the declining birthrate at the turn of the century.² Moreover, compulsory education made households more visible to outsiders. In 1914 the New South Wales Education Minister, Campbell Carmichael, boasted: 'There is no Government Department and no civic organisation that comes so intimately into touch with the lives and the homes of the people as the Education Department'.³ While their supporters saw the schools as an agency of social improvement, there was resistance from some of their clients. As the South Australian Director of Education put it in 1911, 'The standards of the community are more potent than those of the school, and against the illiteracy of the playground, the street and the home, the influence of the schoolroom has a weak chance'.⁴

Schooling remained a State responsibility at Federation. Despite particularities in education policy and practice, there were substantial similarities across the nation. At the beginning of the twentieth century, for example, there was widespread criticism of the teaching practices of public schools. In 1901 the Sydney University philosopher and educationist Francis Anderson criticised them as arid places characterised by rigid discipline and rote learning.⁵ He

- 1 Alan Barcan, A History of Australian Education (Oxford University Press, 1980).
- 2 Alison Mackinnon, Love and Freedom: Professional Women and the Reshaping of Personal Life (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Michael Gilding, The Making and Breaking of the Australian Family (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991).
- 3 Speech at the opening of Parramatta High School, reported in *Cumberland Argus*, 11 April 1914.
- 4 Quoted in Pavla Miller, *Long Division: State Schooling in South Australian Society* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986), pp. 45–6.
- 5 Francis Anderson, The Public School System of New South Wales (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1901).

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and others, including his wife, the feminist Maybanke Anderson, were influenced by the international movement in New Education, which aimed to broaden and humanise schools by focusing on the individual child and broadening the curriculum. An energetic early-century generation of directors of Public Instruction, including Cyril Jackson in Western Australia, Alfred Williams in South Australia, Frank Tate in Victoria and Peter Board in New South Wales, worked to bring about reform on three main fronts: renovation of the primary school curriculum, increased formal training of teachers and expansion of post-primary schooling. The primary school syllabuses were rewritten to include such subjects as nature knowledge, physical education and music.⁶ Other reforms took longer. Pre-service training courses of one or two years were offered by the teachers' training colleges in most States by the 1920s, although some closed temporarily during the 1930s Depression.⁷

Where the nineteenth century saw the establishment of public elementary schools, the twentieth brought development of public secondary and post-primary schooling. The arguments for this included the democratic principle of access, the human capital needs of a modern economy and the social discipline required to control potentially unruly youth.8 Child psychologists such as the American G. Stanley Hall were writing about a newly discovered life stage, 'adolescence', arguing that young people should not be pushed prematurely into adulthood, as had been the practice in the past.9 Until the 1950s the key organising principle of public post-primary schooling was meritocratic. Children might proceed from primary school either to an academic high school - if their results were deemed satisfactory in various forms of entrance examination - or to one of the various post-primary departments that were added to primary schools during the first third of the century. The expanding public high schools provided a pathway to the universities, even though few students actually proceeded so far. Secondary and higher education, it was argued, were thus open to all young people of talent, regardless of wealth, location or family connections. The academic high schools remained substantially unchanged from their foundations until

⁶ Craig Campbell, 'Schooling in Australia', in Craig Campbell and Geoffrey Sherington (eds), *Going to School in Oceania* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2007), pp. 40–1; R.J.W. Selleck, *Frank Tate: A Biography* (Melbourne University Press, 1982).

⁷ B.K. Hyams, Teacher Preparation in Australia: A History of Its Development from 1850 to 1950 (Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1979).

⁸ Craig Campbell and Geoffrey Sherington, *The Comprehensive Public High School: Historical Perspectives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁹ G. Stanley Hall, Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education, 2 vols (London: Appleton & Company, 1904).

at least mid-century. They were organised around the traditional grammar school subjects of English, mathematics and ancient and modern languages, with a limited offering of technical and vocational subjects. Other forms of post-primary schooling had a more complex history as policy makers experimented with institutional forms to suit the 'non-academic' child. Finding a form of higher schooling that would work in the countryside was a particular preoccupation.

Although the timing varied from State to State, the age at which compulsory schooling ended was increased from thirteen to fifteen. In response to what was described in the 1920s as the 'twelve to fourteen' or 'twelve to fifteen' problem,¹⁰ there was an increasing commitment by education departments to provide dedicated curriculums and institutions for those older children who did not proceed to high school. Each State had its own mix of intermediate and technical schools. In the 1910s and 1920s New South Wales set up a system of junior technical schools, which provided generic trades skills for boys and 'domestic science' for girls, as well as intermediate rural schools in country towns that taught subjects such as agriculture and science to boys and hygiene, cookery and horticulture to girls.¹¹ In the 1940s Tasmania pioneered progressive 'area' schools in the countryside, which offered a mix of academic and applied subjects.¹²

The twentieth century saw the continued growth of large, centrally administered state education departments. Australian public education was remarkable for its degree of centralisation, an arrangement criticised by international observers such as Isaac Kandel in the 1930s and Freeman Butts in the 1950s, both professors of the prestigious Teachers College, Columbia University.¹³ Yet it was also defended by Australian educationalists such as George Browne of the Melbourne Teachers College in the 1920s and Frank Tate in the 1930s as a practical solution to the problem of providing equitable access to education across a sparsely populated landmass.¹⁴ Despite the relative concentration of Australian populations in and around the coastal cities,

- 10 G.S. Browne (ed.), Education in Australia: A Comparative Study of the Education Systems of the Six Australian States (London: Macmillan, 1927), pp. vi–x.
- 11 Percival Cole, 'New South Wales', in Browne (ed.), Education in Australia, pp. 39-41.
- 12 Derek Phillips, Making More Adequate Provision: State Education in Tasmania, 1839–1985 (Hobart: Government Printer, 1985), pp. 211–16.
- 13 I.L. Kandel, 'Impressions of Australian Education', in K.S. Cunningham (ed.), Education for Complete Living: The Challenge of To-day (Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1938), pp. 649–60; R. Freeman Butts, Assumptions Underlying Australian Education (New York: Teachers College Columbia University, 1955).
- 14 G.S. Browne, 'Introduction', in Browne (ed.), *Education in Australia*, pp. xvii–xxi; Frank Tate, 'Introduction', in Cunningham (ed.), *Education for Complete Living*, pp. xiii–xxi.

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the small rural primary school remained a prominent feature of the schooling landscape as late as the 1940s. Around World War 2 some 30 per cent of public school children in New South Wales were enrolled in rural primary schools and up to three-quarters in other States.¹⁵

While the state educated the majority, large numbers of children were educated in non-government schools. Catholic schools were the largest group of non-government schools, educating one in four or five Australian children during the twentieth century.¹⁶ In contrast with the centralised public systems, they were run mainly by local parishes for much of the century. Catholic classrooms were distinguishable from public school classrooms by their prayers and religious symbols, the catechism and the observance of the rhythms of the church calendar, but the main difference was the teaching staff. Until the 1960s Catholic primary schools were almost entirely staffed by nuns, priests and brothers willing to subsist on much less than a lay teacher's wage. Most of the private-venture schools, owned and run by their entrepreneur-principals and families, closed early in the century and only a handful survived the 1930s Depression. By the twentieth century these small schools had been superseded by more systematically organised public, Catholic and 'independent' or 'corporate' schools. These latter schools charged high fees and catered to a mainly middle or upper-class clientele. Most of them were founded before the 1920s in the wealthier suburbs of the capital cities.¹⁷ They tended to follow the traditions of the public schools of Britain: 'religion, discipline, culture, athletics and service'.¹⁸ All schools, no matter who ran them, were subject to degrees of government oversight and regulation. State governments effectively controlled the curriculum too, through their management of syllabus documents and public examination systems.

Neither the state nor the other providers of schooling showed much interest in the education of children below the age of five or six, who had been excluded from public schools in the late nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century this was a field of activity for philanthropic groups,

¹⁵ Andrew Spaull, Australian Education in the Second World War (Brisbane: UQP, 1982), pp. 19–20.

¹⁶ R.J.W. Selleck, 'The Catholic Primary School', in John Cleverley (ed.), *Half a Million Children: Studies of Non-Government Education in Australia* (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1978), pp. 77–105.

¹⁷ Janet McCalman, Journeyings: The Biography of a Middle-Class Generation 1920–1990 (Melbourne University Press, 1993).

¹⁸ Geoffrey Sherington, R.C. Petersen and Ian Brice, Learning to Lead: A History of Girls' and Boys' Corporate Secondary Schools in Australia (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987).

especially the Kindergarten Unions, which had established kindergartens and training colleges in nearly all the States by the early 1910s. Initially kindergartens were founded in inner-city slums and working-class areas, but by the 1940s and 1950s they had also been taken up by middle-class mothers in more prosperous suburbs.¹⁹

Since at least the late nineteenth century, the Australian schooling system had been shaped by a belief in the idea that children could and should be classified by their intellectual talent or prowess. From about the 1930s Australian teachers, policy makers and education academics were attracted by the developments in intelligence testing coming from France, the United Kingdom and the United States.²⁰ The new tests promised an empirical way of distinguishing intellectual 'ability' from achievement and thus finding the right fit between an individual child and his or her education. Achievement might be obvious to any classroom teacher, but the identification of ability required specialised knowledge and training. Such ideas were promoted by specialists in the relatively new academic discipline of education, many of them based in the state teachers' colleges.

In 1930 the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) was established with a generous grant from the United States Carnegie Corporation. It was intended to be a clearing house for research and dissemination of the most up-to-date educational theory and practice. Although the ACER came to be best known for intelligence testing and the development of large quantitative studies, during its early decades it also promoted progressive education. In 1937 it almost single-handedly revived the New Education approaches to school reform through sponsoring the New Education Fellowship Conference. Meetings across most Australian capital cities attracted hundreds of educators and others, as well as substantial press and radio coverage. The follow-up publication, *Education for Complete Living*, edited by the ACER's director, Kenneth Cunningham, became a manual for reform well into the post–World War 2 era.²¹

According to their founding legislation, public schools were formally open to all yet soon after the passage of the 'free, compulsory and

¹⁹ Deborah Brennan, *The Politics of Australian Child Care: Philanthropy to Feminism and Beyond*, rev. edn (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

²⁰ David McCallum, The Social Production of Merit: Education, Psychology, and Politics in Australia, 1900–1950 (London: Falmer Press, 1990); Katie Wright, The Rise of the Therapeutic Society: Psychological Knowledge & the Contradictions of Cultural Change (Washington, DC: New Academia, 2011).

²¹ W.F. Connell, *The Australian Council for Educational Research*, 1930–80 (Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1980).

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secular' Acts, Indigenous children were routinely excluded from the public schools or discouraged from attending.²² In New South Wales a policy that Aboriginal children might be excluded from schools if they were not 'clean, clad and courteous' was superseded in 1902 by a policy of 'exclusion on demand' – that is, if white parents objected to their presence. The correspondence files of the various State departments of education contain many letters from Indigenous parents objecting to the policy and seeking exemptions. The following was written during World War 1 by the father of a ten-year-old girl:

I am a taxpayer and an elector, so therefore I am assisting to carry the burden of education of the children of NSW. And I contend that I am perfectly justified in asking that the same facilities of education will be extended to my child that is afforded the children of all castes the Hun and the Turk included.²³

Formal or informal bars remained in place through the assimilationist period from the 1930s until at least the 1960s. We have nothing like a full picture of the history of Indigenous engagement with formal schooling but we do know that there was enormous variety. Many people received no formal schooling at all, but continued to be educated by kin and community in traditional ways. Others suffered in repressive institutions that were later described in the *Bringing Them Home* report (1997) into the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.²⁴ Still others were fortunate to have access to helpful teachers; these included some of the leaders of the early Indigenous civil rights organisations. Nevertheless, it was not until the late twentieth century that Indigenous cultures or languages were treated by schools as anything other than an obstacle to learning.

On completion of primary school, or in some instances well before, the vast majority of students undertook employment or worked within family settings on farms, in businesses and in domestic work. Those who wished to undertake further studies, other than in the few state high schools or private schools, did so in continuation and technical classes, some of which became

²² Craig Campbell and Helen Proctor, *Australian Schools and Schooling: A History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2013).

²³ J.J. Fletcher, *Documents in the History of Aboriginal Education in New South Wales* (Sydney: J. Fletcher, 1989), p. 118.

²⁴ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families (Sydney: HREOC, 1997).

junior technical schools. Several universities provided extension classes for adults; adult education, initially the preserve of mechanics institutes and schools of art, took on a wider role.

Adult and community education (ACE) and vocational education and training (VET) developed as two prongs of post-school, non-university educational activity in Australia.²⁵ Both sectors make major contributions, providing alternative access for adults and utilising teaching methods adapted to adult needs. They are the largest providers of post-secondary education in Australia. At times they have also provided pathways into higher education for disadvantaged groups. Despite these important functions, their histories are often overlooked.

Schools of art and mechanics institutes, early providers of vocational and technical education, had evolved by the early twentieth century into more specific entities such as 'schools of mines' and technical colleges at which apprenticeships also included non-technical studies. Leading examples were Sydney Technical School, South Australia's Roseworthy Agricultural College established in 1883, and the progressive South Australian School of Mines and Industries in 1889.

During the first half of the twentieth century 'the flame of adult learning was kept flickering through the WEAs...the Country Women's Association, arts councils, agricultural extension departments, evening colleges, trade unions, church organisations, university extension...and the library movement'.²⁶ The Workers Educational Association (WEA) was a successor of the nineteenth-century institutes and schools of arts. Based on the British model developed by Albert Mansbridge and linked to university extension, the WEA began at Oxford in 1907. It established tutorial classes to help workers develop political and industrial knowledge.²⁷ By 1914 the WEA had been established in all but one Australian State and became the principal form of adult education. It conducted local classes and arranged university extension lectures, which were vital for the many young Australians who left school at the end of the compulsory years and yearned for more knowledge. Another unexpected player was the Australian Army Education Service, which provided lectures, discussion classes, concerts, publications and an

²⁵ Roger Harris, 'The Historical Contribution of AVE to Social Sustainability in Australia', in Peter Willis, Stephen McKenzie and Roger Harris (eds), *Rethinking Work* and Learning: Adult and Vocational Education for Social Sustainability (New York: Springer, 2009), p. 46.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 49.

²⁷ Derek Whitelock, *The Great Tradition: A History of Adult Education in Australia* (Brisbane: UQP, 1974).

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extensive library service during World War 2. The service built upon the vocational education scheme developed at the end of World War 1, a service run largely in England as part of the demobilisation and repatriation process. The centralised and hierarchical model, ideal for wartime, was not suited to a peacetime democratic society.²⁸

In the vocational field and to a lesser extent in adult and community education, utilitarian interests mostly prevailed over social and cultural concerns. In spite of bursts of cultural flowering, economic benefit seems to have been the default position. Furthermore, adult and vocational interests were seen as secondary to school and university education, leading them to be characterised as 'a threadbare, inadequate chronically poverty-stricken affair', having 'a Cinderella-like existence in the back kitchen of education'.²⁹ The fact that students in VET were more likely to come from a lower socioeconomic group than university students added to a sense of a hierarchy between the sectors. Yet by 1944 technical education students in Australia numbered over 100,000, far outstripping enrolments in higher education.

While mechanics institutes and schools of art flourished, at the beginning of the century there were only four state universities. Two others followed quickly: the University of Queensland in 1909 and the University of Western Australia in 1911, the latter distinctive in its free education and practical courses. A tiny proportion of the population completed university degrees and was assured of a leading place in a society that increasingly valued merit as well as the prestige of a university qualification. Australia followed British models, often that of the Scottish and newer English universities rather than Oxbridge. The fact that Australian universities were created and funded by the States ensured their secular nature: from the beginning, they attempted to avoid sectarian strife by banning the religious tests still required in some British institutions and by not teaching theology. Australian universities were metropolitan, teaching predominantly local non-residential students. A handful of halls of residence catered for country students and those parents seeking pastoral care for their sons and daughters. As well as arts and science, universities offered a range of professional degrees - law, medicine and engineering, for example. A few students, particularly from elite families, studied at Oxford or Cambridge, or obtained higher degrees at British or

²⁸ Harris, 'The Historical Contribution of AVE', p. 49; see also Spaull, *Australian Education in the Second World War*.

²⁹ Derek Whitelock and L. Wilson respectively, quoted in Harris, "The Historical Contribution of AVE", p. 49.

European universities. Little research or higher degree activity took place: the first Australian PhD was not awarded until 1948.

Until World War 2 university students were a tiny minority: around 14,000 students in 1939, just 0.2 per cent of the population.³⁰ Universities struggled to consolidate their role in a pragmatic society still recovering from the Depression of the 1890s. By the turn of the century women had been admitted, often but not always grudgingly, to the four earliest universities. The new universities, the University of Queensland and the University of Western Australia, welcomed women from the start. While classes were coeducational, young men and women clustered in separate clubs. The women, in particular, valued the privacy and companionship of clubs such as the Princess Ida Club at Melbourne University or the Women's Union at Adelaide. There they could escape the typically hostile reception of medical, engineering and law students. Students, both male and female, enjoyed debating and literature clubs, and sporting, religious and humanitarian organisations. The part-time student, mixing paid work with study, was present from the beginning. This arrangement attracted those pursuing arts and science degrees and professional qualifications such as law and commerce.³¹

Throughout the first decades of the century the university provided a place where a wide range of ideas and attitudes could be explored, many espousing a vision of a good society.³² Students might belong to the communist-leaning Labour Clubs that were established from the 1920s, the Student Christian Movement (SCM) and in Sydney from the 1930s the Freethought Society led by the legendary philosophy professor John Anderson. Radicals remained a small minority: the majority of undergraduates were politically conservative or non-partisan. Yet that small minority was significant: student activism prepared many of those who became leaders in Australian politics, professions and the arts.

The increasing need for well-educated professionals and technologists, combined with families' desires for social betterment for their children, led to increasing enrolments in the first decades of the century. From the 1940s the federal government became a provider and funder of universities. Its involvement began with free places for students in courses of significance for

³⁰ David S. Macmillan, Australian Universities: A Descriptive Sketch (Sydney University Press, 1968), p. 77.

³¹ Alison Mackinnon, *The New Women: Adelaide's Early Women Graduates* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1986).

³² Julia Horne and Geoffrey Sherington, Sydney: The Making of a Public University (Melbourne University Press, 2012); Alan Barcan, Radical Students: The Old Left at Sydney University (Melbourne University Press, 2002), p. 331.

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the war effort and then the Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme (CRTS), whereby men and women returning from the armed services were supported in their studies. Although only one-tenth of all ex-service students who took up the CRTS chose universities, most opting for vocational education, they doubled undergraduate numbers. Their presence changed the mix on university campuses, introducing a large number of experienced, predominantly male and older students who enriched the student culture; they also contributed to the further growth of universities. From this point on, in a context of strong economic growth and full employment, Commonwealth funding – and control – increased. From 1951 the Commonwealth provided scholarships for 3,000 undergraduates, and after the report of the 1950 Mills Committee, the first of a series of State Grants (Universities) Acts was passed whereby the Commonwealth contributed a quarter of recurrent costs.

Commonwealth funding continued to increase as demands for greater scientific and technological expertise grew. Political realities intruded onto university campuses in ways other than funding: the 1950s, for example, was a conservative decade in Australian society – and universities. As in many parts of the western world, university political clubs declined and religious societies flourished. Some, such as the SCM, took up political concerns and advocated peace and opposition to apartheid. The SCM provided an opportunity for both men and women to learn the skills of debating, organisation and leadership: the joys of tussling with ideas.³³ Reflecting the sectarian nature of Australian society at this time, Catholic students formed their own religious societies, although students of all faiths mingled in sporting and literary clubs. The Newman Society at Melbourne University exemplified the sense of 'a community, a vision and a hope', particularly in the 1950s.³⁴

University research funding was well established, if hardly generous, yet there was concern that the State universities were not using their meagre Commonwealth research grants well. A new and generously funded university, the Australian National University, was established in 1946 in Canberra.³⁵ This was a significant step, a research-only university created by the Commonwealth, not the States, with the express purpose of supporting research both broadly and for the benefit of the nation. It was to consist of

³³ Renate Howe, A Century of Influence: The Australian Student Christian Movement 1896– 1996 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009).

³⁴ Val Noone et al. (eds), Golden Years, Grounds for Hope: Father Golden and the Newman Society, 1950–1966 (Melbourne: Golden Project, 2008).

³⁵ Stuart Macintyre, *The Poor Relation: A History of Social Sciences in Australia* (Melbourne University Press, 2010), pp. 58–61.

four research schools, and to attract the best minds available, who would in turn train postgraduates. The older universities, unwilling to accept its primacy, introduced their own doctoral research degrees and expanded their research activity. The scene was set for even greater expansion in the next three decades.

The Keynesian experiment, from World War 2 to the 1970s

Immigration and the post-war baby boom brought higher rates of population increase after World War 2. Improvements in technology and expansion of the manufacturing sector contributed to three decades of sustained economic growth. All aspects of education were affected as the government, using Keynesian methods of management, viewed education as an engine of economic growth and agent of social welfare.³⁶ The 'long boom' of the post-war years and an increasingly sophisticated and diversified economy created the conditions and context for much greater expenditure on education, including an expanded role for the Commonwealth government, especially in the wake of the wartime cession to the federal government of the power to levy income taxes. A significant difference among the sectors – universities, schools and technical and vocational institutions – is that school education captured public imagination in both State and federal elections in the post-war period.

Priorities for policy action included the provision of universal secondary schooling and an expanded and enhanced pre-service training of teachers. Under-investment during the Depression and war had left inadequate and rundown buildings and equipment, and a severe teacher shortage. Two new waves of enrolments flowed through the school system: the children of the post-war baby boom and those of the post-war migration program, creating enormous pressure on schools. Teachers' colleges expanded exponentially. Comprehensive public high schools were established in every State. In contrast with the older meritocratic institutions, these were high schools that would provide secondary education for all under the same roof. Governments were influenced in this new provision by countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, as well as by other considerations. The expansion of secondary education was seen as a national investment and

³⁶ Simon Marginson, Educating Australia: Government, Economy and Citizen since 1960 (Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 13–14.

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as a civic entitlement. Moreover, as they embraced the first large groups of immigrants from non-English speaking backgrounds, the new high schools would be community institutions, good for social cohesion.³⁷ Numbers increased also in the Catholic and independent secondary schools. The full employment of the post-war decades, however, meant that the majority of young people continued to leave school as soon as they could.

After extensive lobbying from key educators and scientists, Prime Minister Robert Menzies invited Sir Keith Murray to investigate Australian universities. The chairman of the British University Grants Committee, Murray produced the influential Murray Report of 1957, which brought about major reform. The Commonwealth set up the Australian Universities Commission to coordinate Australia's universities and provide triennial grants. The generous extra funding revolutionised Australian universities. Enrolments rose sharply after 1955 to reach 69,000 by 1963. As they grew, both State and Commonwealth governments felt the pressure to provide more tertiary places.

The 1964 Martin Report sought a solution to expanding demand and growing costs by recommending a two-tiered system of higher education. Building on previous teachers' colleges, senior technical colleges and agricultural colleges, a new coordinated system of colleges of advanced education (CAEs) was established. This set in place a binary system of higher education whereby the universities provided theoretical and professional education and undertook research, while the less costly CAEs offered applied and vocational training. Research funding to universities increased, with the creation of the Australian Research Grants Committee. Additional universities were built, bringing the number to nineteen by 1974. This was a period of remarkable growth in education systems, one linked not only to demographic and economic pressures but to a 'revolution in rising expectations'.³⁸

For students of the late 1960s and 1970s, in Australia as elsewhere, the calmer certainties of mid-century vanished as social movements challenging class, gender and race divisions created turbulence across campuses. 'Sit-ins' and various forms of protest erupted, particularly against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. The university experience was no longer the preserve of the privileged but included a wider group of students, many of mature age, attuned to the broader challenges of the age.

³⁷ Campbell and Sherington, The Comprehensive Public High School.

³⁸ Marginson, Educating Australia, p. 33.

In the early 1940s a loose coalition of academics and others had applied a statistical analysis to Australian schooling, pioneering the kind of classbased analysis that would demonstrate over the next 70 years the robust correlations between parental wealth and schooling achievement.³⁹ The post-war expansion of secondary education had partly been a response to this critique but by the late 1960s sociologists and others were identifying persistent inequality, despite the new opportunities, and arguing that schools needed to develop national policies and programs to work against social and economic disadvantage.⁴⁰

While State governments, churches and other providers continued to administer schools, successive federal governments from the 1960s sought to influence the direction of school education through special-purpose funding schemes, especially in areas considered to have national implications.⁴¹ Partly as a response to the 1957 Sputnik launch, the Menzies Coalition government gave financial assistance to both government and non-government secondary schools for the building of science laboratories and later libraries. In 1973 the Whitlam Labor government went much further when it created the Schools Commission to allocate per capita grants to all schools, including non-government schools, on the basis of need.⁴² The Commission also introduced programs to assist with poverty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, the schooling of people from non-English speaking backgrounds and gender inequality.⁴³

The provision of state aid to non-government schools had been hotly debated within the Australian Labor Party since the 1950s; its introduction marked the overthrow of a long-held policy. In 1971 an alliance of public schools supporters launched a High Court challenge based on the section of the Australian Constitution separating church from state, but this was eventually defeated in 1981. According to Michael Hogan, 'If the infusions of public money into the Catholic system had not been granted in the 1960s

- 39 McCallum, The Social Production of Merit.
- 40 Tom Roper, *The Myth of Equality*, 2nd edn (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1971); R.W. Connell et al., *Making the Difference: Schools, Families and Social Division* (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1982).
- 41 Ian R. Wilkinson et al., A History of State Aid to Non-Government Schools in Australia (Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training, 2007).
- 42 Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission, Schools in Australia: Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission (Canberra: AGPS, 1973).

43 For example, Schools Commission, *Girls, Schools and Society: Report by a Study Group to the Schools Commission* (Canberra: Commonwealth Schools Commission, 1975).

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it would have been too late to save the system'.⁴⁴ By that time the Catholic schools were in crisis, unable to cope with the baby boom, the demands of an increasingly ethnically diverse school population, and a modernising curriculum. The priests, brothers and especially nuns on whom their schools had relied since the late nineteenth century were disappearing as fewer young people were prepared to take up religious vocations.

The vocational and adult education sectors were also looking for Commonwealth support as they expanded to fill the gaps between schools and universities and offer courses for technicians, para-professionals, apprentices and those requiring retraining for manufacturing and expanded services. By 1971 close to 400,000 students were enrolled in technical education, the largest number in adult education followed by those in para-professional and trade apprenticeship courses. By contrast there were 123,000 students in universities and over 44,000 in CAEs.45 The Kangan Report of 1974, which for the first time considered technical education from a national perspective, ushered in two decades of change. Primarily it resulted in the establishment of technical and further education (TAFE) as a distinct sector with Commonwealth funding. In tabling the report, the Minister for Education, Kim Beazley, summed up the changes: 'It abandons the narrow and rigid concept that technical colleges exist simply to meet the manpower needs of industry, and adopts a broader concept that they exist to meet the needs of people as individuals'.46

From Keynes to educational markets

The end of the long boom placed increasing strains on government provision for education. The engine of growth that had allowed government to increase outlays, and the policies that linked education to full employment and increased productivity, no longer operated. At the same time the federal government was committed to high levels of expenditure: the Whitlam government had increased support for universities and abolished university fees in 1974, while its establishment of the Schools Commission brought expectations of additional school funding. Public expenditure on education grew from 4 per cent

⁴⁴ Michael Hogan, The Catholic Campaign for State Aid: A Study of a Pressure Group Campaign in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, 1950–1972 (Sydney: Catholic Theological Faculty, 1978), p. 266.

⁴⁵ D.S. Anderson and A.E. Vervoorn, Access to Privilege: Patterns of Participation in Australian Post-Secondary Education (Canberra: ANU Press, 1983), pp. 21, 30, 33.

⁴⁶ Quoted in Gillian Goozee, *The Development of TAFE in Australia* (Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research, 2001), p. 27.

of GDP in 1970–71 to 6.1 per cent by 1977–78, a level that has never since been regained. Despite slower growth in secondary enrolments and a slight decline in primary enrolments, it proved difficult to reduce spending on schools, and Commonwealth support for non-government schools grew rapidly. The higher education sector experienced particular difficulty: enrolments increased by nearly 40 per cent between 1975 and 1985 with little increase in funding.⁴⁷

Until 1987 government sought to lower expectations and demand greater efficiency, while the universities resisted change. The impasse was broken in that year by a new federal Minister for Education, Employment and Training, John Dawkins, as part of the Labor government's program of economic reform. Determined to expand higher education and align it to national priorities, he abolished the 'binary divide' between universities and the CAEs and institutes of technology. Henceforth all institutions of higher education were to become universities in a 'unified national system'. This system, lean and efficient, was to provide the knowledge workers and innovators for the new economy. It was also to be under the control of the Commonwealth government, which demanded accountability for its funding and required them to adopt new forms of corporate management.

Many mergers took place, bringing 70 existing institutions together into 36 universities. These mergers were resisted, not least by the older universities, often referred to as 'the sandstones' for their stately traditional architecture; they feared their funding would be diluted, their superior status compromised. Staff in newly merged institutions struggled to accommodate each other's cultures. While universities increasingly prided themselves on their research capacity, few academic staff from the CAEs had undertaken higher degrees or produced substantial research, as CAEs had been funded for teaching only. New funding sources were also required to support the unified and expanded national system. In the following year a Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) was introduced, whereby students paid a fee representing a proportion of the cost on entry, or as a tax levy when their post-university salaries reached a certain level.⁴⁸

Research support was also drawn into the market with the creation of the Australian Research Council (ARC), which linked the traditional pursuit of knowledge to strategic economic objectives.⁴⁹ Following international

49 Marginson, Educating Australia, p. 162.

⁴⁷ Marginson, Educating Australia, pp. 26, 187, 212.

⁴⁸ Ian Davey and Ianto Ware, 'Equity, Globalisation and Higher Education', in Gerry Bloustien, Barbara Comber and Alison Mackinnon (eds), *The Hawke Legacy* (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2009), p. 71.

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practice and influenced by statements from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the government looked to investment in science and technology for new products and improved productivity. Researchers were urged to collaborate with industry, to pursue national priorities and to pay attention to the commercial value of their work. Subsequently, Cooperative Research Centres, jointly funded and staffed by universities, business and the CSIRO, concentrated effort in key areas of national interest.

The restructuring of the economy in the 1980s placed a premium on skill. The decline of heavy industry and manufacturing, along with the spread of automation, reduced demand for unqualified school leavers who could once have expected to find work and acquire occupational skills that would have provided them with a lifelong career. Persistent levels of youth unemployment, together with the problems encountered by those made redundant, brought change in the vocational and adult education sectors. A series of reports from the late 1980s set out a framework for increased participation and 'key competencies' that would facilitate more flexible employment practices and provide a platform for lifelong learning. At the same time, there was increased use of private providers and a corresponding shift to treat those receiving training as purchasers in a training market. The neglect of adult education was signalled by the titles of two Senate reports, *Come in Cinderella* and *Beyond Cinderella.*⁵⁰

Changes in the school sector were less pronounced, principally because the States remained the main providers. There was agreement on the need to lift retention rates and improve outcomes. To this end the States moved away in the 1990s from older forms of centralised bureaucratic management. They dismantled some of the boundaries around school catchment areas, compelling schools to compete with each other for student enrolments, and gave greater authority to principals.⁵¹ The efficacy of such changes was restricted, partly because of the reluctance to devolve budgetary control and partly because of the drift of enrolments to non-government schools as they received increased Commonwealth support. Increased participation brought curricular changes, designed to accommodate the greater diversity

⁵⁰ Come in Cinderella: The Emergence of Adult and Community Education (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1991); Beyond Cinderella: Towards a Learning Society: Inquiry into the Developments in Adult and Community Education since 1991 (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1997).

⁵¹ Anthony R. Welch, Australian Education: Reform or Crisis? (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996); Martin Forsey, Challenging the System? A Dramatic Tale of Neo-Liberal Reform in an Australian High School (Sydney: Information Age Publishing, 2007).

of students in senior secondary years, but attempts to develop a national curriculum foundered on the reluctance of the States to surrender control.

Results over the following decade provided some vindication of the changes to Australian education. Higher education enrolments rose rapidly from 394,000 in 1987 to 631,000 in 1996. The deferred fee scheme, HECS, facilitated this expansion and was widely imitated elsewhere, as were the new methods of university management. Benefitting from its regional location as an English-language provider of professional degrees, Australia attracted increasing numbers of fee-paying international students, and this income compensated for the relative decline in public funding. Schools and vocational training providers broadened Australia's education exports.

Within this educational market there remained a concern for social equity. Widening access to higher education was the principal reason for the Whitlam government's abolition of university fees, and similar arguments were made for the HECS scheme. Women benefitted greatly from the abolition of fees and the gender policies of the Hawke Labor government. While in 1949 women made up less than a fifth of all undergraduates, by 1987 they outnumbered men.⁵² The Whitlam government also established a National Aboriginal Consultative Group in 1972, leading in 1977 to the National Aboriginal Education Committee, which gave Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander advice to the Commonwealth Minister of Education.⁵³ The Hawke government brought Indigenous education into the education portfolio, and launched the first National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy in 1989, 'a milestone in Australian history, uniting all states and territories with the Commonwealth in a commitment to pursuing national goals for Indigenous education^{3,54} But that time of hope was not maintained, indeed it was dismantled by the Liberal-National Party government that came to office in 1996, and the laudable policy goals have not been implemented. Indigenous studies centres in universities, while well supported, have failed to spread influence beyond their walls.

Outcomes

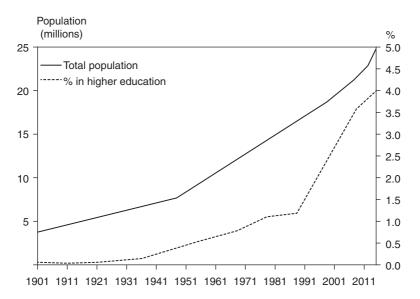
Australia is the only OECD country where the public contribution to higher education remained at the same level in 2005 as in 1995. Yet university

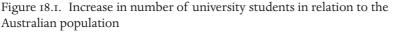
⁵² Anderson and Vervoorn, Access to Privilege, p. 49; Marginson, Educating Australia, p. 187.

⁵³ Peter Buckskin, 'Hawke and Ryan: An Acceleration of Indigenous Education Policy',

in Bloustien et al. (eds), *The Hawke Legacy*, pp. 84–5. 54 lbid., p. 90.

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Source: Based on data provided by Julie Hare, Higher Education Editor of the Australian.

enrolments continued to grow so that 29 per cent of those aged 25 to 34 now held a degree (see Figure 18.1).⁵⁵ The expansion was made possible by the HECS scheme, whereby the government provided part of the cost of tuition and advanced the student component. But while HECS charges were increased, the aggregate funding for domestic students fell short of the full cost. The gap was filled by the growth of fee income from international students, which reached s14.2 billion by 2007–08, but this in turn increased class sizes and caused a marked deterioration in the student–teacher ratio from 14:1 in 1996 to 20:1 by 2006.⁵⁶ After a major inquiry into higher education in 2008 recommended that 40 per cent of 25 to 34-year-olds should have a degree-level qualification by 2020, the government responded by allowing universities to enrol any qualified domestic student. Since the government continues to hold down its contribution and determines the HECS schedule, the universities remain caught in a growth trap that forces them to attract increasing numbers of international students paying higher fees.

⁵⁵ Denise Bradley et al., *Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report* (Canberra: Australian Government, 2008), p. xv.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 71, 88.

Universities now occupy a hybrid public/private space, subsidised to a decreasing degree by the Commonwealth and required to be entrepreneurial. Their institutional forms are a palimpsest of historically embedded structures (remnants of collegiality and public accountability) and values (the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake) operating alongside new corporate goals and procedures. Arguments between those who affirm education as a public good and those who insist it confers private benefits remained endemic in academic debate, but the market in higher education had far-reaching effects on Australian universities. Campuses were different spaces by the twenty-first century, often emptied by students who attended briefly for lectures before disappearing to fulfil commitments in paid work. The research enterprise grew dramatically, absorbing a large part of university attention.

The goal of increasing access for disadvantaged groups seems as distant as ever. A study in 1983 found that 'higher education in general and universities in particular remain socially elite institutions'.⁵⁷ A quarter-century later, a government review cited the despairing conclusion of a researcher that 'It is tempting to conclude that university admission/selection processes are quite resilient in reproducing a certain social order'.⁵⁸ As at the turn of the twentieth century, and again at its midpoint, those from high socioeconomic groups are far more likely to attend universities, a pattern that remains remarkably stable. Some groups have gained greater access: women, spectacularly, since the 1970s, and students with disabilities since the 1990s. Students from non-English speaking backgrounds are no longer seen as disadvantaged. Yet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, despite substantial increases in enrolments, were still represented in universities at half the rate that might be expected: they made up 1.3 per cent of undergraduates in 2008 and their completion rate was much lower, while they constitute 2.5 per cent of the population.⁵⁹ Underrepresented, too, are those from remote, rural and regional areas: here, of course, many Indigenous students can be found.

In schools the rate of retention to the final year of instruction, Year 12, rose by the year 2000 to 74.4 per cent of Year 10 students.⁶⁰ At the same time, the proportion of students in government schools declined. In 1975, 75.9 per cent of secondary students attended government schools, but by 2005

⁵⁷ Anderson and Vervoorn, Access to Privilege, p. 170.

⁵⁸ Richard James, 'Social Equity in a Mass, Globalised Higher Education Environment: The Unresolved Issue of Widening Access to University', Faculty of Education Dean's Lecture Series, University of Melbourne, 18 September 2007, p. 6, cited in Bradley et al., *Review of Australian Higher Education*, p. 38.

⁵⁹ Bradley et al., Review of Australian Higher Education, p. 10.

⁶⁰ Campbell and Proctor, Australian Schools and Schooling.

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their share had dropped to 61.8 per cent.⁶¹ There was a dramatic growth in independent schools charging low-to-moderate fees. This was a new sector of the education market – largely established since the mid-1980s in the outer suburbs of the larger cities – and includes Islamic and evangelical Christian schools, as well as a small group of progressive or alternative providers such as Steiner schools. In a reversal of their earlier circumstances, Catholic schools improved their financial position as public schools became more run down. While diversity exists within and across all sectors, there are significant and persistent correlations between household income and the enrolment of children in non-government schools.⁶²

In the twenty-first century Australian school students were regularly compared with others of the same age and with their peers in other states. One of the most obvious manifestations of the globalisation of school policy was the development by the OECD of sophisticated surveys to create internationally comparable metrics. The first results of the OECD's Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) were released in 2000. Australia's report was mixed. Its mean scores in reading, mathematics and scientific literacy were significantly above the OECD averages, but there was a larger than average gap between rich and poor, which meant that Australia was classified as a 'high quality, low equity' nation. In particular, there were disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the lowest achievement bands.⁶³

In 2008 the Rudd government created the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), charged with oversight of a new national assessment program and the design of a national curriculum. ACARA also managed the design and implementation of a website that published detailed comparative information about nearly every Australian school. The MySchool website employed an 'index of socio-educational advantage' to make sophisticated comparisons between school test results. MySchool 2.0, released in 2011, included details of school fees and school wealth. This innovation spoke directly to parents, who from the late twentieth century were seen as key stakeholders in schooling.

⁶¹ Adapted from Craig Campbell, Helen Proctor and Geoffrey Sherington, *School Choice: How Parents Negotiate the New School Markets in Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2009), p. 58.

⁶² Barbara Preston, *The Social Make-Up of Schools: Family Income, Religion, Indigenous Status, and Family Type in Government, Catholic and Other Non-Government Schools* (Melbourne: Australian Education Union, 2007).

⁶³ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Review of Funding for Schooling: Final Report* (Canberra: Australian Government, 2011).

Efforts continue to create pathways between the sectors, particularly between the diploma and advanced diploma levels of TAFE institutes and the undergraduate degree level of universities. A certain blurring at the edges is likely to continue.⁶⁴ An emphasis on vocationalism seems set to prevail as Australia faces skill shortages and seeks to enhance productivity. Technical education has not achieved the status it enjoys in some other countries, such as Germany, Italy or Sweden, although by 1995 it educated twice the number of students undertaking higher education. Technical and vocational education will no doubt have an important role to play in helping Australian universities reach their twenty-first-century goals of wider access for up to 40 per cent of the age group. Adult community education will continue to play a major part in edifying an ageing and proportionately larger retired population.

Transformations and new identities

Beyond the tangible institutional aspects of a century of educational provision lie a series of wider transformations. Gender relations, age relations, race relations and class relations all produce, and are constituted by, educational participation. The relationship between ever-prolonged education and its recipients, for example, has created new social actors in Australia unknown in 1900: the dependent primary and secondary school-age child, the adolescent, the expert mother.

Education has been a major factor in the transformation of the Australian family as well as the workforce. At the beginning of the twentieth century the education of women was regarded by opponents as dangerous, likely to give women ambitions beyond marriage and child bearing; by the end of the century women made up the majority of undergraduates. Over the century highly educated women have married later and less than other women, leading to smaller families.⁶⁵ Access to secondary and higher education has opened the doors to the professions and economic independence for women. Teaching has offered a pathway to post-secondary education and careers for both men and women from less privileged backgrounds. Throughout the century women staffed the expanding school systems, particularly at primary level. Teaching as a career of choice for women has suffered since the 1970s as women, in common with men, were increasingly attracted by

64 Bradley et al., *Review of Australian Higher Education*, p. 179. 65 See, for example, Mackinnon, *Love and Freedom*.

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higher status careers in law, medicine and commerce. Age relations have also been transformed by increasing dependence, first of school-age children and later of tertiary students. In twenty-first century Australia young adults swell Australian households as they complete their education and seek work.

Throughout the century the prospect of a career based on talent and increasing demand for qualifications lured immigrants and the less privileged to secondary and higher education. Provision of generous scholarships and bursaries made good that promise for many. In the 1950s the need for teachers in the expanding school system was so acute that State education department studentships were created, offering university degrees for the commitment of three years in the teaching labour force. This lasted until the mid-1970s, when a surplus of teachers made the scheme redundant.

As Australia moved into the twenty-first century, debate about the purpose and form of educational provision continued. Definitions such as that of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) – education as 'a universal right and a public good' – jostle more utilitarian arguments, as they did throughout the twentieth century. The notion of a global skills shortage weighs heavily on Australian policy makers. In examining issues around education in Australia we see writ large many of the complexities of our age. One is the competing demands on students to be both part of the global knowledge society and at the same time to contribute to national growth, prosperity and wellbeing. While educational historians in the early twentieth century discussed institutions, nation building and the development of 'character', particularly for men, educational historians today are more inclined to examine the identities produced through institutions and curriculums. Old structures that were laid out in the early twentieth century still persist: the linear pathway through school, university, work and partnership, for example. Yet many Australian students now follow hybrid pathways - they are students and workers, students and parents - even workers, then parents, then students. A century of attempts to broaden the social mix in schools and universities has resulted in far greater numbers of young people achieving a higher level of education. The dominance of higher socioeconomic groups remains intact, however, and the type of institution attended is often dictated as much by birth as by merit. The inclusion of the less privileged in numbers commensurate with their proportions in the population remains a challenge for the century ahead.

¹⁹ The environment

GREGORY BARTON AND BRETT BENNETT

In November 1902 a giant dust cloud hung over much of the recently established Commonwealth of Australia. Red dust storms blew across the parched land as a result of the Federation Drought that lasted from 1895 to 1903.¹ Plants withered, the ground soil cracked, millions of animals died from thirst and starvation, and the Murray and Darling rivers stopped flowing at points from a lack of water. Meteorologists now know that such droughts were a response to a strong El Niño Southern Oscillation, a climatic system determined by the temperature of the water in the Pacific Ocean. When warm Pacific water drifts east towards Peru and South America in an El Niño phase, Australia receives drought, but when warm water moves westward towards Australia, in a La Niña phase, Australia receives rain. Unbeknown to Australians at the time, weather conditions in the Pacific determined whether farmers received rain for their crops.

Throughout the twentieth century white Australians came to recognise that the continent on which they lived had climates and ecologies that were markedly different from those in Eurasia, the Americas and even nearby New Zealand. In a sense, they had to learn what most of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people already knew: that much of Australia is prone to drought, flood and fire. Though most Indigenous people learned about these cycles and processes through oral histories, culture and experience,² their knowledge was not incorporated into state environmental management models or popular interpretations of nature until the last

I Don Garden, 'The Federation Drought of 1895–1903, El Niño and Society in Australia', in Geneviève Massard-Guilbaud and Stephen Mosley (eds), *Common Ground: Integrating the Social and Environmental in History* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp. 270–92.

² See, for example, Deborah Bird Rose, 'Rhythms, Patterns, Connectivities: Indigenous Concepts of Seasons and Change', in Tim Sherratt, Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (eds), *A Change in the Weather: Climate and Culture in Australia* (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2005), pp. 32–41.

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decades of the twentieth century. Extreme events helped introduce the Australian public to the climatic factors shaping the continent's weather. The best known include the Federation Drought of 1895–1903, the 'Black Friday' forest fires in Victoria in 1939, Cyclone Tracy in Darwin and the Brisbane flood in 1974.

In particular, Australians learned throughout the century that drought was a regular and pronounced feature of the continent's climatic cycle. Strong droughts occurred across much of Australia in 1895-1903, 1914-15, 1918–20, 1937–45, 1965–68, 1982–83 and 1991–95.3 Australia is located on latitudes characterised by a dominant subtropical high-pressure system that is relatively stable and dry; this produces clear skies and low precipitation unless lower pressure systems from the Indian, Southern or Pacific oceans destabilise the dominant high-pressure system. Changes in the atmosphere and water temperature around Australia dictate the onset of rain, leaving the continent susceptible to wide variations in rainfall from year to year. Some droughts caused massive crop failure and sharp declines in livestock numbers: the Federation Drought, for example, halved the number of sheep in Australia from 100 million to 50 million.⁴ Such events exacerbated economic slowdowns and recessions at the turn of the century, the early 1980s and early 1990s. Many Australians became aware of the Southern Oscillation due to the peaking of drought in 1982-83 and 1991–95.5 Anthropogenic climate change entered into national debates in the late 1990s, partly as a result of chronic declines in rainfall in south-west Western Australia.6

Droughts often ended with a deluge of water that brought flooding, a result of the movement of warm water in the Pacific towards Australia during a La Niña Southern Oscillation or seasonal monsoonal rains. Massive floods affected large parts of Australia, such the Murray–Darling River Basin, Queensland's Desert Channels, and the monsoonal parts of the Northern

³ Information on the specifics of each drought is at Bureau of Metereology, 'Climate Change' http://www.bom.gov.au/lam/climate/levelthree/c20thc/drought.htm, accessed 11 July 2011.

⁴ William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire* (Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 95.

⁵ Neville Nicholls, 'Climatic Outlooks: From Revolutionary Science to Orthodoxy', in Sherratt et al. (eds), *A Change in the Weather*, pp. 18–29.

⁶ See Ruth A. Morgan, 'Diagnosing the Dry: Historical Case Notes from Southwest Western Australia, 1945–2007', Osiris, 26, 1 (2011): 89–108. While many historians have reflected on the impact of climate change on environmental history, few have approached the subject historically; see Libby Robin and Will Steffen, 'History for the Anthropocene', History Compass, 5, 5 (2007): 1694–719.

Territory, Queensland and Western Australia.⁷ Floods constituted a normal part of the cycle of most riverine ecosystems before European settlers built dams for agricultural purposes and to protect cities from flooding. Floods also had devastating effects on human property; this phenomenon was seen most strikingly in 1974 when Brisbane was affected, an event that led the Queensland government to create the Wivenhoe Dam.

Fire shaped deeply the landscape and history of Australia. Many European immigrants and the first professional foresters in Australia did not at first recognise fire's ecological significance for forests and savannah.⁸ Confident that fire could be suppressed, people settled in highly fire-prone regions, such as the mountain ash (*Eucalyptus regnans*) forests of Victoria.⁹ Towering up to 90 metres, mountain ash tend to grow in forests of similar-aged trees, the result of intense fires that occur approximately every 60 to 100 years. The 1939 fire burned 1.4 million hectares throughout central Victoria and killed 71 people. Famously, Judge Leonard Stretton, who presided over the royal commission into the disaster, concluded: 'They [the dead] had not lived long enough'. The historian Tom Griffiths notes that the judge 'was pitying the innocence of European immigrants in a land whose natural rhythms they did not yet understand'.¹⁰ This fire served as one of many that changed how Australians perceived their place in the landscape.

The emptiness and aridity of central Australia engendered fear, curiosity and, later, reverence. Australian perceptions of the central deserts changed during the century as a response to natural histories and literature in the first half of the century, and tourism, the Indigenous rights movement, and environmentalism in the second half. J.W. Gregory, the early-twentieth century professor of geology at the University of Melbourne, described central Australia as the 'dead heart' in 1906. Thanks in part to the publication of Henry Finlayson's 1935 natural history, the development of colour photographs and the growing use of private cars from the 1960s, the dead heart became known as the 'red centre'." Tourism to Ayers Rock, now known

8 Stephen Pyne, The Still-Burning Bush (Melbourne: Scribe, 2006).

⁷ Libby Robin, Chris Dickman and Mandy Martin (eds), Desert Channels: The Impulse to Conserve (Melbourne: CSIRO Publishing, 2010); Emily O'Gorman, Flood Country: An Environmental History of the Murray–Darling Basin (Melbourne: CSIRO Publishing, 2012).

⁹ Tom Griffiths, *Forests of Ash: An Environmental History* (Cambridge University Press, 2001). 10 Ibid., p. vii.

¹¹ Libby Robin, How a Continent Created a Nation (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), pp. 103–9; H.H. Finlayson, The Red Centre: Man and Beast in the Heart of Australia (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1935); J.W. Gregory, The Dead Heart of Australia: A Journey around Lake Eyre in the Summer of 1901–1902 (London: John Murray, 1906).

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by the local Pitjantjatjara term as Uluru, started in the 1930s through to the 1940s and grew in popularity each decade thereafter, with the establishment of a national park at Ayers Rock in 1950. In 1985 the federal government returned Uluru to its Pitjantjatjara owners and signed a 99-year lease for joint management of the park. By the last decades of the twentieth century, many Australians regarded a trip to Uluru as a spiritual journey to the soul of the continent.

Most Australians only discovered the fragility and uniqueness of the country's natural systems after agriculture, pastoralism, mining and fishing had transformed them. Though the history of Australia is often understood in terms of economic growth, environmental failures are object lessons in the limits of growth, including extinction, the decline of populations of native species, crop failures, livestock losses, biological invasions and declining water quality. Popular attitudes towards nature shifted in the last quarter of the century as a response to these economic limits and environmental changes, leading to the rise of environmentalism and the passage of environmental legislation that aimed to slow down or reverse the change.

Agricultural settlement, logging and stocking transformed many remaining forests in the twentieth century. Australia's forest cover declined throughout the first half of the twentieth century as a result of commercial and small-scale deforestation, but turned around slightly towards the end of the century.¹² The increase was caused by the expansion of timber plantations after 1960, decreased logging in native forests from the 1980s, and the expansion of native and alien woody vegetation in pastures throughout the twentieth century.

It has been argued that Indigenous people employed their own form of land management by using fire to ensure the constant production of grass for kangaroos and game. In 1969 the anthropologist Rhys Jones coined the term 'fire-stick farming' to describe the purposeful use of fire to manage land employed by Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.¹³ Scholars have continued to debate the frequency, effects and intentionality of Indigenous

¹² See K.F. Wells, N.H. Wood, and P. Laut, Loss of Forests and Woodland in Australia: A Summary by State Based on Local Government Areas, CSIRO Technical Memorandum 84/4 (Canberra: CSIRO, Institute of Resources, Division of Water and Land Resources, 1984), cited in Michael Williams, Deforesting the Earth: From Prehistory to Global Crisis (University of Chicago Press, 2006); M. Bedward et al., 'Patterns and Determinants of Historical Woodland Clearing in Central-Western New South Wales, Australia', Geographical Research, 45, 4 (2007): 353–4; SJ. Cox et al., 'Clearing of Native Woody Vegetation in the New South Wales Northern Wheatbelt: Extent, Rate of Loss and Implications for Biodiversity Conservation', Cunninghamia, 7, I (2001): I0I–55.

¹³ Rhys Jones, 'Fire-Stick Farming', Australian Natural History, 16, 7 (1969): 224–8.

burning in Australia. Eric Rolls, Tim Flannery and Bill Gammage use early exploration accounts, ethnographic sources and repeat photography to argue that the imposition of European settler agriculture and pastoralism across much of Australia stopped fire-stick farming, causing the expansion of woody plants in areas that were previously dominated by savannah and grasslands interspersed with larger trees.¹⁴ Other researchers using data drawn from archaeology, palynology (analysing pollen), palaeobotany, paleoecology, and paleoclimatology suggest that Indigenous fire regimes in many regions of Australia were less frequent and probably less intentional than Gammage, Flannery and Rolls claim.¹⁵

The intensification of agriculture and pastoralism modified the continent's hydrological systems. To develop the arid interior, farmers and politicians built dams and irrigation networks across Australia that distributed water to farms and in turn changed the hydrology and ecology of rivers. Many of these schemes were in the Murray–Darling Basin, a vast area that includes the watersheds of the Murray and Darling rivers and runs from Queensland into New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia before exiting into the Southern Ocean near Adelaide.¹⁶ Before European settlement the water flows in the Murray–Darling Basin fluctuated greatly. In an attempt to regulate the seasonal cycles of flooding and drought, governments built dams to retain water. Engineers and environmental planners before the second half of the century did not recognise that the geophysical make-up of the region meant that when dams stop the flow of rivers and build up artificial lakes, they raise groundwater levels and increase the salinity that floodwaters drain naturally.

Salinity became a serious problem across much of south-west and south-east Australia, especially in areas where States encouraged post–World

¹⁴ Eric Rolls, A Million Wild Acres: 200 Years of Man and an Australian Forest (Melbourne: Nelson, 1981); Tim Flannery, The Future Eaters: An Ecological History of the Australasian Lands and Peoples (Melbourne: Reed Books, 1994); Bill Gammage, The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2011).

¹⁵ See, for example, J.S. Benson and P.A. Redpath, 'The Nature of Pre-European Native Vegetation in South-Eastern Australia: A Critique of Ryan, D.G., Ryan, J.R. and Starr, B.J. (1995) The Australian Landscape – Observations of Explorers and Early Settlers, Cunninghamia, 5, 2 (1997): 285–328; S.D. Mooney, M. Webb and V. Attenbrow, 'A Comparison of Charcoal and Archaeological Information to Address the Influences on Holocene Fire Activity in the Sydney Basin', Australian Geographer, 38, 2 (2007): 177–94; S.D. Mooney et. al., 'Late Quaternary Fire Regimes of Australasia', Quaternary Science Reviews, 30, 1–2 (2011): 28–46.

¹⁶ Chris Hammer, *The River: A Journey through the Murray-Darling Basin* (Melbourne University Press, 2011).

War 1 and World War 2 soldier settlement schemes.¹⁷ During the second half of the century the Mallee, a flat region that spans north-west Victoria and South Australia characterised by dense growth of tough, bush-like Mallee eucalypts, experienced high levels of soil salinity. Mallee eucalypts once covered a fifth of Victoria, or approximately 4.4 million hectares.¹⁸ To create wheat farms, farmers burned them and used tractors to drag chains across the land, removing all vegetation. During previous geological periods, the ocean covered the flats, depositing a salt bed between the surface soil and the ground water table. The removal of the Mallee, which previously acted as a reservoir and water pump that kept the water table from rising and mixing with the salt, altered the hydrological balance. Because the soil lacked key nutrients, especially phosphates, farmers had to use fertilisers such as superphosphate to grow wheat. The Western Australian government repeated this process of environmental destruction from the 1950s to the 1970s with its 'million acres a year' plan of settlement in the south-west part of the State.

Attempts to establish commercial fisheries in rivers and the seas led to exhaustion of some fish populations. From 1915 to 1961 the New South Wales government supported efforts to trawl for tiger flathead off the coast. By the 1930s the population had plummeted as a result of overfishing, and by the early 1960s it collapsed.¹⁹ Recreational and commercial fishing for the Murray cod in the Murray–Darling Basin led to declines in population from the late 1910s; large-scale commercial fishing ended in the 1930s, and mid and small-sized operations stopped in the 1960s. New South Wales finally closed fishing for the Murray cod in 2001 to allow for recovery.²⁰ Efforts after World War 2 to establish whaling from Albany, Western Australia, also caused the decline of humpback whales and sperm whale populations in the Southern Ocean. An international ban on humpback whaling in 1963, local protests, economic losses and scientific warning of the unsustainability of whaling

¹⁷ William J. Lines, Taming the Great South Land: A History of the Conquest of Nature in Australia (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), pp. 262–4; Quentin Beresford et al., The Salinity Crisis: Landscapes, Communities and Politics (Perth: UWA Press, 2001).

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 101.

¹⁹ Richard J. Gowers, 'Selling the "Untold Wealth" in the Seas: A Social and Cultural History of the South-East Australian Shelf Trawling Industry, 1915–1961', *Environment and History*, 14, 2 (2008): 265–87.

²⁰ S.J. Rowland, 'Overview of the History, Fishery and Biology of Murray Cod (*Maccullochella peelii peelii*)', Management of Murray Cod in the Murray–Darling Basin Workshop, Canberra, Australia, 3–4 June 2004; see also Paul Sinclair, *The Murray: A River and Its People* (Melbourne University Press, 2001).

led finally to the end of all whaling in Albany in 1978, with Australia the last English-speaking country to ban the practice.²¹

The introduction of foreign species changed the balance of Australia's ecologies. Some introductions created economic opportunities – for example, the cultivation of exotic fruits such as bananas and avocado – but other flora and fauna destroyed crops and indigenous species. Australia's history of foreign plant, pest and animal invasion fits into a larger transnational history of settler societies, particularly in North America, Argentina, South Africa and New Zealand. European migrants introduced to Australia many of the twentieth-century's most invasive species, including cane toads, rabbits, camels, foxes, myna birds, carp, and numerous species of grasses and trees. Altered ecologies also meant that native species (including sulphur-crested cockatoos, rainbow lorikeets, galahs and noisy miners) expanded aggressively throughout Australia. Invasion is thus not only a problem caused by the introduction of foreign species, but also by the spread of native species populations.

Most species (native and exotic) that became invasive in Australia thrived because they shared characteristics that made them both desirable to introduce and likely to propagate rapidly: quick growth, high reproduction rates and small seeds.²² European settlers brought in hardy grasses, shrubs and trees as fodder for cattle and sheep in the marginal hinterlands; trees were selected for accelerated growth; and animals were introduced that bred rapidly and tolerated varied environmental conditions. Certain species, such as rabbits, were protected even after it was widely known that they had become invasive.²³ The planting of grains and the creation of urban spaces encouraged the expansion of parrot populations across the continent.²⁴

While foreign species spread throughout Australia, Australian species invaded other parts of the world, especially New Zealand.²⁵ Australia's most notorious global exports were its hardy, fast-growing trees. From the 1860s Australian species of *Eucalyptus* and *Acacia* were planted in many countries because they grew quickly and, it was thought, had valuable timber. Though

²¹ Adam Wolfe, 'A Cruel Business: Whaling and the Albany Community, 1946–1998', in Andrea Gaynor, Anna Haebich and Mathew Trinca (eds), *Country: Visions of Land and People in Western Australia* (Perth: Western Australian Museum, 2003), pp. 83–104.

²² Marcel Rejamnek and David M. Richardson, 'What Attributes Make Some Plant Species More Invasive?', *Ecology*, 77, 6 (1996): 1655–61.

²³ Brian Coman, Tooth & Nail: The Story of the Rabbit in Australia (Melbourne: Text, 1999), pp. 22–4.

²⁴ Bill Gammage, 'Galahs', Australian Historical Studies, 40, 3 (2009): 275–93.

²⁵ For a survey, see Tim Low, Feral Future (Melbourne: Penguin, 1999), pp. 137–72.

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a few species of Australian trees flourished abroad and quickly colonised the surrounding landscape, especially in Spain and Portugal (*Eucalyptus*), South Africa (*Acacia* and *Hakea*) and Florida (*Melaleuca*), most Australian species that were introduced outside their native environment failed.²⁶ Despite early setbacks, scientific foresters around the world ran experiments during the first half of the twentieth century to select and breed species that grew in a variety of climates and conditions.²⁷ These experiments proved highly successful, and by the 1990s *Eucalyptus* species composed approximately 20 per cent of the world's new plantations. The success of Australian trees around the world challenges the view that 'New biota did not colonise the "Old World".²⁸

In order to control invasive species, Australian governments pursued biological control. These programs produced both stunning successes and abysmal failures. The best known example is the introduction of the Myxomatosis virus by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) in 1950. Spread by mosquitoes, the virus killed 99.8 per cent of the feral rabbit population, thus wiping out a major competitor for grasslands that fed sheep. Dunlap describes this effort as 'the most spectacular magic bullet in pest control history'.²⁹ By 1953 the wool clip increased by approximately 18 million kilograms because of the increased forage. But not all the rabbits died. The remaining 0.2 per cent of the population proved to be immune from the virus, and by the 1980s rabbits began to again become a problem. In 1995 the CSIRO released its second control, the rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus RHDV, lowering the population in arid areas. Biological interventions on the invasive prickly pear (Opuntia spp.) worked to stop a genus that had colonised approximately 58 million hectares of Queensland and New South Wales by the 1920s.³⁰ Other attempts at biological control failed and led to substantial changes in Australia's ecosystems. The introduction of

- 27 South African foresters pioneered this international trend; see Brett M. Bennett, 'Naturalising Australian Trees in South Africa: Climate, Exotics and Experimentation', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37, 2 (2011): 265–80.
- 28 Joachim Radkau, Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment, translated by Thomas Dunlap (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 21–2, 159; B.R. Tomlinson, 'Empire of the Dandelion: Ecological Imperialism and Economic Expansion 1860– 1914', Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, 26, 2, (1998): 89. For Crosby's original thesis, see Alfred W. Crosby, Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900–1900 (Cambridge University Press, 1986).
- 29 Thomas Dunlap, Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand (Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 259.
- 30 Jodi Frawley, 'Prickly Pear Land: Transnational Networks in Settler Australia', *Australian Historical Studies*, 38, 130 (2007): 336.

²⁶ Brett M. Bennett, 'The El Dorado of Forestry: The Eucalyptus in India, South Africa, and Thailand, 1850–2000', *International Review of Social History*, 55, 18 (2010): 27–50.

poisonous cane toads from Latin America into northern Queensland is one example.³¹ Introduced by farmers in 1935 to kill cane beetles that plagued their sugar plantations, the cane toads unfortunately did not control the cane beetles, but spread rapidly throughout north and west Queensland, spilling over into the Northern Territory by 1984, where they soon acclimatised. Cane toads are toxic to most animals that eat them, and certain snake, lizard and crocodile species in Queensland and the Northern Territory experienced population declines.

The Commonwealth government created a fortress-like quarantine that extended throughout the entire century. The first Commonwealth import restrictions on biological products, especially fruit and vegetables, were implemented with the *Quarantine Act* of 1908, although individual colonies and States had imposed quarantine inspections and restrictions earlier. Quarantine served both economic and biological purposes: it helped keep out cheaper foreign fruits and vegetables, thus providing a protected market for domestic producers, and guarded against biological threats to Australian agriculture. Australian quarantine laws kept out most fresh fruits and vegetables for the twentieth century, and animal quarantine has always been rigid: so rigid that the equestrian events of the 1956 Melbourne Olympics were held in Stockholm, Sweden.³² Stoked by scientists who predicted 'feral futures', Australia's governments and public continued to maintain quarantine vigour until the end of the twentieth century.³³

Country and city

By 1900 Australia was already one of the most urbanised societies in the world, and the rate of urbanisation continued to increase throughout the twentieth century. It was an uneven process that involved migration to cities and substantial environmental changes to the local environment around them; and it also helped catalyse broad social and cultural movements to protect the environment. The fact that most activists in these movements lived in cities while most of their activities were concerned with non-urban environments powerfully affected the social and cultural dynamics of twentieth-century

³¹ Christopher Lever, *The Cane Toad: The History and Ecology of a Successful Colonist* (Otley: Westbury Academic and Scientific Publishing, 2001).

³² Ted Henzell, Australian Agriculture: Its History and Challenges (Melbourne: CSIRO Publishing, 2007), pp. 252–3; Allen Guttmann, The Games Must Go On: Avery Brundage and the Olympic Movement (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 160.

³³ Low, Feral Future, is an example of this popular support.

environmental policy. Many of the tensions of the later stages of environmental movement resulted from real and perceived divisions between urban and rural dwellers, and the middle and working classes.

The expansion of urban spaces created new ecosystems, patterns of food production, and parks. The edges of cities comprised a patchwork of open fields, forests and cities that ecologists now recognise as important ecosystems. Residents sought to cultivate nature by planting native and exotic street trees, making parks and creating 'Garden Suburbs' in the 1920s and 1930s; the best known is the nation's capital, Canberra.³⁴ Urban residents pushed for the creation of nature reserves and national parks in and around cities, such as the Georges River National Park south-west of Sydney in 1992.³⁵ Cities remained important centres of food production from the late nineteenth century to World War 2. Urban-produced food declined throughout the century as food imports and the rise of large agribusiness led to the mass production of foodstuffs. It was a relatively slow decline, however, and domestic production remained high until the end of the century. In Perth approximately one in five households still possessed poultry as late at the 1960s.³⁶ Australians continued to produce vegetables and fruits into the 1990s: 30-40 per cent of all Victorian households in 1992 did so.37

Urbanisation did little to dispel the dream of a populous, prosperous rural Australia. Politicians up to the 1950s saw rural development as a political tool to appease veterans, immigrants and rural voters. The allure of rural development proved irresistible to many, especially rural politicians seeking subsidies and national elites desiring economic growth. Politicians enacted policies that provided subsidies for agricultural schemes and encouraged immigration by foreigners to settle in rural areas, while intellectuals debated the limits of Australia's development in newspapers, magazines, books and speeches. The most widely known tract promoting development was *Australia Unlimited*, published by the journalist Edwin Brady in 1918.³⁸ He argued that Australia had almost unlimited agricultural land on which to expand the nation's economy and population, which he confidently reckoned

³⁴ J.M. Powell, An Historical Geography of Modern Australia: The Restive Fringe (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 173–9; Jodi Frawley, 'Campaigning for Street Trees: Sydney Botanic Gardens, 1890s–1920s', Environment and History, 15, 3 (2009): 303–22.

³⁵ See especially Heather Goodall, and Alison Cadzow, *Rivers and Resilience: Aboriginal People on Sydney's Georges River* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2009).

³⁶ Andrea Gaynor, Harvest of the Suburbs: An Environmental History of Growing Food in Australian Cities (Perth: UWA Press, 2006), pp. 132–3.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 159.

³⁸ Edwin J. Brady, Australia Unlimited (Melbourne: George Robertson, 1918), p. 66.

could eventually reach 200 million. Brady found the willing ear of political elites who both sought to use rural development as a vehicle for economic growth and an outlet for British emigration.

Griffith Taylor, an Australian meteorologist, geographer and environmental determinist, was the most public critic of development in the 1920s.³⁹ He argued that environmental conditions and limits on the capacity of European races restricted Australian growth in the interior and far north. Taylor eventually left Australia for the University of Chicago, weary of public and private battles with pro-settlement boosters and politicians. Professional foresters also challenged the agriculturally dominant 'Australia Unlimited' policies during the first half of the century by linking deforestation with soil erosion, desiccation and even climate change.⁴⁰ Ecologists took their place as the strongest critics of development in the second half of the twentieth century. The ecologist Francis Ratcliffe's 1938 book *Flying Fox and Drifting Sand* became the classic popular book calling for the conservation of Australia's fragile interior.⁴¹

Inter-war schemes for agricultural settlement reinforced the environmental 'limits' of development, although widespread recognition of this reality took longer to win cultural acceptance. Politicians saw settlement schemes as a safety valve to release local and imperial pressure for population and economic growth; they used settlement as a popular political platform often with detrimental social and environmental effects - into the 1960s. Australia and other Dominions participated with the United Kingdom to settle British emigrants. The first such scheme, the Empire Settlement Act of 1922, allocated f_{34} million to British emigration, much of it to Australia. Settlers came to marginal lands in Western Australia and Queensland. Grandiose posters touted Australia by showing romantic panoramas of wheat fields and sheep. The reality differed wildly from these pictures and from the bombastic claims of the scheme's imperial proponents. Rural failure mired such settlements, especially in marginal areas of Victoria and Western Australia. Powell notes that 'wholesale abandonments were common'.42

³⁹ Carolyn Strange and Alison Bashford, *Griffith Taylor: Visionary Environmentalist Explorer* (Canberra: National Library of Australia Press, 2008); J.M. Powell, *Griffith Taylor and* 'Australia Unlimited' (Brisbane: UQP, 1993).

⁴⁰ Warwick Frost, 'Australia Unlimited? Environmental Debate in the Age of Catastrophe 1910–1939', *Environment and History*, 10, 3 (2004): 285–303.

⁴¹ Francis Ratcliffe, Flying Fox and Drifting Sand: The Adventures of a Biologist in Australia (London: Chatto and Windus, 1938).

⁴² Powell, An Historical Geography of Modern Australia, p. 76.

Political elites and agricultural boosters saw water as the determining factor in rural development. The desire to control the direction and amount of water was a pressing agricultural and political issue made all the more difficult by the continent's climatic variability. This in turn made agricultural yields difficult to predict. Though many optimists pressed for irrigation and water storage schemes, environmental realities and constitutional law made it difficult to fulfil their goals.⁴³ States dominated early irrigation and water management schemes because of a provision in the Constitution that relegated the Commonwealth government to a minor role. The federal Parliament could not prescribe how and how much water States could use for irrigation purposes, and it lacked the ability and will to monitor usage. States dictated usage by claiming legal control over watercourses.

Despite these legal and regulatory disputes, the Commonwealth and State governments cooperated in large-scale water projects, especially after World War 2. The Snowy River Scheme and the Ord River Scheme were the most audacious and expensive. Both reflected the prevailing developmentalist ideology, frequently at the expense of the environment. The Ord River Scheme proposed to build a dam to control the flow of the seasonal Ord River in the remote north-east of Western Australia. It was completed in 1972 and the Western Australian government assisted farmers to settle in the region. The project turned out to be a financial failure because the costs and subsidies far outweighed the agricultural output. The Snowy River Scheme was perhaps the grandest, most visionary engineering project undertaken in Australia during the twentieth century.⁴⁴ Started by Prime Minister Ben Chifley in 1949, the project took until 1974 to complete and diverted water from the Eucumbene and Snowy rivers west into the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers.

The continued expansion of Australia's mining industry throughout the century had major effects on the environment. The creation and abandonment of mines for coal, iron ore, gold and uranium across the country left varying levels of pollution and radically transformed landscapes and ecosystems. Surprisingly, few environmental historians have written about the impact of twentieth-century mining on Australia's environment, and much of the

⁴³ J.M. Powell has published widely on this topic. See his Watering the Garden State: Water, Land and Community in Victoria, 1834–1988 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1989); Plains of Promise, Rivers of Destiny: Water Management and the Development of Queensland 1824– 1990 (Brisbane: Boolarong Press, 1991); and Watering the Western Third: Water, Land and Community in Western Australia, 1826–1998 (Perth: Water and Rivers Commission, 1998).

⁴⁴ George Seddon, Searching for the Snowy: An Environmental History (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994).

work has been done by scientists, social historians and business historians, in particular Geoffrey Blainey.⁴⁵

Uranium occupies a controversial place in twentieth-century Australian environmental history. For most of the century, Australia allowed national and foreign companies to mine uranium, but it did not develop nuclear power or nuclear weapons. After World War 2 the government sponsored extensive mineral surveys and supported the 1954 opening of the Rum Jungle mine in the Northern Territory, which the United States and United Kingdom–based Combined Development Agency ran jointly. Uranium mining caused substantial pollution problems at Rum Jungle, which closed in 1971, leaving behind substantial 'tailings', the radioactive mineral waste produced by mining.

Anti-mining protests, such as those in the late 1970s over the proposed Ranger mine in the Northern Territory, drew national attention to the land tenure of Indigenous people.⁴⁶ Until the last two decades of the century, they had little control over their traditional lands. Mining companies did not need local consent to prospect and mine on traditional land because States and the Commonwealth did not recognise native title and the Australian States claimed the ownership of all minerals. The Yirrkala people in Arnhem Land protested against a twelve-year bauxite mining concession granted by the Northern Territory government on what they claimed to be traditional lands. The Supreme Court of the Northern Territory's 1971 *Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd* ruling allowed the mining company Nabalco to mine bauxite on the lands claimed by the Yirrkala despite their protests. The court ruled, controversially, that the crown owned the land because before the British arrival in 1788 Australia's land was *terra nullius*, that is, a land belonging to no-one.

Indigenous people gained increasing legal and scientific recognition as traditional custodians and owners of land from the 1970s as a result of growing popular activism and Commonwealth and State legislation. The findings of the 1974 Woodward Aboriginal Land Rights Commission led to the passage of the 1976 Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act, which created land councils and provided a mechanism for the recognition of native title. In perhaps the most important decision on native title, the High Court's 1992 decision in Mabo and Others v Queensland (No. 2) overturned the 1971 Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd decision to recognise the existence of Aboriginal land claims

⁴⁵ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Rush That Never Ended: A History of Australian Mining*, 4th edn (Melbourne University Press, 1993).

⁴⁶ For a survey of scholarship on Indigenous Australians and mining, see Beinart and Hughes, *Environment and Empire*, pp. 342–50.

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before British colonisation in 1788. This provided a legal basis for establishing native title, which could be proved by traditional and continuing connection to a place.

Though Mabo marked a turning point, court decisions and Commonwealth legislation qualified the legal rights of native titleholders. The High Court's 1996 *Wik Peoples v Queensland* decision declared that statutory leases, such as large pastoral leases, did not extinguish the potential native title claims, and that native title and existing leases could coexist. The *Native Title Amendment Act* of 1998 gave primacy of usage rights to existing leases, while providing native titleholders with cultural or ceremonial access to land. The High Court determined in *Western Australia v Ward* (2002) that native title was a 'bundle of rights', so that multiple parties could claim ownership or usage of a single property (meaning a mineral company could lease mining rights and Indigenous groups could have rights to fishing, hunting and other land uses), and that these individual rights held under native title could be extinguished individually through legislation.

Native title has allowed for greater Indigenous participation in determining how traditional lands are used and the revenues derived from them are distributed. Aboriginal groups now co-manage many of Australia's most famous national parks, including Kakadu National Park and Uluru–Kata Tjuta National Park, which are located on native title lands. The Northern Territory, which has nearly 50 per cent of its land and 85 per cent of its coastline held under native title, pioneered the co-management of parks.⁴⁷ Aboriginal people work as guides, help determine conservation strategies and receive park revenue. This model of co-management spread to other States (and countries) in the 1990s and after.

Since the *Native Title Act* of 1993, Indigenous people have been able to negotiate with mining companies for compensation and revenue from mining, but this income has not been distributed equally among Indigenous communities.⁴⁸ There has also been conflict between some Indigenous intellectuals seeking greater participation and environmentalists, who want a smaller, more regulated mining sector. After the 2010 election, when the federal Labor government depended upon the support of the Greens, the Indigenous intellectual Noel Pearson warned against Green policies that would 'stifle indigenous aspirations' by limiting development in rural parts

⁴⁷ Robin, How a Continent Created a Nation, p. 180.

⁴⁸ For a review of literature, see Jon Altman and David Martin (eds), Power, Culture, Economy: Indigenous Australians and Mining (Canberra: ANU E Press, 2009)

of Australia.⁴⁹ Some Indigenous leaders have applauded the recent efforts of large mining companies, such as Rio Tinto and Fortescue, to create jobs for Indigeneous people. Like other Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have had to balance complex economic and social aspirations with efforts to conserve the environment.

The conservation and environmental movements

Throughout the twentieth century a variety of groups sought to conserve and preserve Australia's ecosystems, landscapes, and flora and fauna. Following the terms used by American historians, Australian historians frequently distinguish an initial 'conservation' movement from the later 'environmental' movement. American commentators and scholars of the 1970s saw the utilitarian conservation movement challenged by a more romantic preservation movement, which developed into the environmental movement in the 1960s as a result of fears of pollution and nuclear fall-out, and a new moralisation of the environment. Many Australian environmental historians have utilised these categories, although some challenge their dichotomies.⁵⁰

Both conservationism and environmentalism drew in Australia upon imperial and American precedents, but took on a distinctly local shape and direction. The practice of reserving state forests and the profession of forestry came via the British Empire, particularly British India, whereas the idea of creating 'national' parks was an import from the United States.⁵¹ The Commonwealth Constitution meant that the federal government played a less important role in the development of conservation policies for most of the twentieth century than in the United States, India or South Africa, where stronger central governments could harmonise national policies across political jurisdictions.⁵² This meant that for the first half of the twentieth century Australian States often pursued idiosyncratic

⁴⁹ Patricia Karvelas, 'Greens Alliance Threatens Aboriginal Wellbeing: Noel Pearson', *Australian*, 7 September 2010.

⁵⁰ Tom Griffiths, [•]Environmental History', in Graeme Davison, John Hirst and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, rev. edn (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 219–20.

⁵¹ Gregory A. Barton, Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism (Cambridge University Press, 2002); James Beattie, Empire and Environmental Anxiety: Health, Science, Art and Conservation in South Asia and Australasia, 1800–1920 (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁵² The failure to create a national forestry policy is but one example; Brett M. Bennett, An Imperial, National and State Debate: The Rise and Near Fall of the Australian Forestry School, 1927–1945', *Environment and History*, 15, 2 (2009): 220.

conservation programs that were dominated by agricultural, mining and industrial concerns.

Australians, along with other settlers in the Anglo-world, began to construct and celebrate 'national natures' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵³ There was particular emphasis on the kangaroo, emu and kookaburra, and the wattle, gum tree and banksia. Children's fiction, such as May Gibbs' *Tales of Snugglepot and Cuddlepie* (1918), anthropomorphised plants and animals. Australian nationalists also sought to connect nature to nation. The Wattle Day League, founded in 1912 from the Wattle Day Club (1899), continued to promote yellow 'wattle' blossoms as one of the main symbols of Australia. The celebration of wattles encouraged the broader celebration of 'native' species, a trend that became increasingly popular from the 1930s.⁵⁴ The popularisation of ideas of 'nativeness' also heightened fears of the impact of introduced 'alien' plant species; these fears eventually fed into native species preservation and exotic species eradication efforts in the second half of the century.

A plethora of groups formed around nature conservation and recreation. These included professional associations such as the Australian Forest League, founded in 1911, which advocated and educated the public about forestry. They also included public organisations such as the Mountains Trails Club, founded in 1914.⁵⁵ These groups helped in the early twentieth century to coordinate major State and national efforts to create 'national' parks, such as Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park in Tasmania and the Kosciusko National Park, which could be enjoyed by bushwalkers and campers.⁵⁶ The first generation of national parks was created in iconic or desirable landscapes, particularly mountainous and forested regions such as the Blue Mountains that fitted squarely within North American or European aesthetics. Only in the 1960s did parks advocates seek to preserve less traditional environments, such as deserts or Mallee regions.

Though conservation had a strong popular base, a technocratic, scientific elite directed the conservation movement. Conservation ideals became official policies through various State and Commonwealth departments such as forestry, lands, agriculture and irrigation, all created during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Forestry, in particular, became

⁵³ Dunlap, Nature and the English Diaspora.

⁵⁴ Robin, How a Continent Created a Nation, pp. 21-30.

⁵⁵ Melissa Harper, The Ways of the Bushwalker: On Foot in Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007).

⁵⁶ Dunlap, Nature and the English Diaspora, p. 109.

a highly specialised profession with its own schools, the most important being the controversial 'national' Australian Forestry School opened in 1927 in Canberra.⁵⁷ Foresters saw themselves as the profession that brought together forest, water and soil conservation, and many of the leading foresters in the 1920s to the 1940s played a powerful role shaping State and federal conservation policies.

In the decades following World War 2, especially the late 1960s and early 1970s, the conservation movement realigned itself into a newly styled environmental movement, a popular movement that advocated a wider and more ambitious set of goals. There is no consensus on whether, how or when the conservation movement became the environmental movement, although most scholars recognise that post-1960s environmentalists were more likely to emphasise the protection of nature for its own sake, rather than for human benefit.⁵⁸ Environmental quality became an important political issue that went far beyond the more utilitarian efforts in the early twentieth-century to conserve forests, soil and water. Historians have advanced a variety of factors for these changing attitudes, including economic and population growth, the expanding ownership of private cars, increased awareness of pollution and environmental changes, and the rise of the science of ecology and popular ecological thinking.

Public fights in the late 1960s to save the Little Desert in Victoria and Lake Pedder in 'Tasmania brought together like-minded environmental activists. The Little Desert controversy concerned a scrubby desert in the north-west of Victoria that had little economic value.⁵⁹ In 1968 Victoria's Minister of Lands, Sir William McDonald, sought to develop the desert into an agricultural settlement. A small but motivated group of critics from Melbourne and the area surrounding the Little Desert ran an influential press campaign that worried the Liberal government sufficiently to stop its funding of the Little Desert scheme in 1969 after it lost a by-election. In 1970 the unrest

⁵⁷ Bennett, 'An Imperial, National and State Debate', pp. 217–44.

⁵⁸ For scholars who see conservation and environmental movements as a continuation of one movement, see Drew Hutton and Libby Connors, A History of the Australian Environmental Movement (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 15, 20–2; Martin Mulligan and Stewart Hill, Ecological Pioneers: A Social History of Australian Ecological Thought and Action (Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 162–3; and Gregory A. Barton and Brett M. Bennett, 'Edward Harold Fulcher Swain's Vision of Forest Modernity', Intellectual History Review, 21, 2 (2011): 135–7, 149–150. For the view that environmentalism represented a more distinct break from conservationism, see Libby Robin, Defending the Little Desert: The Rise of Ecological Consciousness in Australia (Melbourne University Press, 1998).

⁵⁹ Robin, Defending the Little Desert.

surrounding the scheme helped unseat McDonald. The fight over the Little Desert was the first major public environmental campaign to protect an area purely for its ecological uniqueness. The success bolstered other movements in Australia to protect ecologically significant areas.

If the Little Desert scheme provided an environmentalist victory, the Lake Pedder campaign symbolised the movement's early defeats.⁶⁰ In 1967, just a year before the Little Desert scheme proposal, the Tasmanian government announced plans to dam this lake in the south-east corner of the State, renowned for its beautiful sandy beaches. Again, small but vocal groups came to the defence of the lake. One of them, the United Tasmania Group, which formed in March 1972, participated in the following State election as Australia's first political party with an express environmental platform. The campaign to preserve Lake Pedder lasted seven years but construction for the dam began in 1974.

Environmental protests grew in strength and effectiveness during the 1970s. Increasingly diverse groups fought against a variety of activities: uranium mining, whaling, the expansion of exotic timber plantations, native logging, suburban development, sand mining on Fraser Island and oil drilling in the Great Barrier Reef. The conflicts that resulted often (but not always) formed along class and political lines, with urban residents and ex-urban residents who settled in rural areas pushing for stringent environmental regulations against 'locals' whose livelihood depended upon natural resource extraction and processing.⁶¹ The protests helped to end sand mining and oil drilling off the Queensland coast, finally shut down whaling in Western Australia, and protected many of Australia's coastlines from future development. A strong contingent of environmentalists also supported the Indigenous rights movement, though these two movements were often different in approach and desired outcomes.

Under public pressure, the federal government held inquiries into mining and implemented environmental legislation by using parts of the Constitution relating to external affairs and trade. Moss Cass, the Minister for the Environment and Conservation in Whitlam's federal Labor government, opened the Ranger Inquiry in 1975 to determine whether Australia should mine uranium in the proposed Kakadu National Park.⁶² The findings

62 Hutton and Connors, A History of the Australian Environmental Movement, pp. 137-44.

⁶⁰ Greg Buckman, *Tasmania's Wilderness Battles: A History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2008), ch. 2.

⁶¹ Nicholas Brown, 'On the Margins of Littoral Society: The New South Wales South Coast since 1945', *Environment and History*, 4, 2 (1998): 209–37.

of the inquiry, published in two volumes in 1976 and 1977, did not call for the ending of uranium mining, and the Ranger mine opened controversially in 1981 on native title land in Kakadu National Park. The inquiry bolstered the anti-uranium mining campaign and fuelled the rise of Green politics. The Coalition government of Malcolm Fraser pursued an expansion of the federal government's powers for managing the environment, using the trade and commerce clause of the Constitution to ban sandmine exports from Queensland's Fraser Island. The High Court in 1976 upheld this interpretation, despite the fact that the reason for the ban was to protect the environment.

One of the most enduring and politically divisive of environmental campaigns was to stop logging in native forests and end the expansion of timber plantations. Environmental groups and individuals fought against State policies and private industry in a series of battles that became known as the Forest Wars. These conflicts began in the 1970s, when the timber industry rapidly expanded its harvest of Australia's forests for pulp and wood chips during an export-driven boom. Environmentalists criticised the timber industry for unsustainably and recklessly cutting Australia's hardwood eucalyptus forests for export to Asia. The demand for more timber intensified criticisms of the timber industry and created political polarisation.⁶³ Softwood timber plantations also proved divisive.⁶⁴ The Commonwealth government supported State schemes from the 1960s to the 1980s to expand the rate of planting, mainly of Monterey pine from North America. At first native forests of poor timber quality were cleared to provide land for the faster growing plantations.

By the 1980s environmentalists began to gain major victories. Historians trace the origins of the Green Party to the Tasmanian government–owned Hydro-Electric Commission's plan to create the Franklin Dam on the Gordon River. The announcement of the proposal in 1978 evoked strong local, national and international protests, including the listing of the Gordon River as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1982. The Tasmanian government continued with the dam even after the federal Labor government, which came into power in 1983 with an anti–Franklin River dam pledge, passed the *World Heritage Properties Conservation Act* of 1983, which forbade construction

⁶³ John Dargavel, Fashioning Australia's Forests (Oxford University Press, 1995).

⁶⁴ Val Plumwood and Richard Routley, *The Fight for the Forests: The Takeover of Australian Forests for Pines, Wood Chips and Intensive Forestry* (Canberra: Research School of Social Sciences, ANU, 1973).

in World Heritage areas. Tasmania challenged the Act, but lost in the High Court decision *The Commonwealth of Australia v State of Tasmania*, which recognised the Commonwealth parliament's right to legislate under the 'external affairs' clause of the Constitution. World Heritage status was used subsequently to protect the Daintree rainforest in northern Queensland in 1988.⁶⁵ The federal government became a world player in environmental affairs when it successfully lobbied foreign governments from 1989 to 1990 to reject a proposed *Convention on the Regulation of Antarctic Mineral Resource Activities* that would have regulated mining in Antarctica. The government sponsored an amendment to the Antarctic Treaty, *The Protocol on Environmental Projection*, which enshrined Antarctica as a protected continent.⁶⁶

Climate change was the most divisive and important issue in Australian environmental politics at the end of the century. Concerned countries met in Kyoto, Japan, in 1997 for a United Nations-sponsored summit to create an internationally binding protocol that set regulations for the abatement of carbon emissions to slow human-caused global warming. The Liberal prime minister, John Howard, did not sign the Protocol during his tenure, which ended in 2007. The first act of the Labor prime minister, Kevin Rudd, in December 2007 was to ratify the Protocol, which he then used to justify his unsuccessful Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme. Rudd's failure to pass the bill is seen as a major reason for his loss of the prime ministership in June 2010 to Julia Gillard, who introduced a carbon tax and emissions trading scheme, and for the Greens winning increased support (13 per cent of the vote for the Senate) in the 2010 federal election. The government's policy on climate change seeks to abate Australia's high per capita domestic carbon emissions, rather than try to regulate the larger carbon footprint resulting from its vast exports of coal to China and other countries. Because mining provides a substantial part of the revenue that supports Commonwealth and State expenditure, balancing economic growth and environmental sustainability will continue to be a major challenge that Australians will face for the next decades of the twenty-first century.

⁶⁵ Timothy Doyle, 'The Campaign to Save the Wet Tropics', in Geoff McDonald and Marcus Lane (eds), *Securing the Wet Tropics* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2000), pp. 103–15.

⁶⁶ Tom Griffiths, Slicing the Silence: Voyaging to Antarctica (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), pp. 275–89.

Travel and connections

20

AGNIESZKA SOBOCINSKA AND RICHARD WHITE

In 1909 the world's most famous Australian embarked on a 10,000 mile (16,000 kilometre) 'sentimental tour' of her homeland. After lessons and amateur concerts in Melbourne, 'Madame' Nellie Melba had carved her singing career in Europe: she studied in Paris, debuted in Brussels, appeared in the courts of St Petersburg, Vienna and Stockholm, became a fixture at Covent Garden and managed an affair with the Duc d'Orléans, the pretender to the French throne. For six months in 1909 she crisscrossed Australia, drawing adoring crowds in towns as far flung as Mount Morgan, Charters Towers, Bairnsdale and Ballarat, as well as the major cities. With her maid, her valet and two baby grand pianos, she travelled mostly by train, but also on steamers, carriages, horse-drawn buggies - even an undertaker's coach.¹ In the New South Wales town of Dubbo she revelled in 'the true Australian enthusiasm' of her audience, which included a Goodooga family who had driven 145 kilometres by car through heavy rain to Brewarrina, and then 400 kilometres by rail to hear her sing. At Warwick in southern Queensland she was acclaimed as 'the greatest Australian, feted by Kings, adored by the People'.² As Melba's career and her tour demonstrate, even the dustiest Australian backblocks were connected to the world, both in practice and in the imagination. This chapter explores how Australians were increasingly connected to each other and the world during the twentieth century and how, through travel and tourism, mobility acquired meaning.

Overcoming distance

Colonial Australia's development had been constrained by the 'tyranny of distance', in Geoffrey Blainey's telling phrase, both across the continent and

I John Hetherington, *Melba: A Biography*, new edn (Melbourne University Press, 1995), pp. 159–60.

^{2 (}Lismore) Northern Star, 25 June 1909; Warwick Examiner and Times, 2 August 1909.

between Australia and the rest of the world.³ At the start of the twentieth century there was optimism that the tyranny could be overcome. This was part of the promise of modernity: a host of technological innovations produced by the second industrial revolution accompanied a new way of imagining the world as an interconnected network, 'a vast, shared experience of simultaneity'.⁴ The telegraph finally ringed the globe in 1902, with a cable across the Pacific coming ashore at Botany Bay, not far from where Captain Cook had landed in 1770. Federation itself had been an act that imagined such connections. In 1901 Australians decided that, despite vast distances and varied origins and experiences, they could be represented by a single national parliament, with members from Queensland and Western Australia travelling thousands of miles to attend. Even more ambitious, imperial federationists could imagine a single parliament representing the whole British Empire at Westminster, insisting that it was now as easy for a Melburnian to reach London as it had been for a parliamentarian from the Orkneys in 1707, following Britain's Act of Union.5

Change and progress could be seen everywhere: as Charles Péguy famously put it in 1913, 'The world has changed less since the time of Christ than it has in the last thirty years'.⁶ Because they were relatively affluent, because they often thought of themselves as a 'young nation' in the vanguard of progress and because of the particular demands of a new settler society being created in vast space, Australians travelled with particular eagerness. 'Australia on the move' was a slogan that would recur throughout the twentieth century to describe everything from real estate sales to continental drift. By 1966 the Commonwealth *Year Book* claimed that Australians were defined by their 'habit of mobility', branding it, with an uncharacteristic pun, as a 'mass movement'.⁷

Australians took up new forms of transport and communication with all the enthusiasm of Mr Toad of *Wind in the Willows*, published in 1908. Their enthusiasm was expressed in an early mania for racing and for setting distance and speed records. The bicycle had arrived in 1868, and by 1884 some

³ Geoffrey Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance: How Distance Shaped Australia's History* (Melbourne: Sun Books, 1966).

⁴ Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space* 1880–1918 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 314.

⁵ Edward E. Morris, Imperial Federation: A Lecture for the Victorian Branch of the Imperial Federation League, 28 August 1885 (Melbourne: Imperial Federation League, 1885).

⁶ Quoted in Robert Hughes, The Shock of the New (New York: Knopf, 1981), p. 9.

⁷ R.D. Piesse, 'Travel and Tourism', in Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book Australia*, 1966, cat. no. 1301.0 (Canberra: ABS, 1966), p. 1159.

30 bicycle clubs were holding race meetings to test the machine's possibilities.⁸ Mass bicycle rides to the hinterland of the major cities attracted large crowds eager to exercise their freedom and mobility. In 1888 two members of the Melbourne Bicycle Club rode their penny-farthings most of the way to England. By 1912 Francis Birtles had cycled around Australia twice and crossed the continent seven times.⁹ The same passion greeted the motor car as intrepid motorists, Birtles among them, drove around Australia in races and reliability trials, their progress eagerly followed by a national audience. They followed routes where hardy explorers had perished not half a century before, kindling confidence in their capacity to tame the continent. As the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported in 1911, the motor car 'annihilates distance and in a country of such magnificent distances as ours this is no small thing'.¹⁰ Even greater excitement greeted advances in aviation, with every air race and every 'first' met by official praise and popular acclaim. The aviator and the aviatrix became the new heroes of modernity.

While enthusiasm for the latest innovations could be shared by all Australians, access to mobility was defined by social class. The poet A.B. 'Banjo' Paterson talked about how the view of the world from his horse was different from that of men like Henry Lawson who could only afford to tramp.¹¹ Similar social distinctions held for the newer forms of transport. The vast majority of Australians could only dream of an ocean cruise, and although steamers and railways opened up travel to more people, extended trips remained out of reach for those who could not afford the time away from work or high fares. Air travel was particularly expensive, and it was not until the advent of the Jumbo Jet, economy class fares and discounted package holidays from the 1970s that many middle-class Australians could turn their dreams of flying into reality. Even then, class divisions remained: the flight attendants' curt closing of the dividers between the business and economy sections remains a stark symbol of status in modern Australia. The bicycle was perhaps the most democratic of the new technologies. Many ordinary workers could afford it, especially if they saved on tram fares by pedalling to work, and some swagmen got around by bike.

⁸ Jim Fitzpatrick, *The Bicycle and the Bush: Man and Machine in Rural Australia* (Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 32.

^{9 &#}x27;Francis Edwin Birtles', Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol. 7, pp. 297-8.

¹⁰ Sydney Morning Herald, 2 October 1911, quoted in John William Knott, 'The "Conquering Car": Technology, Symbolism and the Motorisation of Australia before World War II', Australian Historical Studies, 31, 114 (2000): 23.

^{11 &#}x27;Banjo Paterson Tells His Own Story', Sydney Morning Herald, 4 February 1939.

Mobility was also defined by gender. There was a 'boy's own' quality to the excitement engendered by the new technology: 'popular mechanics', tinkering with motors and competing to break records were widely assumed to be male domains. Yet in practice women took to new forms of transport just as enthusiastically as men. Women embraced the independence represented by the bicycle and, despite some early disapproval, their enthusiasm brought changes in dress and codes of propriety.¹² Some young upper-middle-class women took to driving, and even had their cars serviced by female mechanics.¹³ They also took to the air. Women – at least women with means – were visible and mobile by the 1920s.

Travel for adventure and pleasure relied on an infrastructure that was built to move goods rather than people. The construction of ports and railways, the building of roads and bridges, and the organisation of urban public transport systems demanded an enormous investment. In Australia, unlike many other nations, the vast bulk of the investment came from the state: only governments had the breadth of vision and the capacity to imagine an interconnected Australia as a single market. Only with Federation could the financial power of Melbourne-based Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP) extract the iron ore of South Australia and ship it to Newcastle in New South Wales, where steelworks opened in 1915.

Similarly, overseas trade helped determine the experience of travel. Australia was already an established trading nation in 1901 and the bustle of the capital cities' ports inspired dreams of the world beyond. It seemed only natural that shipping news should dominate the front pages of the major newspapers. Australia grew wealthy from selling wool, wheat and gold to the world, and Australians expected the products of the world to be available and on display in the grand new 'Universal Providers', emporiums and department stores. Australians took it for granted that they could buy tea from Ceylon, cameras from Germany, cutlery from Sheffield and books – a quarter of Britain's book exports – from London.¹⁴ There was also a sense that Australians themselves were raw material that needed refining elsewhere. In 1901 most of this exchange – both goods and people in both directions – was with Britain, which accounted for five times as much trade as the second

¹² Penny Russell, 'Recycling Femininity: Old Ladies and New Women', *Australian Cultural History*, 13 (1994): 31–51.

¹³ Georgine Clarsen, "The "Dainty Female Toe" and the "Brawny Male Arm": Conceptions of Bodies and Power in Automobile Technology', *Australian Feminist Studies*, 15, 32 (2000): 160–1.

¹⁴ Peter Morton, 'Australia's England, 1880–1950', in Peter Pierce (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Australian Literature* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 266.

most significant trading partner, the United States. Over the century the pattern of exporting raw materials in exchange for manufactures remained, but the nature of the goods and the direction of trade changed. Japan had outstripped Britain as the largest market for Australian exports by 1967, and Australia's trade links with Asia, particularly Japan, China and Korea, came to eclipse those with Europe.

War, as well as trade, contributed to Australia's habit of mobility. World War I developed sophisticated new vehicles, tanks and planes, as well as training drivers, mechanics and pilots. Yet the same machines that destroyed distance also destroyed lives. The war's carnage revealed the dark side of technology, taking the gloss off modernity. It also took 324,000 men and some women beyond Australia's shores: indeed, the opportunity of 'A Free World Tour', as one recruiting pamphlet put it, probably motivated many to join up in the first place and shaped their experience of war.¹⁵ The encounter with foreign countries encouraged many to reflect on their own national identity, and the fact that so many Australians were buried on the other side of the world forged an unexpected emotional tie to other lands.

National and international links have relied as much on the post, telephone and internet as on planes, trains and automobiles. Postal services had particular importance for a people desperate to connect to each other and the world. The mails facilitated physical meetings: many letters contained remittances to assist family members migrating to Australia, or to help those already here saving for a visit 'home'.¹⁶ Australians also embraced the telegraph and telephone. By 1946 they sent on average four telegrams a year, making them the world's greatest users of telegraphic services.¹⁷ During the mid-1970s the number of international calls made out of Australia rose by approximately 25 per cent each year.¹⁸ By 2008 the number of mobile telephones in the country outstripped the total population. It comes as no surprise that Australians also took to social networking, with 10 million Facebook accounts activated by late 2010.¹⁹

- 15 Richard White, 'The Soldier as Tourist: The Australian Experience of the Great War', *War & Society*, 5, 1 (1987): 67.
- 16 Gary B. Magee and Andrew S. Thompson, Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850–1914 (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 83–5.
- 17 Kelly Burke, The Stamp of Australia: The Story of Our Mail from Second Fleet to Twenty-First Century (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2009), p. 72.
- 18 J.H. Curtis and Trevor Pearcey, 'Communications and Computers', in *Technology in Australia*, 1788–1988 (Melbourne: Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, 1988), p. 561, available at http://www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/tia/561. html>, accessed 12 June 2012.
- 19 Australian Communications and Media Authority, 'Number of Mobile Phones Now Exceeds Australia's Population,' ACMA Media Release 43/2008, 28 April 2008

Government encouraged these connections. Lucrative subsidies for airmail delivery from the 1920s underpinned the expansion of aviation across the continent. National control of telecommunications ensured that by 1930 virtually every country town had its own telephone exchange.²⁰ More recently, a commitment to a 'fair go' for regional Australia motivated the decision to build a National Broadband Network at the cost of \$35.9 billion, which, when completed, will stand as the latest in a long chain of government-subsidised technologies slaking Australians' thirst for national and international connections.

Transporting Australia

Australia's web of connections relied on modes of transport that changed dramatically, in speed, comfort, convenience and reliability, across the twentieth century. At first the sea was dominant. Colonial Australia was a vital part of an imperial network bound by maritime links, and in the first third of the twentieth century coastal shipping still prevailed. For interstate travel, coastal steamers, with their new screws, stability, sociability and luxurious appointments, easily beat railways for comfort and convenience, helping annihilate the connection between travel and travail.²¹ Burns Philp and Co., based in Sydney and dominating trade with the South Pacific, promoted cruise tourism as a safely exotic holiday for the relatively well-off. Its *BP Magazine*, published from 1928, placed tropical Australia and the South Pacific firmly within the tourist gaze.²²

It was the great ocean liners' promise of connections with a wider world that really captured the imagination. The route to Britain, 'Home via Suez', held special cultural significance. School children in their final exams could be asked to 'Describe carefully the scenery, nationalities, and types of trade commodities likely to be met with' in the ports along the way.²³ An increasingly complex set of social negotiations and rituals structured the weeks of shipboard life, beginning with streamers at departure, encompassing ceremonies to mark the crossing of the equator, climaxing

- 20 Curtis and Pearcey, 'Communications and Computers', p. 539.
- 21 Robert Lee, Transport: An Australian History (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010), pp. 47-8.

<http://www.acma.gov.au/WEB/STANDARD/pc=PC_311135>, accessed 12 June 2012; '10 million Aussies in Love with Facebook', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 10 December 2010.

²² Ngaire Douglas and Norman Douglas, 'P & O's Pacific', *Journal of Tourism Studies*, 7, 2 (1996): 2–14.

²³ Richard White, 'Overseas', in Bill Gammage and Peter Spearritt (eds), *Australians 1938* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987), p. 439.

in a rendition of 'Rule Britannia' at the first glimpse of England and concluding with the search for the first sighting of the Southern Cross on the return voyage. The rigid hierarchy of cabin classes typically circumscribed shipboard friendships, enmities and romances. The Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company (P&O) ordered its last ships for the route, the *Canberra* and the *Oriana*, in 1955 but by that time the experience was already losing some of its gloss since migrants were arriving on the very same ships that took young Australians to Europe. The great ships would return towards the end of the century with a dramatic revival in cruise tourism.

Australia's railway network was the nineteenth century's legacy to the twentieth, built by colonial governments to open up land for settlement and farming. Few new lines were built in the new century – few needed to be. The opening of the transcontinental railway in 1917 – a condition of Western Australia's joining the new Federation in 1901 – had a psychological impact as Australians could now imagine themselves connected to each other more by land than sea. The only other major new country lines were extensions of networks to Cairns in 1924 and Broken Hill in 1927. The Ghan had reached Oodnadatta from Adelaide in 1891 and was extended to Alice Springs in 1929: it finally reached Darwin in 2004.

Yet the elaborate network created by 1901 was a mixed legacy. Conceived as drawing trade from the regions into the capital cities rather than as linking the colonies to each other, rail's great flaw was that it 'remained colonial rather than national in conception'.²⁴ The 'disaster' of each colony building its railways on a different gauge was one result: by 1917, it was possible to go by rail from Perth to Brisbane, but it required five changes of train.²⁵ The inconvenience to interstate travellers was a minor consideration, however: the point was to get produce to the ports cheaply; this the railways did effectively, and as a result consolidated the dominance of State capitals. Queensland was the exception: there the railways were routed from the farming, grazing and later mining districts of the west to the string of ports along the coast. This had the effect of making Queensland the most provincial of States, stimulating the growth of large provincial port cities including Cairns, Rockhampton, Townsville and Mackay.

²⁴ Lee, Transport, p. 169.

²⁵ W.C. Kernot, first professor of engineering at the University of Melbourne, considered the incompatibility of State railway gauges as 'the most lamentable engineering disaster in Australia'; quoted in Blainey, *The Tyranny of Distance*, p. 245.

Railways symbolised the great modern industrial enterprise. Their workforce was industrially and politically significant, and the bureaucracy that oversaw their operations was influential. Train platforms encapsulated the hustle and bustle of modern life. The speed at which vast distances could be covered also contributed to a shift in the way travellers regarded the land: the continent's sweeping vistas could be enjoyed when every kilometre was no longer felt to be an obstacle.²⁶ The trains linking Sydney and Melbourne, the Spirit of Progress from 1937 and the Southern Aurora from 1962, epitomised modern communication. But from the 1970s a wave of economic rationalisation closed down lines that had become marginal through lack of investment and competition from road and air, with negative effects on many regional communities. By the late twentieth century the railways were seen as old-fashioned and irrelevant in Australia despite advances in rail technology elsewhere in the world. Scenic railways and 'puffing billies' on the green periphery of Australia's capital cities consigned connections to the bush to the realm of sentimental nostalgia.

More than any other form of transport, the car remade daily lives.²⁷ While cars were an exciting novelty at the beginning of the century, they had become the norm by the 1950s, with claims that Australians were, after Americans and Canadians, 'the most automobilised people on earth'.28 Australia's quarter-acre blocks and 'the Australian way of life' itself would not have been possible without the family sedan in the driveway. The Holden, 'Australia's own car' produced by General Motors with substantial government assistance, came to symbolise Australianness as the car industry underpinned post-war industrialisation.²⁹ At its launch in 1948, the first Holden cost $f_{.760}$. By 1960 the price had risen by a third, but male wages had quadrupled and mass car ownership had arrived. While early motoring rallies had spoken to national dreams of annihilating distance, by mid-century the love affair was also lived out in the domestic ritual of the Sunday drive. This tradition captured the tensions of middle Australia's dual desire for both the secure rituals of a suburban life and the freedom to escape them. The car's most dramatic impact was on the cities, as governments shifted investment to roads, freeways and bypasses. Most car trips went between home, work

²⁶ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the 19th Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 52–69.

²⁷ Knott, 'The "Conquering Car"', p. 3.

²⁸ Graeme Davison, Car Wars: How the Car Won Our Hearts and Conquered Our Cities (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2004), p. 15.

²⁹ Robert Crawford, 'Holden', in Melissa Harper and Richard White (eds), Symbols of Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press and National Museum of Australia, 2010), p. 170.

and the local shopping centre; yet the car also remained the most common means by which Australians got away from it all, with roughly 53 million longer distance leisure drives taken in the year 2000.³⁰

The experience of driving, premised on a shared understanding of road rules and etiquette, helps forge a sense of national community.³¹ Yet the freedoms offered by the car can be particularly meaningful for those who feel they exist at the edges of the national mainstream. By century's end some disenfranchised young men, particularly those from migrant backgrounds, claimed urban space by cruising in cars specially modified to look and sound dominating. For some Indigenous communities, particularly those living in remote camps many miles from town, four-wheel drives and trucks offered new mobility. Buying, maintaining and operating a truck or 'troopy' acquired a wealth of social meaning, with new protocols around access to mobility part of the modern, hybrid lives of Indigenous Australians across the country.³²

While cars remade the fabric of daily life, there was no greater symbol of modernity than the aeroplane. In 1927 Charles Kingsford Smith flew around Australia in only ten days, and crossed the continent non-stop. The major new airlines operating from the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s - Qantas, Australian National Airways (ANA), Ansett Airways and Trans Australia Airlines (TAA) flew along an ever-thickening network that promised to link the nation as never before. From 1928 the Rev. John Flynn's flying doctor service began to extend the benefits of modernity to the furthest reaches of the outback. Aviation also transformed international links. In 1919 Prime Minister William Morris Hughes announced a prize of f10,000 to the first Australian to fly from England to Australia in less than 30 days. This very modern spectacle garnered much excitement and four entrants. The winners, brothers Ross and Keith Smith, completed the journey of 18,000 kilometres in 27 days and 20 hours. Within two decades, Qantas and the British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) provided a weekly flying boat service to London, allowing news and mail to circulate faster than ever before, the government subsidising the route at an initial rate of $f_{169,000}$ per annum.³³

- 30 Davison, *Car Wars*, p. 26; Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Survey of Motor Vehicle Use*, *Australia*, 12 Months Ended 31 October 2010, cat. no. 9208.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2011); National Visitor Survey (Canberra: Bureau of Tourism Research, 2000).
- 31 Tim Edensor, 'Automobility and National Identity', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21 (2004): 101–20.
- 32 Jon Altman and Melinda Hinkson, 'Mobility and Modernity in Arnhem Land: The Social Universe of Kuninjku Trucks', *Journal of Material Culture*, 12, 2 (2007): 181–203; Annette Hamilton, 'Coming and Going: Aboriginal Mobility in North-West South Australia, 1970–71', *Records of the South Australian Museum*, 20 (1987): 47–57.
- 33 Hudson Fysh, Qantas at War (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1968), pp. 64-5.

Aviation not only reinforced old colonial ties with England: it also facilitated Australia's own colonial expansion in the notoriously difficult terrain of Papua New Guinea. In the words of popular writer and colonial enthusiast Frank Clune, the dawning of the Air Age allowed 'only a few dozen white officials...to pacify and control an area of 90,000 square miles of jungle swamps', so that Australia could finally 'civilise the sorcerers'.³⁴ Aircraft offered a potent juxtaposition of supposed Papuan primitivism with Australian modernity, an implicit justification for the expansion of Australian imperialism at a time when regional voices increasingly called for decolonisation.³⁵

The period following World War 2 was the glamour age of commercial aviation. It also saw the nationalisation of Qantas, which began flying Super Constellations, or 'Connies' as they were affectionately dubbed, from 1947. Their pressurised cabins, quieter engines and ability to climb above the weather made flying a less jarring experience. The Kangaroo Route's sumptuous, multi-course meals and fine wines also meant planes could compete with ocean liners for luxury. Travelling times continued to shrink following the introduction of jet aircraft in 1958. That year, more overseas-bound Australians departed by plane than by ship for the first time; by 1964 the ratio was more than two to one. The jet age, and the introduction of the Jumbo Jet in 1971, facilitated an outbound tourism boom. In 1960, 77,000 Australians departed Australia on a short-term basis; the number reached 353,000 a decade later and passed 1.2 million by 1980. By the twenty-first century, flying had become a routine part of life.³⁶

Domestic tourism

These were the means by which Australians travelled: but what did they make of their journeys? Increasingly they travelled for pleasure. At the beginning of the twentieth century many of the dimensions of their holidaymaking had been established. The railway and the steamer brought crowds of excursionists to beach and seaside locations around Melbourne's Port Phillip Bay, to Manly and the coastal resorts of Sydney, Southport near Brisbane, Victor Harbor south of Adelaide and Rottnest Island off the coast from Perth.

³⁴ Frank Clune, Prowling through Papua (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1942), p. 11.

³⁵ Robert Dixon, Prosthetic Gods: Travel, Representation and Colonial Governance (Brisbane: UQP, 2001), pp. 72–97; Bill Gammage, The Sky Travellers: Journeys in New Guinea 1938–1939 (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 1998).

³⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia, Year Book Australia and Oversea Arrivals and Departures, various issues.

Mountain destinations near the cities also became popular resorts. Particular natural and geological curiosities – Jenolan, Buchan and Yallingup caves, the Twelve Apostles and the Three Sisters, waterfalls, extinct volcanoes, big trees and the Barrier Reef – were marked out for tourism.

By this time Australians had learned to see the landscape as spectacle and to apply the conventions of the picturesque and the sublime to the Australian bush. Picking wildflowers, celebrating Wattle Day, admiring gum trees and picnicking in fern-covered valleys were all popular pastimes. The identification and promotion of local beauty spots became an enterprise promoted by local committees, which also provided lookouts and tracks to make them accessible.³⁷ By 1920 Australia had more spaces called 'national parks' than any other country. Perhaps most importantly, walking in the bush became the dominant way in which Australians engaged with the natural world. Walking clubs became popular at the beginning of the century and by the 1920s 'bushwalking', as it then became known, had a sufficient popular following for social distinctions to be drawn between 'real' bushwalkers and mere 'hikers'.³⁸

Much of the early promotion of tourism was led by the State railways, which benefitted from daytrippers and tourists using their networks on weekends and other slack periods. They commissioned and published extensive railway guides, and in the twentieth century displayed colourful posters promoting tourist resorts. While New Zealand had established the world's first national government tourist bureau, the Australian States followed suit, often combining the promotion of tourism with migration, convinced that 'the settler follows the tourist'.³⁹ The postcard craze had begun in the 1880s and governments worked with photographers to promote tourism. Even stamps were used to depict popular tourist landscapes. The Tasmanian government was particularly active, promoting the State's 'Englishness' to mainlanders wanting to escape the summer heat and approximate a European experience at a time when few could afford a trip to the idealised 'Old Country'. Government tourist bureaus did not limit themselves to promotion. They arranged accommodation and transport, published hotel and guesthouse directories, and gave advice. They also provided accommodation and opened

³⁷ Julia Horne, The Pursuit of Wonder: How Australia's Landscape Was Explored, Nature Discovered and Tourism Unleashed (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2005), p. 71.

³⁸ Melissa Harper The Ways of the Bushwalker: On Foot in Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), pp. 201–2, 232.

³⁹ Jim Davidson and Peter Spearritt, *Holiday Business: Tourism in Australia since* 1870 (Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 2000), pp. 70–1.

up new areas for tourism. The development of snowfields, for example, was a government initiative, with the New South Wales and Victorian governments building chalets at Mt Kosciuszko and Mt Buffalo, as well as hotels at the Jenolan and Yallingup caves.

Yet increasingly it was the beach that attracted attention. As mixed bathing became acceptable and popular, and as surf bathing grew safer with the development of the surf life-saving movement from 1907, beaches became the most popular Australian holiday destinations. Beaches with train, tram or steamer access drew large crowds, but for the increasing number with cars, getting to out-of-the-way coastal retreats, often with just tents or caravans, became an attractive escape. The casual primitivism of the experience was a large part of the attraction. From the late nineteenth century the wealthy had been building substantial holiday homes in coastal and mountain resorts. By the 1920s more modest and determinedly primitive shacks and what Australians began calling 'weekenders' were dotting less accessible beauty spots suitable for swimming, fishing and relaxation. The typical mid-century family holiday was basic and fairly inexpensive. Camping, caravanning and cabins were popular, and large extended families would often return to the same place as an annual ritual. They rarely ranged far beyond State borders. An industry grew up around the provision of camping equipment and beach paraphernalia. In a society that increasingly valued family life, the family beach holiday came to hold a highly symbolic role. In many representations of the typical Australian, the bush worker was being replaced by the holidaymaker at the beach. But that typical holiday was also premised on the unpaid labour of women, who usually continued in their roles as cooks, nannies and cleaners even while on 'holiday'.

After World War 2, two factors extended access to holidays to a much wider constituency, so that they became a core feature in what was widely understood as an egalitarian, family-oriented and leisure-focused 'Australian way of life'. First, mass car ownership turned this kind of holiday into the norm. Second, paid holidays became a standard feature of most industrial conditions following an award by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court in 1938: by then Australia, once in the forefront of campaigns for reduced working hours, was lagging behind European nations. The States then began legislating for paid holidays – first one, then two, then three and, by the 1970s, four weeks of paid annual leave.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Richard White et al., On Holidays: A History of Getting Away in Australia (Melbourne: Pluto Press, 2005), ch. 5.

There were other kinds of tourist experiences. While nature dominated both holidaymaking and tourist promotion, some forms of cultural tourism acquired a following, though of Australia's nineteen UNESCO World Heritage sites, only three – Melbourne's Exhibition Building, Sydney's Opera House and a cluster of convict sites around the nation – are cultural rather than natural. For rural Australians, a visit to the State capital – perhaps for Sydney's Royal Easter Show, Brisbane's 'Ekka' (the Royal Queensland Show, originally the Brisbane Exhibition) or Melbourne's Royal Show – was an experience of urban modernity, with its attendant virtues and vices. For suburbanites, a farm holiday provided insight into what was still seen as the 'real' Australia: typically it meant staying with family in 1900, but by 2000 was a packaged 'farm stay' offering a nostalgic evocation of a disappearing way of life, as well as a means of diversifying rural economies.

Indigenous cultures had long drawn the curiosity of tourists, and corroborees and boomerang-throwing displays were staged from early colonial times. Critics decried the commodification of 'primitive' cultures in such displays, but others argued that tourism led to cultural exchanges in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people exhibited autonomy and expertise. Those confined to reserves and missions could earn income from souvenir craftwork and performance, though it was often taken from them. From the 1960s Indigenous culture was increasingly used to represent Australia to an international audience, a strategic move by the broader tourism industry. By the end of the century Indigenous tourist enterprises – and the international recognition given to Papunya art – were significant features of the tourist scene. Uluru (Ayers Rock), returned to Aboriginal ownership and placed under joint management in 1983, became a major drawcard but also a site of contention, particularly around the propriety of tourists climbing it.

Australia's history also became a tourist attraction. Governments initially discouraged what they considered a vulgar interest in convicts and bushrangers: the wrong sort of history. The Tasmanian government had sought the demolition of the extensive penal complex at Port Arthur, but in 1915 decided to protect the site in recognition of the contribution convict tourism was already making to the economy.⁴¹ In the 1920s paintings and etchings depicting the charm of old colonial buildings helped make Australia's past attractive to people of taste. From the 1930s writers and broadcasters – most notably Frank Clune – were influential in promoting a popular interest

⁴¹ David Young, Making Crime Pay: The Evolution of Convict Tourism in Tasmania (Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1996), p. 40.

in Australian history and linking it with travelling the country. National Trusts, established in all States between 1947 and 1963, opened the past to tourists, as did the lavish coffee-table books on Australian heritage in the lead-up to the Bicentennial celebrations in 1988. This new interest in the past was exploited by outdoor museums and theme parks, beginning with Swan Hill's 'Pioneer Village' (1964) and including more ambitious projects such as Sovereign Hill at Ballarat (1970) and Old Sydney Town (1975).⁴²

Tourism was increasingly a matter of maximising profit. The Australian National Travel Association was formed in 1929 to represent both State and private tourism interests and to promote the industry. While always hampered by State rivalries – domestic tourists still accounted for 95 per cent of visitor nights in the mid-1960s – its great success was the publication from 1934 of the monthly magazine *Walkabout*, which promoted 'the vast Australian continent and the colourful islands below the equator in the Pacific'.⁴³ In 1967 the Association gave way to a new Australian Tourist Commission, which would take credit for the boom in international tourism to Australia that followed the introduction of cheap airfares. As State tourist bureaus declined, private tourism agencies proliferated and the tourism sector organised itself as an effective industrial lobby.

Other pressures consolidated the move towards new kinds of holidaymaking. From the 1980s working hours, which had been reducing steadily in 'the land of the long weekend', began to increase. The reversal was so pronounced that by the twenty-first century governments were encouraging workers to take more leave to save the tourist industry. Long, cheap holidays were replaced with shorter, more expensive ones, such as those provided by Queensland's island resorts. The increasing move of married women into the paid workforce gave them claim for a holiday in which their unpaid labour was replaced by the paid work of others. The Gold Coast developed from the 1960s with a faux sophistication, featuring large theme parks and a Miami-style beachfront. That it became the favoured destination for school leavers celebrating their rite of passage to adulthood was a sign that teenagers were ready to distance themselves from the family beach holiday. The spa resort, which had once referred to a community with publicly accessible mineral springs, was revived as a privatised resort hotel package, where rejuvenation required far more elaborate services than simply relaxing in the sun. With discounted airfares, island resorts with cheaper

⁴² Davidson and Spearritt, Holiday Business, pp. 263-6.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 80, 89.

labour – Bali, Vanuatu and Fiji, for example – also offered alternatives to the Australian beach holiday.

By the end of the century the borders between 'holidays' and 'lifestyle' had become porous. The internet made it increasingly viable to conduct business from a pleasant location. Coastal populations outside the capital cities were increasing at twice the rate of Australia as a whole, part of a global move to the coast.⁴⁴ In 2007 the Gold Coast overtook Newcastle to become Australia's biggest non-capital city and the sixth biggest city overall. Some baby boomers retired to the holiday resorts of childhood or of family holidays; others were drawn to coastal resorts by lifestyle, employment opportunities and cheaper housing. Weekenders gradually became more elaborate holiday homes and sleepy holiday hamlets became bustling suburbanised shopping strips.

Travelling the world

For all their global connections, Australians were very conscious of their distance from the people, places and events that mattered. It was a habit of thinking that derived from a subordinate place in the Empire, but also from modernity itself, which imagined that civilisation had a centre where the avant-garde gathered and innovation had its source, behind which the rest of the world lagged in varying degrees. It seemed only appropriate that Mercator world maps in early twentieth-century Australian school atlases showed London at the centre and Australia in a corner near the bottom.

The crowds that thronged to catch a glimpse of Nellie Melba in 1909 hint at the particular cachet Australians attached to connections with the metropolitan centre. Australia's cultural hierarchy – governors, university professors, religious leaders – were customarily British; appointments of Australians to such positions were matters of moment through much of the twentieth century. Conversely, Australians travelled to Britain to acquire education, social status and cultural refinement, or simply to try their fortune.⁴⁵ Those Australians who established themselves in metropolitan centres, from Melba through Germaine Greer to Robert Hughes and Peter Carey, delivered

⁴⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 'How Many People Live in Australia's Coastal Areas?', *Year Book Australia, 2004,* cat. no. 1301.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2004). See also Nicole Gurran, Caroline Squires and Ed Blakely, *Meeting the Sea Change Challenge: Sea Change Communities in Coastal Australia,* Report for the National Sea Change Taskforce, (Planning Research Centre, University of Sydney, 2005) http://www.seachangetask-force.org.au/Publications/researchreportno.1.pdf>, accessed 25 November 2012.

⁴⁵ Angela Woollacott, To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism and Modernity (Oxford University Press, 2001).

verdicts on Australian society with an authority based on their capacity to move within global circles. A certain class of Australians lived in both Britain and Australia, notwithstanding travelling times. After 1909 Melba alternated between seasons at Covent Garden and her home near Lilydale in Victoria until she was well into her sixties. In London itself there was a floating population of Australians: enough to sustain a weekly newspaper, the *British Australasian*, from 1884 until 1965, when other papers including *In London* and *TNT Weekly* took over.⁴⁶ Almost two-thirds of the expatriate population in Britain were women. This, and the curious but persistent sense that they were 'expatriates' rather than 'migrants', served to differentiate Australians from other ethnic groups – at least in their own minds.

For many Britain was not only an imperial centre, but also home. While calling England 'home' was already being pilloried by the late nineteenth century, it signified a depth of emotional attachment to a place most never saw. Some older Australians would continue to speak of 'Home' into the 1960s, and for many a visit to London functioned as a secular pilgrimage. It generally required considerable time and money, though cultural capital, self-confidence and sheer determination could suffice. Yet the pilgrimage could have unforeseen effects, drawing attention to the cultural distance between Australia and Britain even as it annihilated the physical. The heady mix of sentiment and homesickness, along with varying experiences of English nature, history, food, weather and people, convinced many that Australian outlooks, habits and ways of life were very different from British ones. The recognition of difference increased with time, and expatriates in Britain became more open in expressing an Australianness that they rarely acknowledged back home.

London was not the only cultural centre that drew the talented and the hopeful. Nellie Melba's career took in the great opera houses of Europe and North America as well as London and Melbourne. For some Australian bohemians, Britain represented staid, claustrophobic tradition, while the continent stood for intellectual life and vitality. Many artists looked to France, musicians to Germany, others still to New York or Los Angeles. For Nina Murdoch, Australia's most popular travel writer between the wars, it was not Britain but the continent that provided all the breathless excitement of

⁴⁶ The British Australasian underwent a number of name changes during this period: see Simon Sleight, 'Reading the British Australasian Community in London, 1884–1924', in Carl Bridge, Robert Crawford and David Dunstan (eds), Australians in Britain: The Twentieth-Century Experience (Melbourne: Monash University ePress, 2009), pp. 7.1–7.14.

cultural discovery. Popular culture looked increasingly to Hollywood, which helped secure America's place as another centre of civilisation. The prize for the first 'Miss Australia' contests of the 1920s took the winner not to London but to Los Angeles, where a colony of Australian entertainers had begun to gather.⁴⁷ To subsequent generations who grew up with American popular culture, a visit to the United States could be as alive with meaning as a visit to England had been for their parents.

The exclusivity and some of the intensity of the experience was lost as more Australians found the means to travel. By mid-century a trip to Europe was becoming a middle-class rite of passage. So many Australians went overseas that the nation suffered negative migration in the immediate post-war years, despite the inflow of refugees and migrants.⁴⁸ The shift from ship to plane robbed the journey of the weeks of anticipation and reflection. As the numbers increased, the feeling of distinction – of having arrived, both economically and culturally – was diluted further by the presence of so many other tourists. The ecstatic pitch of travellers such as Nina Murdoch became less common as 'doing' Europe became a commodity, to be consumed regularly rather than once in a lifetime. Even Australia House, that symbolic piece of Australia in the heart of London, became less welcoming and more bureaucratic as its consular workload increased.⁴⁹

The changing experience of being an Australian in England had broader implications. Some have argued that Australians began to disentangle their national identity from England once Britain sought entry to the European Community in the 1960s.⁵⁰ But the routinisation of the tourist experience also contributed to a dwindling in the intensity of the relationship. The trip came to signify upward mobility more than sentimental ties; Richard Neville, one of the Sydney *enfants terribles* who established their satirical *Oz* magazine in London in 1967, thought it was something 'everyone did – eventually'.⁵¹

- 47 Angela Macdonald, 'Hollywood Bound: A History of Australians in Hollywood to 1970', PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 2001.
- 48 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Year Book Australia 1946–47, cat. no. 1301.0 (Canberra: ABS, 1946), p. 1293.
- 49 Olwen Pryke, 'Australia House', in Harper and White (eds), Symbols of Australia, pp. 129-33.
- 50 James Curran and Stuart Ward, *The Unknown Nation: Australia after Empire* (Melbourne University Press, 2010).
- 51 Richard Neville, Hippie Hippie Shake: The Dreams, the Trips, the Trials, the Love-ins, the Screw-ups...the Sixties (Melbourne: William Heinemann Australia, 1995), p. 53.

Australians remain a significant presence in London. The Gap Year has become institutionalised and the emergence of a professional labour market has resulted in colonies of Australians in law, finance, journalism and the arts. Memories of a youthful year in London continue to bind Australian lives to Britain and continuing British immigration constantly replenishes the number of Australians with relatives to visit or ancestors to trace. Yet with the increasing presence of non-British migrants in Australia, they and their children are likely to feel at home in other parts of Europe, America, Asia or beyond, especially as the internet and Skype enable a breadth of contacts unimaginable in the era of flimsy aerograms and the occasional postcard. In the twenty-first century, the Australian Grand Tour has broadened to encompass the Munich Beer Festival, the Anzac Day service at Gallipoli, the ski slopes in Canada and a beach holiday in Bali or Phuket, alongside its traditional stops at Buckingham Palace and Piccadilly Circus.

Travel and tourism also contributed to a dramatic shift in Australian ideas about Asia.⁵² Early attitudes depicted the continent as mysterious and impossible to understand. The supposed inscrutability of 'Orientals' was a cliché and fears of Asian plots to invade Australia's undefended north figured in military planning as much as pulp fiction.⁵³ The 1901 *Immigration Restriction Act* was aimed at keeping Asia out. From the 1940s, however, Australians began to experience Asia for themselves, and the sense that it was unknowable began to give way to growing familiarity through contacts ranging from trade, military and diplomatic connections to the most intimate personal relationships. Australians travelled there for a variety of reasons, but increasingly for pleasure, and most returned home feeling they knew something about Asia.

This familiarity has been greatest in those parts of Southeast Asia that became Australia's pleasure periphery. Bali, the small Indonesian island with a reputation as paradise on earth, has hosted a disproportionate number of Australian holidaymakers taking advantage of discount package deals since the 1970s. A very different group of (mostly young) Australians also 'discovered' Bali around the same time while travelling on the hippie trail, an overland route to London that passed through Southeast Asia, India, Nepal and the Middle East. The National Union of Australian University Students

⁵² David Walker and Agnieszka Sobocinska (eds), Australia's Asia: From Yellow Peril to Asian Century (Perth: UWA Press, 2012).

⁵³ David Walker, Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850–1939 (Brisbane: UQP, 1999).

published a new *Student Guide to Asia* every year during the mid-1970s. It promised that freedom from the West's 'cold conformity' and 'nine-to-five living' could be found by escaping to Asia, 'a world that has not yet turned plastic'.⁵⁴ Few Australians had been so open to Asian influences before, and many travellers brought elements of South and Southeast Asian cultures home with them – from yoga and batik to satay and dhal. Others never returned, and established roots in Goa or Bangkok. Not all were devout seekers of spiritual or cultural growth. Drugs and sex were just as strong a lure:⁵⁵ early editions of Lonely Planet's first ever guidebook, *Across Asia on the Cheap*, devoted more space to dope than to food.⁵⁶

Asia attracted more Australians than Europe for the first time in 1973, and has done so every year since 1981.⁵⁷ By 1998 more Australians headed to Indonesia than the United Kingdom. Just as references to Britain as 'home' disappeared, Bali was increasingly referred to as Australia's 'second home' or 'backyard', revealing the extent to which anxieties about Asia had waned. Even the Bali bombings of 2002, which killed 88 Australians, did not dent the love affair: Australians travelled to Indonesia in record numbers in subsequent years. Indeed, the shock and loss that followed these attacks pointed to the extent to which Bali had become stitched into the national fabric.⁵⁸ The shift towards closer relations with Asia has also been strengthened by the growing web of cultural and personal links of Australians of Australian expatriates across the region. This everyday familiarity with Asia has underpinned and arguably preceded the diplomatic desire for engagement in what the government's 2012 White Paper called the 'Asian Century'.

Yet increased travel has not had uniformly positive outcomes; personal contacts can also jaundice mutual perceptions. The relatively low cost of an Asian holiday means that, in parts of Asia, ordinary tourists can live like royalty. Some Australians have come to imagine that their economic superiority buys them the right to act with impunity. The casual condescension that marked past Australian attitudes has been revived in stereotypes portraying Indonesians or Thais merely as touts, masseurs or prostitutes vying for Australian dollars. Furthermore, the comfortable

⁵⁴ David Jenkins, Asia: A Traveller's Guide (Adelaide: Rigby, 1976), p. 9.

⁵⁵ Richard Neville, Play Power (London: Jonathan Cape, 1970), p. 206.

⁵⁶ Tony Wheeler, Across Asia on the Cheap (Sydney: Lonely Planet, 1973 and 1975 edns).

⁵⁷ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Year Book Australia, Demography Bulletin and Overseas Arrivals and Departures, various issues.

⁵⁸ Agnieszka Sobocinska, 'Innocence Lost and Paradise Regained: Tourism to Bali and Australian Perceptions of Asia', *History Australia*, 8, 2 (2011): 199–222.

Australian attitude to Asia is not necessarily reciprocated. Some head to Asia to act up; drug traffickers such as Schapelle Corby and the Bali Nine, sex tourists (including paedophiles) and even the casual hedonists who think that what happens in Bali or Phuket stays there can affect Asian attitudes towards Australia. Tourism functions as a form of people's diplomacy; accordingly, it has the potential to instigate diplomatic crises as well as strengthen ties.

While Australia's changing relationship with Asia was particularly noticeable, Australia's ties with New Zealand have been so solid as to be taken for granted, cemented by a steady stream of Tasman Sea crossings. More Australians have travelled to New Zealand than any other country since records began to be kept in the 1930s. Over 1.1 million Australian residents made the trip in 2011.⁵⁹ Many of them were motivated by family ties - numbers travelling to New Zealand double over Christmas - while others go for education or work. The two governments offer citizens reciprocal rights to visit and take up residence in each other's countries: until 1991 they could even draw immediate welfare benefits. Travel provides a measure of the closeness of international relationships. New Zealanders' freedom to enter Australia, formalised by the Trans-Tasman Travel Arrangement in 1973, is unique for a nation that prides itself on its strict migration controls. New Zealanders are not even counted as part of Australia's migration program, despite an estimated annual net migration of 20,000 - the same number as the annual refugee intake in 2012, which has been the source of so much political contention.60

Australia's warm relationship with another official friend, the United States, has also been shaped by travel patterns. United States visa requirements are as stringent as Australia's, but in 2005 a special visa category, replicated for no other nation, allowed qualified Australians to work in America with relative ease. To what extent this enmeshment will continue as America's power is challenged in the so-called Asian Century is an open question. Australians have been voracious consumers of American popular culture since the 1920s (reinforced by the Australia–United States Free Trade Agreement signed in 2004), and the Australian–US military alliance has been sacrosanct since World War 2. But the fact that the major hubs for working Australian expatriates are London and Shanghai, and not London

⁵⁹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Overseas Arrivals and Departures, Australia, Feb* 2012, cat. no. 3401.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2012).

⁶⁰ Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *Fact Sheet* 17–New Zealanders in Australia <http://www.immi.gov.au/media/fact-sheets/17nz.htm>, accessed 27 November 2012.

and New York, speaks volumes about the connections being fostered by the current generation of people's diplomats, rather than by formal ties.⁶¹

Still moving

At the start of the twenty-first century, Australians spend more on international travel per head than any other people on earth.⁶² Unlike other tourist markets, they are just as likely to undertake long-haul journeys as shorter hops. In 2010, Australians made over 7 million overseas trips, equating to one departure for approximately every three people (although some frequent travellers are counted multiple times).⁶³ Their numbers were further bolstered by the million-plus expatriates who form an Australian diaspora scattered throughout the world. Travel and international connections have arguably become definitive of the Australian experience; they are certainly seen as valuable in terms of social and professional status.⁶⁴ Increasingly, events that give meaning to Australian lives now take place overseas. The commemoration of Anzac Day, perhaps the major event in Australia's civic calendar, draws ever-larger crowds to the Gallipoli peninsula in Turkey. Personal milestones are also increasingly celebrated overseas, with graduations, weddings, birthdays, anniversaries and funerals becoming justifications for an overseas trip. Almost 800,000 Australians went to Bali in 2011, many to celebrate a wedding, anniversary or birthday, others to remember the loved ones lost in the Bali bombings of 2002 and 2005.65

In 1997 Qantas began a decade-long advertising campaign revolving around the Peter Allen song 'I Still Call Australia Home'. It evoked the shared emotion of lives being lived across national boundaries and repositioned the figure of the typical Australian: not working in the bush or lying on the beach, but travelling the world. Political, economic and sentimental relationships are no longer limited to links with Britain and its Empire; nor are they fulfilled

- 61 Graeme Hugo, Dianne Rudd and Kevin Harris, *Australia's Diaspora: Its Size, Nature and Policy Implications* (Canberra: Committee for Economic Development of Australia, 2003).
- 62 United Nations World Tourism Organization, UNWTO Tourism Highlights, 2011 edn http://mkt.unwto.org/sites/all/files/docpdf/unwtohighlights11enhr_3.pdf>, accessed 12 November 2012, p. 10.
- 63 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year Book Australia, 2012*, cat. no. 1301.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2012).
- 64 Graeme Davison, Narrating the Nation in Australia (London: Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, 2010), p. 46.
- 65 'Number of Foreign Visitors Arriving Directly by Nationality to Bali', Badan Pusat Statistik, Provinsi Bali, http://bali.bps.go.id/eng/tabel_detail.php?ed=611002&od=11&id=11>, accessed 18 February 2013.

by solely national associations. Australians have acquired a wealth of global connections maintained by constant movement between cities, States and nations, though that global mobility continues to elude a significant minority. While it still provides fertile ground for social distinction, the mere act of international travel has become so common that it no longer carries the cachet of cosmopolitanism. Most still call Australia home; but going away – to Europe, America or Asia, for a matter of weeks, months or years – has become part of what it means to be Australian.

21 Security

DAVID LOWE

The history of Australian security during the twentieth century is told largely in accounts of Australia in world affairs, and often in simplified form. According to successive governments, Australian security challenges have arisen from the tension between geography (an island continent in the South Pacific) and history (of British settlement and predominance in shaping institutions and identity). In exploring Australian military preparation and planning, involvement in wars, the protests that resulted and Australia's foreign policies more generally, the more probing interpretations go beyond the conventional tension between geography and history.

This chapter deals principally with Australia in world affairs, but examines connections between internal and external threats. It is also sensitive to the tension between a global Australian outlook, owing much to European and then Anglo-American thinking, and a form of provincialism that certainly derived from geography but also from the circumstances of Australia's continental Federation. European thought is both indispensable and inadequate in thinking through the political and historical circumstances of formerly colonised states such as India.¹ There is also something indispensable and yet inadequate about what has, in recent years, been called 'the British World' – the empire formed by British settlement and the extension of British values – as the lens through which to view all Australian security fears and reactions.² Similarly, although deployed often and casually by politicians, the concept of security involves more than protection against foreign enemies: studies of security require exploration of connections between internal and external threats; and they

I Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

² Good explorations of the concept of the British World are found in Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich (eds), *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London: Frank Cass, 2003).

suggest that, as security links closely to identity, it necessarily includes and excludes groups of people in its articulation.³

The history of Australia's search for security divides logically into the two halves of the twentieth century. Up to the mid-1950s participation in world wars as part of the British Empire shaped Australians' global outlook. This was accompanied by a preference for a citizen soldiery rather than large professional forces, and an expeditionary mentality. Thereafter, shifts in world power and rapid, sometimes unpredictable, decolonisation in Southeast Asia forced revisions to the strategic outlook and set in train a persistent tension between continental and forward defence, which sought preparedness to meet threats well beyond Australian shores. These alternatives led in turn to inconclusiveness over the balance between self-reliance and alliance. Australians' identification with the British World and its own restrictive immigration policy (for much of the century known as the white Australia policy) kept race close to considerations of security - both internal threats and dangers in the international environment. This picture changed quickly from the late 1960s as the restrictive immigration policy was progressively dismantled and the European-American security buffer between Australia and Southeast Asia diminished; but Australian considerations of security did not adjust as quickly. At the end of the twentieth century the echoes of past dilemmas remained.

Provincial globalism

For more than 50 years after Federation, Australia's globalism – here meaning a determinedly international prism through which economic, defence and foreign policies unfold – reflected a geographically distinctive vantage point of a people who saw themselves as part of 'the British World' with Britain at its centre. Being part of the imperial project while asserting distinctive, regional interests and arguing for a greater role in strategic decision making was a fundamental task for Australian leaders. Australian globalism had two other essential qualities. It was not only tied inextricably to an idea of British progress but it also lent a strategic logic to support for others' empires and to Australia's own local empire with its possible extensions. It was also recognised by other major players in international

³ See David Campbell, Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity, rev. edn (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998) and an Australian equivalent, Anthony Burke, *Fear of Security: Australia's Invasion Anxiety* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

affairs as a dependent form of globalism. Bold Australian declarations of independence or assertiveness did not necessarily lead to great change; and the decisions of others brought about some of the most significant changes to Australians' security. Australian globalism, then, can logically be termed a provincial globalism.

The three strands of Australia's provincial globalism can be seen in the major foreign policy, war and security episodes of the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. Placement within a British world is fundamental to understanding Australian hopes, fears and commitments. From the outset, this imagined Britishness involved a considered embrace of British Empire interests around the world. The military backdrop to Australia's Federation was the Australian expeditionary force in the South African War against the Boers.⁴ But this did not imply an unquestioning approach to the Empire's needs and interests. 'Considered embrace' meant that hard questions could and should be asked at the same time as Australian governments acted to defend the Empire, and it also carried the expectation that Australia's distinctive, regional security concerns would be incorporated in imperial planning. By the time Australians entered World War I they had become preoccupied with their security in the Pacific. Leading statesmen, including Prime Minister Alfred Deakin, were alarmed by the rise of Japan, and its consequences for Australia. British leaders were also seized by Japan's growing strength, but responded in 1902 by making an alliance with Japan to protect British interests in the Far East. With renewal, the treaty covered the next 20 years. In 1905 the divergence between Australian and British views was highlighted when the Japanese crushed the Russian Navy in the battle of Tsushima, thereby underlining their capacity for military conquest.

Australians were deeply conscious of the consequences of great power struggles for their region.⁵ Watching the German Navy grow rapidly, and foreseeing possible demands on the Royal Navy in Europe, Alfred Deakin pushed successfully for the formation of the Royal Australian Navy (established in 1911) rather than relying on Australian financial contributions to the Royal Navy's auxiliary Pacific fleet. As prime minister, Deakin also encouraged American interest in the security of the Western Pacific, securing the visit of the US Navy Battle Fleet (called the 'Great White' Fleet) on its

⁴ Craig Wilcox, Australia's Boer War: The War in South Africa, 1899–1902 (Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁵ Roger C. Thompson, Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era, 1820–1920 (Melbourne University Press, 1980), pp. 203–21; Neville Meaney, A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy, 1901–23. Volume 1, The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901–1914 (Sydney University Press, 1976).

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grand tour in 1908; and, with the backing of the Labor Party, developed coastal defences and introduced compulsory military training.

Sending the cream of Australian manhood to war in 1914 provided the basis for more aggressive argument that Australia's regional interests not be overlooked during the war. In 1914 the Japanese, as agreed with the British, occupied those parts of the former German empire north of the equator. When the British endorsed their continued occupation for the war's duration, without informing the Australians, Prime Minister William Morris Hughes resolved to insist on an Australian voice in planning security in the Pacific.

There was some basis to Hughes' conviction that Australia was earning the right to be heard in strategic discussions. Upon the outbreak of war, volunteers swelled the ranks of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), which sailed with New Zealand troops (soon to be known as Anzacs) in November 1914. As is told in detail elsewhere, the Anzacs trained in Egypt for over four months before landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula on 25 April 1915, as part of a spectacularly unsuccessful plan to defeat Turkey. After Gallipoli, where 8,141 Australians were killed, the AIF expanded from two divisions to five in 1916, and shared with other armies on the Western Front the same horrific consequences of outdated strategy colliding with advanced ballistics weaponry in trench warfare. In a war of attrition, Australian troops certainly mattered; and minor but distinguished roles were played by the Australian Light Horse in Palestine and the Royal Australian Navy (under British command). The Australian fighting effort was huge, relative to Australia's size. It was Australians' baptism of fire at Gallipoli that would be remembered above all. The Anzacs' blend of courage, mateship and disdain for authority became a well-promoted official story and laid the basis for the 'Anzac legend'.

Despite these significant Australian contributions, Hughes made little ground in London on the Japanese issue during the course of the war. He regarded the outcomes of the peace making at the end of the war as qualified successes. In the Pacific, he would have preferred simple Australian annexation of former German possessions south of the equator (including German New Guinea), but the new League of Nations C-class mandate was an acceptable second-best, preserving control over trade and the movement of people although preventing the construction of military bases. The Japanese retained control over German territories north of the equator, but failed in their efforts to have a racial equality clause included in the League's Covenant. Otherwise, the collective security principle endorsed by the League of Nations struck Hughes as an unwanted infringement on sovereignty that might result in the Royal Navy having to respond to others at Australia's expense.⁶ And there were divisions among fellow Dominions in relation to the future making of imperial policy. The Canadians and South Africans ended the war eager for constitutional clarity to catch up with their respective senses of equality and independence. The Australians and New Zealanders, by contrast, looked to greater coordination of imperial defence planning in the next stage of the Empire, but would be disappointed in the lack of change that followed. The subsequent evolution of the British Commonwealth (as the self-governing parts became known in the 1920s) owed much less to Australian ideas than the agitation of others.

The war also saw what one historian has called the 'origins of political surveillance' in Australia, the formation of a Commonwealth Police Force charged with identifying and prosecuting those whose opposition to the war effort manifested in ways that could be deemed subversive.7 Hughes' impatience with State police forces and his determination to punish opponents such as the revolutionary Industrial Workers of the World were fundamental to this development. Non-British immigrants declared to be 'enemy aliens' suffered similarly, amid a sustained propaganda campaign that demonised the German 'Hun'. Around 7,000 civilians were interned during the war.8 Although the Commonwealth Police Force was disbanded quickly at the end of the war, an intelligence and surveillance capacity continued to develop. The Commonwealth Investigation Branch, formed from military intelligence officers and remnants of the Commonwealth Police Force, operated from the Attorney-General's Department and maintained close ties with the British intelligence service, MI5. Surveillance concentrated on those at either end of the political spectrum, especially members of the new Communist Party but also sympathisers with the fascist regimes that emerged in Europe. The Commonwealth Investigation Branch worked closely with the Australian Customs Department during the 1920s and 1930s, tightening control over passports and outward journeys by Australians under surveillance, restricting literature either subversive or undermining moral standards, and

⁶ There is now a strong literature assessing the diplomatic battles of Hughes, including W.J. Hudson, *Billy Hughes in Paris: The Birth of Australian Diplomacy* (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1978); L.F. Fitzhardinge, *The Little Digger, 1914–1952. William Morris Hughes: A Political Biography, Volume 2* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1979); Peter Spartalis, *The Diplomatic Battles of Billy Hughes* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983); Carl Bridge, *William Hughes: Australia* (London: Haus Publishers, 2011).

⁷ Frank Cain, *The Origins of Political Surveillance in Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1983).

⁸ Gerhard Fischer, Enemy Aliens: Internment and the Homefront Experience in Australia, 1914–1920 (Brisbane: UQP, 1989).

borrowing from South African legislation to exclude any person deemed 'an undesirable inhabitant or visitor' based on information received from other governments.⁹

Australian politicians and policy makers grappled during the inter-war period with the enduring problem of the Pacific's uncertain standing in imperial defence plans. Japan continued its militarisation and the annexation of Manchuria in 1931, demonstrating a preparedness to use force in its quest for natural resources. This was a major Australian concern. In Europe, the rearmament that followed Hitler's accession to power in Germany in 1933 made it increasingly likely that in the event of another war, the British Commonwealth's resources would be stretched. A small group of Australians saw new possibilities in international relations, while government policies turned inwards. Some of these internationalists advocated strengthening the League of Nations to promote liberalism and arbitrate in international disputes. Others developed transnational ties with women's groups and advocates of racial equality, but these views did not translate to government policy. The crippling effects of the Depression contributed to the building of higher walls, especially tariff and customs, and a more insistent reliance on British trade and finance, interwoven with defence planning, as the basis of Australian security.

The Americans, although adversely affected by higher Australian tariffs, remained a factor in Australian thinking about the Pacific. In 1919 Billy Hughes revisited some of Deakin's earlier consideration of a possible extension of the Monroe Doctrine to the Pacific – without eliciting any American response. In the 1930s Australians made a more comprehensive case for a Pacific pact, linked to the League of Nations Covenant and ideally involving the British, Americans, Japanese, Russians and other European powers with strong interests in the region, notably France and the Netherlands. The proposal was over-ambitious in scope and London's cool response sealed its fate.

Both of these episodes reinforced Australians' anxieties about their dependency on great powers whose geopolitical priorities appeared to lie distant from Australia. Even before World War I, and especially afterwards, Australian policy makers were sensitive to how conflicts in the northern hemisphere might have consequences for the southern. World War I accentuated the global–regional interdependence rather than weakening

⁹ Frank Cain, Terrorism & Intelligence in Australia: A History of ASIO and National Surveillance (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), pp. 26–41.

Australians' conviction of the centrality of the British World alliances. Those in London knew this: in the late 1930s the British were careful to ensure that all efforts in dealing with Hitler short of war were taken, partly in order that the Dominions' support would be certain if war came.

For their part, Australian leaders, with the exception of elder statesman Billy Hughes, were consistent in their support for measures to appease Hitler. Notwithstanding some impressive progress in science and technology linked to defence industries, Australians' reliance on British naval strength grew. They had rapidly reduced spending on defence, especially as the Depression took hold. Only from 1935, when the international situation had worsened, did spending increase substantially, and by this time the munitions, naval and air equipment urgently sought from Britain were needed for Britain's own preparations. Having anxiously watched the stop-start building of the new British fortress at Singapore as the main barrier to a potential attack from Japan, the Australians had to rely on it more than they wanted.¹⁰ As a result, in the words of the historian Christopher Waters, the prime ministers Joseph Lyons and Robert Menzies, the ex-prime minister Stanley Melbourne Bruce who was now High Commissioner in London and the treasurer Richard Casey 'were powerful advocates for appeasement, both within the secret councils of the empire and in the public arena. Indeed, on many occasions these men were well out in front of their colleagues in London in calling for more far-reaching measures of appeasement of Germany and Italy.'11 Upon the outbreak of war in Europe, when the nightmare prospect of an overstretched Royal Navy was realised, Australians mounted similar arguments for concessions that might keep Japan from embarking on conquest.

World War 2 saw Australian forces again joining an imperial force (and those volunteering for overseas service formed the Second AIF). This time the Pacific would become a major theatre of war, but despite the apparent threat to Australia, this did not transform its responses or its security dilemmas. By prior agreement, the vessels of the Royal Australian Navy came under the control of the British Admiralty in 1939. In effect, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) saw the same transfer of control. After participating in an Empire Air Training Scheme, more than 26,000 Australian aircrew served in

¹⁰ Jeffrey Grey, A Military History of Australia, 3rd edn (Cambridge University Press, 2008), ch. 6. An argument that Australia was better prepared than most historians have suggested is put by A.T. Ross, Armed & Ready: The Industrial Development and Defence of Australia, 1900–1945 (Sydney: Turton & Armstrong, 1995).

¹¹ Christopher Waters, Australia and Appeasement: Imperial Foreign Policy & the Origins of World War II (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), pp. 243–4.

the Royal Air Force (RAF). Eventually there were seventeen RAAF squadrons in the RAF, and they did not return to Australia at the height of the Japanese threat in 1941–42.¹² At the outbreak of war, the Australian Army comprised conscript Militia and volunteers, and only the latter were able serve overseas. The 6th, 7th and later the 9th divisions were sent to the Mediterranean theatre while most of the ill-fated 8th Division surrendered to the Japanese at Singapore and in the smaller islands to the north of Australia in the early months of 1942.¹³

Australians were joined in the Mediterranean by the New Zealanders, but the war did not trigger coordinated responses among the Dominions. With limited Dominion involvement in British decision making – there was nothing in London like the Imperial War Cabinet of World War I and only a token Pacific War Council in Washington – the Australians struggled to make their voices heard in Anglo-American decision making. The success of the Anglo-American alliance was partly the result of Churchill's and Roosevelt's marginalisation of other Allies. It took the Australians some time to learn of their 'Beat Hitler First' strategy, which meant concentrating effort in Europe and fighting only a 'holding war' in the Pacific.¹⁴

Australian forces in the Pacific played a role subordinate to the Americans. General Douglas MacArthur removed to Australia after the fall of the Philippines and became the commander of all Allied forces in the South-West Pacific Area. As the most logical base from which to launch a counter-attack against the Japanese, Australia became a strategic responsibility of the United States. Although the Japanese decided not to attempt an invasion of Australia, it seemed that this was their intent in the middle months of 1942, when they launched an overland campaign to capture Port Moresby in Papua New Guinea. In conditions made appalling by the heat, mud, water, precipitous inclines and diseases common in the jungle, Australian Militia troops, soon supported by the returned 7th Division, stopped the Japanese advance over the Kokoda Track. Later, and especially in the hands of Prime Minister Paul Keating in the early 1990s, Kokoda jostled with Gallipoli for

¹² See John McCarthy, A Last Call of Empire: Australian Aircrew, Britain and the Empire Air Training Scheme (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1988).

¹³ Grey, A Military History of Australia, pp. 159-63.

¹⁴ There has been debate over the implications for Australia of the 'Beat Hitler First' policy. See David Day, *The Great Betrayal: Britain, Australia and the Onset of the Pacific War, 1939–41* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1988), pp. 102, 215–29; Carl Bridge, 'Poland to Pearl Harbor', in Carl Bridge (ed.), *Munich to Vietnam: Australia's Relations with Britain and the United States since the 1930s* (Melbourne University Press, 1991), pp. 44–8.

pre-eminence in the list of battles that could match extraordinary resilience with a nation-making significance.

MacArthur's presence in Australia brought no special access to strategic decision making. When, in 1943, top-level meetings between the Allied powers began to discuss plans for defeating the Japanese and for the post-war Pacific, the Australians were not consulted. Prime Minister John Curtin and his Minister for External Affairs, H.V. Evatt, found greater opportunities for activism in 1944, when post-war planning featured more prominently. Some of their ideas for the extension of imperial-Australian power were too bold. Curtin's idea of a new imperial secretariat that would better coordinate the Empire's foreign policy was too much for the South Africans and Canadians, even before the British prime minister, Winston Churchill, dismissed it.¹⁵ Evatt's adventurous Australian-New Zealand Agreement of January 1944 offended both Britain and the United States. It was an attempt to claim standing in any decisions about the post-war Pacific, bring concerted involvement in welfare and development for Pacific Islanders, and reject the notion that US occupation of islands during the war implied claim to sovereignty afterwards but its only lasting result was the establishment of a South Pacific Commission in 1947.¹⁶ More successful was Evatt's role in extending the reach of the new United Nations General Assembly and, at least initially, envisaging a strong role for its Economic and Social Council. At the San Francisco conference in 1945 that established the United Nations, Evatt argued indefatigably to increase the role of smaller powers by expanding the membership of the United Nations Security Council and limit the veto rights of the permanent members.¹⁷

Distinctive Australian security concerns had been hard to elevate among the Allied partners as World War 2 became a 'total' war, extreme in its mobilisation of whole populations, in the weapons used and in the aims of warring parties. Australia's losses were still significant: just under 34,000 of its people were killed (among other Dominions, Canada suffered a loss of 40,000 people and over 397,000 British lives were lost). The grim addition was the number of Australian soldiers who died after being captured and maltreated by the Japanese. One-third of the 22,000 captured in the Pacific did not live to the war's end.¹⁸ Total war also prompted massive efforts at home, where

18 Grey, A Military History of Australia, pp. 193-6.

¹⁵ Andrew Stewart, *Empire Lost: Britain, the Dominions and the Second World War* (London: Continuum, 2008), pp. 129–44.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 115-28.

¹⁷ David Lee, Australia and the World in the Twentieth Century (Melbourne: Circa, 2006), pp. 73–91.

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more than I million Americans passed through. As Lizzie Collingham notes, Australia's role as a large base and producer of food was notable in a world transformed by airpower and new mobility:

No matter how valiant Australian efforts in battle, these campaigns were peripheral in the defeat of both Germany and Japan. The more effective, and less publicised, Australian contribution to the war effort was to supply American troops in the Pacific with 420,000 pairs of trousers, well over a million knitted shirts, 270,000 battle jackets, 11 million pairs of socks, 1.5 million blankets and 1.8 million boots and shoes...Most importantly, over half of the supplies the United States took from Australia came in the form of food.¹⁹

This also hints at the mobilisation of the state more generally. The years following World War 2 saw a major increase in the powers of the federal government at the expense of the States. During the war the Commonwealth also adopted security measures at the expense of individual liberties. National Security Regulations from 1939 provided for extensive government control of industry and the workforce, and both the Communist Party and the right-wing Australia First Movement were proscribed. The state reacted drastically to counteract a perceived threat of enemies within: of the 52,000 'aliens', 22,000 were at some stage declared enemies and had their liberties severely circumscribed. Internment practices varied between the States, but rose in response to heightened fears in the middle years of the war. German and Italian male immigrants were the most likely to be interned, especially those more recently arrived (including Jewish refugees). The smaller Japanese population endured the harshest treatment. Around 7,000 residents were interned, and a similar number of aliens sent to Australia by Allies meant that internment numbers reached a peak of 12,000. Crucially, there was no category of Australian citizen until the Citizenship Act came into operation on 26 January 1949. Until then, 'British subject' was the official status requiring allegiance to the crown; this in turn encouraged the equation of foreignness with a lack of loyalty. Without an alternative definition of citizenship, those subject to internment had no recourse to the contributions they might have made to their new homeland ²⁰

20 Margaret Bevege, Behind Barbed Wire: Internment in Australia during World War II (Brisbane: UQP, 1993); Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien, 'Citizenship, Rights, and Emergency Powers in Second World War Australia', Australian Journal of Politics and History, 53, 2 (2007): 207–22; Joan Beaumont, Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien and Mathew Trinca, Under Suspicion: Citizenship and Internment in Australia during the Second World War (Canberra: National Museum of Australia, 2008).

¹⁹ Lizzie Collingham, The Taste of War: World War Two and the Battle for Food (London: Allen Lane, 2011), p. 443.

DAVID LOWE

Long transition

There is now a strong consensus that Australia's multilayered closeness with Britain did not unravel with World War 2 or quickly thereafter; rather, it endured, particularly with respect to the defence aspect of the relationship. Prime Minister Curtin's claim at the end of 1941 that 'Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom' continues to be seized on as a public transfer of primary allegiance to the United States, but its status as a turning point is not well founded. As historians such as Wayne Reynolds and James Curran have argued, most Australians anticipated and welcomed the prospect of some form of major revival of empire after the war.²¹

There was, in fact, a serious rehearsal for the British Commonwealth's mobilisation for the next world war in the early 1950s, when the threat of a sudden Soviet assault seemed real. The Menzies government took its role seriously and prepared for war along familiar lines. It committed to sending the first division raised to the Middle East again, this time to defend British air bases from which attacks would be launched on the Soviet Union: it instigated a recruitment drive and reintroduced compulsory military training; it embarked on a costly stockpiling exercise; it tried, unsuccessfully, to outlaw the Australian Communist Party; it drew up lists of enemy aliens for internment upon the outbreak of war; and it tried, through a combination of legal and bureaucratic innovations, to create something approximating the US national security state. What Les Louis has called a 'Keynesian warfare state' marked Australia's transition from World War 2 to the Cold War.²² An overheated economy and changed international conditions meant that the more ambitious aspects of a national security state were not realised. But Menzies effectively harnessed and extended earlier government efforts to link defence preparations to the task of national development, and, through the recently established Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) and Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS), linked growing surveillance activities to government-defined threats to security, internal and external.²³

²¹ Wayne Reynolds, *Australia's Bid for the Atomic Bomb* (Melbourne University Press, 2000); James Curran, *Curtin's Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

²² L.J. Louis, *Menzies' Cold War: A Reinterpretation* (Melbourne: Red Rag Publications, 2001).

²³ David Lowe, Menzies and the 'great world struggle': Australia's Cold War 1948–1954 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1999); David McKnight, Australia's Spies and Their Secrets (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994); Cain, Terrorism & Intelligence in Australia, pp. 76–158.

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Both of the new security agencies gained in authority when a Canberra-based Soviet diplomat, Vladimir Petrov, defected to Australia in 1954. His wife, Evdokia, joined him in a blaze of publicity and airport drama. ASIO officers managed the defections, and Petrov brought with him documents purporting to show evidence of espionage in Australia. A Royal Commission on Espionage from 1954 to 1955 did not find a major spy ring at work, nor did it lead to prosecutions, but it was politically charged due to the naming of staff of the Labor Opposition leader, Evatt, and his appearance as counsel for them until the commissioners ordered him to withdraw. The Commission could not, for security reasons, discuss the evidence of some spying that was already known. Through sharing of American decoded cables sent by the Soviets from their embassy, the Australians knew of several leaks of documents, mainly towards the end of the war. ASIO's creation owed much to these revelations and the possible repercussions for Australia's security standing with its allies in the Cold War.²⁴

Even after fears of another world war had ebbed, most Australians recognised that while Britain in the 1950s was an imperial power in decline, especially after the prestige-shattering Suez affair in 1956, it was still a power with considerable international influence and assets. As confirmed in atomic testing off the Australian coast and in Australia's desert during the 1950s, Britain also had a nuclear capability matched with long-range missiles. Menzies even harboured hopes that an Australian atomic bomb might emerge from Anglo-Australian testing collaborations. And London was still at the heart of the sterling bloc, which remained the basis of Australian financial and trading relationships with the rest of the world.

Instead of fighting a third world war, Australian forces formed part of the Commonwealth Division defending South Korea from North Korea and its Chinese ally from 1950 to 1953. Having contributed to the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan, the initial Australian components were not far away when war broke out on the Korean peninsula in June 1950. One squadron of RAAF fighters and one army battalion transferred there, and a second battalion followed in June 1952. At the ceasefire in July 1953 the Australians killed numbered 339.²⁵ Australia's role was small in a UN force dominated by the Americans, but at a strategic level it helped shape a

²⁴ Robert Manne, *The Petrov Affair*, rev. edn (Melbourne: Text Publishing, 2004); Desmond Ball and David Horner, *Breaking the Codes: Australia's KGB Network, 1944–1950* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998).

²⁵ Grey, A Military History of Australia, p. 214; Robert O'Neill, Australia in the Korean War 1950–53. Volume 1, Strategy and Diplomacy (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1981).

diplomatic climate conducive to the signing of the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) in 1951.

The crucial clauses of ANZUS were not overly reassuring: it was less a well-defined 'insurance policy' than the bones of a new security relationship with the Americans in need of flesh. One of the US reactions after the Korean War was to be more wary of shouldering the burden of military alliance action in Asia. Although the Australians began to standardise military equipment with the Americans from 1957 and tried hard to make the ANZUS Council into an effective strategic planning body, they spent much of their time trying to elicit clarity around the circumstances in which the Americans would respond to a request for help. The two main sources of Australian regional fears were Chinese support for Vietnamese and other Asian communist parties, conjuring the spectre of 'falling dominoes' in Southeast Asia; and Indonesia under President Sukarno and a growing communist influence. As historians of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War have suggested, the uncertainty surrounding the Americans' preparedness to wage major campaigns against aggression in Asia was a factor behind the Australian eagerness to commit their own forces there.²⁶ In the meantime, up to 1967 when the British announced their intention to withdraw military forces from 'east of Suez', Canberra continued to look to the British military presence in Malaysia and Singapore to provide at least some military-strategic certainty in the region.27

Assumptions in defence planning changed slowly. Continental defence underpinned the 1903 *Defence Act*'s provision that conscripts not be required to serve overseas. The defence of the Australian continent was thereafter axiomatic. For most of the twentieth century, however, there was arguably a disjunction between axiom and the operational practices of Australian armed forces. In other words, in every war and crisis prompting Australian military involvement, Australian governments sent their forces, primarily soldiers, overseas. For two-thirds of the century, official defence planning squared the circle by emphasising Australia's potential expeditionary role in conflicts involving Britain and the United States, upon whom Australia was dependent for security. A strong regional consciousness accompanied defence planning

²⁶ Gregory Pemberton, All the Way: Australia's Road to Vietnam (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987); John Murphy, Harvest of Fear: Australia's Vietnam War (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993); Peter Edwards with Gregory Pemberton, Crises and Commitments: The Politics and Diplomacy of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948–1965 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1992).

²⁷ Andrea Benvenuti, Anglo-Australian Relations and the 'Turn to Europe', 1961–1972 (London: Boydell & Brewer, 2008).

after World War 2 and the rapid decolonisation in much of Southeast Asia, but it also acknowledged the global context of the Cold War. The post-war era began with regional security treaties, defence cooperation for the Anglo– New Zealand–Australia–Malaya Area (ANZAM, 1948), ANZUS, and the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO, 1954). They formed part of a 'forward defence' posture, a policy of cooperation with allies to meet threats from Australia's potential enemies in the region rather than on Australian shores. From the early 1970s, however, successive defence white papers in 1976, 1987 and 1994 highlighted the difference between theory and practice. These papers stressed the primacy of geography in peacetime planning. All the while, Australian military involvement in distant theatres continued, primarily now in peacekeeping roles as Canberra adjusted to détente, a renewed or 'second' Cold War phase in the 1980s, and then the end of the Cold War.²⁸

The shift in composition and character of the Australian Army also took time, but from the mid-1960s it would be decisive. Up to this time, citizen soldiery, embodying the republican ideal of trained citizens in arms providing the backbone of the nation's defence, was linked to compulsory military training. Until 1942, when conscription for service south of the equator was introduced, volunteering to join military expeditions overseas was an especially celebrated feature of Australians at war. Recruitment in World War I suggested that the citizen soldier would volunteer to serve overseas in defence of Australia when needed. Australian governments implied as much by not legislating for Militia forces to serve overseas, but instead raising the First and Second AIFs from citizens who joined up only for the duration of the war. Indeed, this voluntarism has been integral to the formation, growth and endurance of the Anzac legend, and has since mediated the ways in which the military relates to civil society. For example, political, religious and civic leaders have found connections between volunteering for armed service and volunteering for service in lifesaving clubs and firefighting groups.

The *Defence Act* also forbade the formation of regular infantry battalions, and a small home-grown professional officer corps took shape only after the establishment of the Royal Military College in 1911. Significant military action depended on the rapid raising of a citizen army. The situation also bred tension between staff corps and citizen officers during the first years of World War 2, but the experiences of war, including the deployment of the Militia

²⁸ Peter Edwards and David Goldsworthy (eds), *Facing North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia. Volume 2, 1970s to 2000* (Melbourne University Press, 2003).

outside of Australia to Papua New Guinea and surrounding islands, fostered a sense of one army.

When Menzies was preparing to raise an expeditionary force in the early 1950s to assist in defence of British air bases in the Middle East in anticipation of another world war, he initially envisaged a strong role for citizen soldiery. The last major episode of compulsory military training at this time had echoes of earlier schemes but was disconnected from changing strategic circumstances and military needs. Increasingly, it was the regular army (and smaller naval and air force contingents) that led Australian involvement in successive Cold War 'counterinsurgency' operations overseas, including Malaya and Vietnam, and the Citizen Military Force grew less significant. In 1964, when the government introduced compulsory national service for service overseas, it was effectively enlisting men as short-term regular soldiers rather than mobilising a citizen army. Thereafter, reorganisation and specialisation within the armed forces further marginalised citizens, later known as Reserves, within Australian Army ranks. Where Australians have played leading roles in international peacekeeping since the end of the Cold War, such as in Cambodia (1991-93), Somalia (1992) and the International Force for East Timor (1999–2000), regular soldiers have made up the forces. These soldiers have combined with the Australian Federal Police – an agency that has worked more closely with the military in meeting post-Cold War security concerns - to help maintain stable environments in Australia's region, such as in the Solomon Islands since 2003.

It was difficult for Australians to adjust to the nature and pace of post-war decolonisation. There was a provincial feel to the doggedness with which Australians built and defended their local empire and supported others' colonial outposts in their region. The main component of Australia's empire was the eastern half of the island of New Guinea. After World War 2, the Australian territory of Papua was combined with mandated New Guinea and administered under the new United Nations trusteeship system. Up to the early 1960s, local empire was viewed primarily in terms of security, as a regional buffer and supporting lines of defence communications. Post-war Australian governments worked hard to keep Papua New Guinea (PNG) free from international scrutiny and to bolster the Dutch colonial presence in the western half of the island.

Through the 1950s the Coalition government led by Menzies maintained a hard line in favour of Dutch retention of the western part of the island. It became the focal point for fierce campaigns in the United Nations as the membership of that body swelled with newly independent nations anxious

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to see decolonisation extend to all parts of the world. Similarly, up to the early 1960s the Australian hold on PNG seemed to tighten with the rise of communism as a major factor in Southeast Asian politics, and with the growing prospect of a land border with Indonesia should the Dutch finally relinquish their part of the island (which they did in 1962). Possession of PNG meant that no potential enemy could seize control of it. As the historian W.J. Hudson noted caustically, this determinedly colonial stance clashed with the growth of liberal internationalism in the world community, which began with the League of Nations and continued in the United Nations after World War 2:

If that [possession] meant we had to smile fixedly while the League of Nations' Permanent Mandates Commission noted that we seemed to be doing less in territory contiguous to us than distant Germany had done in years before 1914, or while United Nations committees harried us, so be it; if that meant that Labor governments must defend South African racial policy lest breaches in domestic jurisdiction jeopardise their control over New Guinea, so be it; if it meant that until the early 1960s, when a little belatedly we learned to make pious noises while going our own way, we fell into the then dubious company of states like Spain and Portugal, so be it.²⁹

Supporting others' empires in Australia's region was more divisive at home, but the Menzies government endorsed the maintenance of European influence where possible, and gradual withdrawal where it was not. Where remnants of Britain's 'Far East' empire were sufficiently strategic, Australian governments sought to take them over. In the Indian Ocean, to which test rockets were fired from the Australian desert, and across which aircraft and shipping needed to travel safely towards Europe, the Cocos Islands and Christmas Island changed hands from British to Australian administration. That the first to transfer, the Cocos (1955), did so with agonising slowness was due to the complications that came with trying to maintain a strict white Australia policy while assuming responsibility for a British dependency with a non-white population. Looking towards the Pacific, PNG held sway as the bulwark in strategic wisdom, so minor outposts of the British Empire, such as the Solomon Islands, were better left in British hands for as long as possible.³⁰

In very brief survey, the years 1955, 1965 and 1975 help trace the climax of Australia's security-dominated approach to regional decolonisation, and

²⁹ W.J. Hudson, 'Strategy for Survival', in M. McKernan and M. Browne (eds), Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace (Canberra: Allen & Unwin, 1988), p. 38.

³⁰ See generally, David Goldsworthy, Losing the Blanket: Australia and the End of Britain's Empire (Melbourne University Press, 2002).

its consequences. In 1955 Australia's commitment to a British-organised Far East Strategic Reserve of an Australian Army battalion and a squadron of bombers met two objectives: it curbed the anti-colonial movement and it signalled an Australian preparedness to move to any location in Southeast Asia that might be a Cold War flashpoint. It was important to demonstrate the commitment to 'forward defence' to Australia's allies, especially the United States.

Ten years later, in 1965, Australian troops in Malaysian Borneo were helping resist small-scale Indonesian incursions from neighbouring Kalimantan. This was the height of Indonesian president Sukarno's 'Confrontation' policy and his militant opposition to the recently formed Federation of Malaysia. It occurred in the wake of the Indonesian incorporation of West Papua in 1961–62, a process that gained international approval but caused considerable Australian anxiety. Deteriorating relations with Indonesia, and the prospect of expanded conflict in New Guinea and elsewhere, had prompted the reintroduction of national service at the end of 1964, this time via a ballot system based selectively on birthdays. In September 1965 Indonesia was wracked by internal revolution and retribution that effectively ended Sukarno's power and overseas militancy.

Earlier in that year, Menzies had announced the dispatch of an Australian battalion to South Vietnam, in response to a 'request' engineered from the South Vietnamese government, then struggling to combat the armed forces of the (communist) Democratic Republic of Vietnam to the north. Provoking great controversy at home, Australian national servicemen were required to serve overseas, and thus joined the commitment to Vietnam. In what was Australia's longest involvement in twentieth-century war, more than 50,000 Australians served in Vietnam (including 17,424 national servicemen), the commitment growing to a peak of three battalions and supporting units and small contributions by naval and air forces, until final withdrawal at the end of 1972. Based in the southern coastal province of Phuoc Tuy, the Australians fought mostly search-and-destroy missions, with the exception of occasional bigger actions such as the battle of Long Tan in August 1966. Menzies' successor as prime minister, Harold Holt, captured the centrality of the American alliance in Australian involvement in Vietnam when he picked up the electoral slogan of US president Lyndon Baines Johnson and suggested that Australia would go 'all the way with LBJ'. Australia lost 501 personnel, compared to the US figure of over 58,000, and their ally South Korea, with over 5,000 dead. The greatest casualties were, of course, among the Vietnamese, with the North suffering more than I million deaths in battle and the South a quarter of a million (and, in both cases, huge civilian casualties). 3I

In 1975 the Labor government led by Gough Whitlam granted independence to PNG following the formation of political parties, the adoption of a constitution, and Australian insistence that secessionist movements, particularly that on the island of Bougainville, would have no means of declaring independence in the transfer of power. In the same year, the sudden end of Portugal's overseas empire brought a power struggle to the eastern half of the island of Timor (the western half was already part of Indonesia). In an unworkable compromise, the Whitlam government favoured the incorporation of East Timor into Indonesia but in a manner that suggested self-determination for its people. When the East Timorese independence movement, Fretilin, declared independence, Indonesia completed incorporation by means of invasion, and Australia was among the first to grant recognition.

While shocking many Australians, this policy reflected a new determination to foster a strong relationship with Indonesia, and a blend of pragmatism and symbolism designed to engage more directly with Australia's neighbourhood. By the early 1970s Japan had emerged as Australia's most important trading partner. Upon coming to power at the end of 1972, Whitlam followed up his earlier visit to Beijing by establishing official diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. He also took the last steps towards complete dismantling of the white Australia policy. In particular, Whitlam ratified the United Nations Convention eliminating all forms of racial discrimination and enacted matching Australian legislation in 1975. Australia was also the first dialogue partner (1974) with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) formed in 1967.³²

Australians' orientation towards Asia grew quickly. After the end of the war in Vietnam, Australia accepted 130,000 refugees, and by the early 1980s over one-third of the migrant flow was from Asia.³³ And in the wake of the collapse of the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rates and a balance of payments crisis in the 1980s, Canberra increasingly sought economic security in Asia. Prime Minister Hawke successfully championed the formation of the Asia Pacific

33 Lee, Australia and the World in the Twentieth Century, p. 291.

³¹ Grey, A Military History of Australia, pp. 248–9; Lee, Australia and the World in the Twentieth Century, pp. 172–3.

³² David Goldsworthy et al., 'Reorientation', in David Goldsworthy (ed.), Facing North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia. Volume 1, 1901 to the 1970s (Melbourne University Press, 2001), pp. 310–71.

Economic Cooperation (APEC) group in 1989. At the same time he drastically reduced tariffs, floated the Australian dollar, liberalised controls on foreign investment and encouraged privatisation of state-owned utilities. These sweeping reforms accompanied closer economic ties to the dynamic economies of Northeast Asia, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan and South Korea.

Finally, the way in which Australia's security interests were developed and articulated also changed slowly. For two-thirds of the century, the pattern of Anglo-Australian exchange and the recurrence of wars, hot and then cold, reinforced prime ministerial dominance of policy relating to Australia in world affairs. Overseas posts grew in number after World War 2, especially in Asia. The growth of the Washington Embassy (necessary for the US–Australian relationship and representation at the United Nations), the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank was a significant development of the 1950s and 1960s, challenging the pre-eminence of the Australian High Commission in London. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Australians recaptured some of their early advocacy for a strengthened United Nations, elevating the notion of international citizenship and leading a difficult but successful peace process to enable the Vietnamese withdrawal from Cambodia.³⁴

Anti-war and self-reliance

Since the South African War at the start of the century, public protests have accompanied Australia's involvement in wars and, in more recent times, its military alliances. The more prominent voices of protest against participation in the South African War included the New South Wales politician W.A. Holman, and the professor of history George Arnold Wood. Both railed against a capricious and greedy extension of empire in southern Africa, led by fortune seekers. They drew on a British liberal suspicion of unjust conquest and cartel that was always a recurring risk, even for enlightened imperial projects such as Britain's. Holman, on the left of the Labor Party, also included a fiery denunciation of capitalism's recurring need for militarism; and the racist as well as nationalist *Bulletin* magazine tapped the deep vein of

³⁴ On foreign policy making and overseas representation, see Joan Beaumont, Christopher Waters and David Lowe with Garry Woodard, *Ministers, Mandarins and Diplomats: Australian Foreign Policy Making*, 1941–1969 (Melbourne University Press, 2003). On the new internationalism of the late 1980s and early 1990s, see Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia's Foreign Relations in the World of the 1990s* (Melbourne University Press, 1992).

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insecurity that saw Australia as a fragile experiment, needing to preserve its stock of white manhood and resist foreign workers.³⁵

Protests against the South African War were largely drowned out by high levels of official and public support. Thereafter, the composition of anti-war groups broadened in ways that incorporated opposition to compulsory military training, introduced in 1911, and featured familiar root values: unjust wars and religious pacifism; liberal and socialist critiques; and radical, sometimes racial, constructions of Australian interests. The broadening base of protest has also led historians to consider anti-war movements in conjunction with the more general mobilisation of women in public life, and as case studies of overseas influences entering Australia. The Women's Peace Army not only emerged during the World War 1 as a defiant source of protest at the war and conscription, but it also propelled its leaders such as Adela Pankhurst into the public sphere.³⁶ Later in the century the anti-Vietnam War moratorium marches were fuelled by precedents in American cities; and other groups, such as the Save Our Sons movement protesting conscription during the Vietnam War, seemed to blend Quaker pacifism with Gandhian non-violent resistance.37

Attempts to introduce conscription during World War I, and Billy Hughes' heavy-handed actions against opponents, encouraged a coalition of anti-war groups. The new Anti-Conscription League provided an umbrella for some peace groups in New South Wales, while the Australian Peace Alliance based in Melbourne assumed leadership of some of the more radical organisations. The Communist Party of Australia was prominent in the peace movement in the inter-war years, especially in the wake of failed hopes in the League of Nations; and although outlawed for two years during World War 2, it emerged afterwards at the head of the post-war peace movement. The other challenge to the prosecution of war came from extreme conservative nationalists early in World War 2; the leaders of the Australia First Movement were interned in March 1942. The ban on the Communist Party was not lifted until the end of that year, despite party support for the war effort in the wake of Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union.

³⁵ Malcolm Saunders and Ralph Summy, 'One Hundred Years of an Australian Peace Movement 1885–1984: Part I, From the Sudan Campaign to the Outbreak of the Second World War', *Peace and Change*, 10, 3–4 (1984): 41–2.

³⁶ Joy Damousi, 'Marching to Different Drums: Women's Mobilisations 1914–1939', in Kay Saunders and Raymond Evans (eds), *Gender Relations in Australia: Domination and Negotiation* (Sydney: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), pp. 350–75.

³⁷ Alan D. Gilbert and Ann-Mari Jordens, 'Traditions of Dissent', in McKernan and Browne (eds), *Australia*, p. 346.

The Investigation Branch of the Attorney General's Department was responsible for internal security until 1946, when the Commonwealth Investigation Service was formed. It was not unusual that two brigadiers headed the new service, as military figures had provided leadership throughout the growth of Australia's surveillance bureaucracies and would also figure in ASIO. From 1949, when the Soviet Union boasted its own atomic bomb, the threat of nuclear war provided a rallying point for a new peace movement. With the USSR's international arm, the Cominform, providing direction and support for a World Peace Council, the Cold War context for peace movements was quickly established. Three Protestant ministers in Melbourne founded the Australian Peace Council in 1949, but it took the best part of the next decade for it to counter the Cold War taint and the government blasts directed at it, and build a broader base. The swelling of the peace movement with the participation of trade unions, the intelligentsia and additional church members did not soften the hostility of the Australian government. ASIO's remit was sufficiently broad to allow surveillance of those protesting from religious and liberal traditions as well as socialist ones; and some of the subsequent accounts of peace activism by historians draw heavily on the ASIO records.38

Although unsuccessful in denting public support for peacetime compulsory military training (a major issue in the 1966 election won by the Liberal– Country Party Coalition government), the peace movement later took to the streets to protest against Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. Anti-war and anti-conscription forces joined in the late 1960s through the Moratorium movement, which brought around 120,000 onto the streets of Australian cities and towns on 8 May 1970. Subsequent moratoriums saw smaller numbers but maintained the relatively broad coalition of students, feminists, churches and trade unions. Although the Moratorium movement was significant in its size and diversity, the Australian government's decision to pull forces out of Vietnam was influenced more by the American decision to withdraw.³⁹

Somewhat ironically, one of the main outcomes of Australia's involvement in Vietnam was the need to think more in terms of defence self-reliance. In 1969 President Richard Nixon announced a program of progressive withdrawal

³⁸ Fiona Capp, Writers Defiled: Security Surveillance of Australian Authors and Intellectuals 1920–1960 (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble, 1993); Phillip Deery, 'War on Peace: Menzies, the Cold War and the 1953 Convention on Peace and War', Australian Historical Studies, 34, 122 (2003): 248–69.

³⁹ Murphy, Harvest of Fear, pp. 219-58.

of US troops from Vietnam and signalled an expectation that America's allies would henceforth be expected to share more of the burdens of regional security. Both the circumstances of US withdrawal and the declaration of greater efforts by allies caught the Australians by surprise. Not being able to rely on US military involvement in Southeast Asia was a shock to which the Australians were slow to adjust, but which ultimately provided for greater clarity - especially when British plans to withdraw their military presence from east of Suez were also confirmed. Two defence white papers, in 1976 and 1987, built a strong case for an Australian Defence Force that should be able to detect and defend against an enemy lodged in islands to Australia's north or in sea and air approaches; but the latter paper also stressed the importance of the US alliance. Under Kim Beazley, who was Minister for Defence from 1984 to 1990, Australia began to produce more of its defence needs, including submarines, but intelligence developments were dependent on US collaboration. In 1991 Prime Minister Bob Hawke committed Australian naval forces in support of the United Nations-backed liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi invaders. Hawke justified the move in terms of upholding international law, but the US lead in taking the battle to Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein was clearly a factor in his thinking. In the wake of al-Qaeda's spectacular suicide attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001, when President George Bush declared the 'war on terror', the Australian prime minister John Howard invoked ANZUS, later committing 2,000 troops and naval units to the multinational force invading Iraq. A modest Australian military contingent joined US and allied forces in Afghanistan at the end of 2001 to fight the Taliban, believed to be harbouring key figures of al-Qaeda. In 2002 this 'war on terror' was brought home to Australia when 88 Australians were among 202 killed by terrorist bombings in the Indonesian island of Bali.40

These incidents also triggered a raft of Australian anti-terror laws in the following decade, encroaching on such rights as fair trial, freedom from arbitrary detention and searches, privacy, and freedom of expression and movement. At one level, Australian governments, along with other democracies and as in previous global conflicts, were reacting in a familiar fashion – and this time there was a need to create laws that would not only prosecute but also prevent acts of terrorism. But some of the more than 50 new statutes were worryingly extreme for many observers, especially for their possible endurance beyond the immediate threat of terror. The capacity and willingness of the state to encroach on individual rights, in a country

40 Grey, A Military History of Australia, ch. 11.

without a Bill of Rights or other legislation incorporating internationally recognised human rights into domestic law, cast historical shadows back to the days of Hughes and the over-zealous security service.⁴¹

The end of the Cold War provided little guidance in resolving the tension between alliance and self-reliance running through Australian defence planning. Possible threats were now splintered into small states and terrorist groups. New concerns emerged about global warming, joining longstanding questions of food and energy security and the spread of infectious diseases that might accompany the great increase of people movements across national boundaries. Nor did older problems of nuclear and chemical weapons disappear with the end of the Cold War. Australian governments of the 1980s and 1990s played prominent roles in some preventive efforts such as the conclusion of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty for nuclear weapons (1996) and a Chemical Weapons Convention (1997) preventing the production, storage or use of chemicals that might be used for mass destruction. Australian protesters, mobilised from a broad base, marched against the renewed nuclear arms race of the 1980s, nuclear-armed visits by US ships, and French atmospheric nuclear testing in the Pacific.

The history of Australian security reveals enduring preoccupations. The early-twentieth century globalism through which security concerns in the Pacific were viewed reflected the circumstances of Australia's Federation, which came at the high point of European imperial competition. It also reflected the pragmatic and intellectual consequences of Australian politicians' sense of their role in the South Pacific. Australia's vast coastline and small population led logically to hopes that a trained citizenry would take up arms when needed. In 1913, at the laying of the foundation stone of Parliament House in Canberra, Billy Hughes recalled that Australian settlers had killed Aboriginal people in order to take possession of their land, and he challenged his colleagues to build on the tenuous foothold they had established on the continent.⁴² For around two-thirds of the century, many others shared his anxiety that white Australians risked being supplanted by a stronger (most likely, Asian) race, thereby suffering the same fate as Australia's Indigenous people.

The globalist outlook was sustained by this concern, even as Europe's influence overseas, and Britain's Empire in particular, shrank. Two world

⁴¹ George Williams, 'A Decade of Australian Anti-Terror Laws', *Melbourne University Law Review*, 35 (2011): 1136–76; see also Andrew Lynch and George Williams, *What Price Security? Taking Stock of Australia's Anti-Terror Laws* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006).

⁴² Sydney Morning Herald, 13 March 1913.

wars were followed by another long 'Cold War', also global in reach and reinforcing ideas about the connectedness of change in Australia's region and the importance of alliances in a global struggle. Such an outlook was complicated by, but coexisted with, developments such as the internationalism of the United Nations, the growth of overseas aid, the need for bilateral alliances in security and trade, the retreat by Britain into Europe, and the growth of regional architecture in Asia and the Pacific. Provincial globalism affected those on the ground, too. Australian troops serving in Malaya in the 1950s periodically had to train for possible involvement in a global conflict that might include the use of nuclear weapons. After a long adjustment to a region drained of European predominance, Australians' security conversations of the twenty-first century retain the tension between alliance and self-reliance, and in a modern twist on the global–regional, now feature the consequences of late-phase globalisation.

Australia, Britain and the British Commonwealth

22

CARL BRIDGE

Australia's relationship with Britain and the 'British' Commonwealth (the 'British' was dropped in 1965) changed fundamentally, if gradually, across the twentieth century. In 1901 Australia was an integral, though self-governing, part of the British Empire, variously called a 'colony of settlement' or a 'dominion'. This reflected the fact that the population, overwhelmingly immigrants or descended from immigrant parents or grandparents, regarded themselves as transplanted Britons. The relationship with the 'mother country' was complex and intimate. In the 1960s and 1970s this relationship, which had been attenuating for decades, unravelled with astonishing speed. Britain shed its empire and retreated into Europe. Immigration patterns changed and changed again. So did trade. The Empire became the Commonwealth - a voluntary international organisation of mostly small, nearly all British-influenced developing countries in Africa, Asia, the Pacific and the Caribbean - and for Australia one of a number of useful platforms for dealing with global and regional issues. Curiously, bonds with Britain remain close, as many values, institutions and interests are shared. Nonetheless, the dependent relationship has long gone, replaced by occasional co-participation under American leadership in military 'coalitions of the willing'.

Independent Australian Britons

Alfred Deakin, Australia's most eminent prime minister in the early Federation years, and a closet correspondent for the London *Morning Post*, summed up the *zeitgeist* of that time by characterising himself and his fellow Australians as 'independent Australian Britons'.¹ In the decade after 1901 some 400,000 Britons migrated to Australia to join a population that was, as it boasted, '98 per cent' British, most of them the children or grandchildren

I W.K. Hancock, Australia (London: Ernest Benn, 1930), ch. 3.

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of British immigrants. This was the 'crimson thread of kinship' of which that other Federation father, Sir Henry Parkes, had spoken. What is more, blood was backed by iron - in the form of the Royal Navy, which acted as Australia's primary defensive shield - and treasure - in the form of British investment, which oiled the wheels of Australia's commerce. Over half of the country's imports and exports came from and were sent to Britain; trade with the rest of the Empire was far less significant.² The very Australian landscape was named for British places or people - Victoria after a queen, Melbourne her prime minister, and Perth was both the gateway to the Scottish Highlands and the Western Australian goldfields.³ 'Independent' in Deakin's phrase referred to both a state of mind - Australians then as now loved nothing more than to best British sporting teams (at British games that were also Australia's own) or win a favourable commercial deal - and to the fact that Australia's State and federal parliaments were self-governing and responsible. Indeed, they were more democratic than the British parliament. But it is the second and third parts of the phrase that require the most careful explication for today's readers. For then, unlike now, Australians saw themselves as British and as inhabiting a British world. Australia was, in the words of a perceptive New Zealand historian, 'a neo-Britain'.4

More of the flavour of Edwardian Australia's Britishness can be discerned by looking at Australia's institutions and symbols. The most prestigious school in Sydney was called King's, and the University of Sydney's motto – Sidere mens eadem mutato – referred to the old learning of Europe remaining lustrous and relevant under the new stars of the Southern Cross. With little demur, archbishops, professors and headmasters were routinely appointed from 'Home', meaning the United Kingdom, as were all State governors and the governor-general. Despite the setting up of a High Court to interpret the new federal Constitution, the highest court of appeal was the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, based in London.⁵ Foreign policy, though an Australian responsibility under the Constitution, was severely limited in practice. It was 1910 before any sort of diplomat was appointed, and then it was a High Commissioner to Britain, and as late as 1940 before the next

² Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians: Historical Statistics* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987), pp. 193, 196.

³ Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History* (London: Faber, 1987).

⁴ James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year* 2000 (Auckland: Allen Lane, 2001), p. 12.

⁵ P.A. Howell, The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, 1833–1876: Its Origins, Structure and Development (Cambridge University Press, 1979).

significant appointment, a Minister to the United States. This reflected the legal position, that the monarch of Britain was also the Australian head of state, and that war, peace and international relations were ultimately a royal prerogative. The crown was 'indivisible' in the minds of Australian constitutional lawyers until the imperial parliament's *Statute of Westminster* of 1931 was ratified by the Australian parliament in 1942.⁶

A generation ago, in a brilliant analysis of Australia's search for national symbols in this period with the evocative title Lion and Kangaroo, Gavin Souter pointed to their schizophrenic nature.7 The Australian flag had, and still has, the British Union Flag in its upper hoist canton (the dominant position) but the other three cantons house the Southern Cross and the Federation Star, both local - and in the case of the former, republican symbols. Furthermore, the Union Flag was often flown with it, or instead of it, until the middle of World War 2. Australian coins bore British Royal heads and national themes; official letters were emblazoned 'OHMS', On His (or Her) Majesty's Service. Postage stamps were a point of contention: Andrew Fisher's Labor government commissioned the first federal stamp in 1910, a kangaroo standing on a map of Australia, but two years later the conservative government of Joseph Cook replaced it with a head of King George V. Leading institutions, from the Royal Australian Navy to the Royal Sydney Golf Course, cherished their regal or vice-regal patronage. When it came to naming the national capital, the Australian imagination was given free rein: most numerous were imperial suggestions, including Empire City, Regina, Shakespeare, Victoria Cross and Britaustral. There were also federal proposals - Federal City, Meladneyperbane (the syllables taken from three letters of each mainland State capital and surely a spoof); personal -Phillipton, Banksborough, Wentworth; ideological - Concordia, Albinalia (for white Australia); regional – Pacifica, Australetta; and Indigenous – Myola, Kooringa, and the one finally chosen, Canberra, meaning meeting place.8

The British connection was also apparent in Australian aspirations. The largest Australian overseas communities were in Britain and in New Zealand. For migration and business purposes New Zealand, another neo-Britain, functioned virtually as another Australian State. Britain, and the magnet of

⁶ Anne Twomey, *The Chameleon Crown: The Queen and Her Australian Governors* (Sydney: Federation Press, 2006); WJ. Hudson and M.P. Sharp, *Australian Independence: Colony to Reluctant Kingdom* (Melbourne University Press, 1988).

⁷ Gavin Souter, Lion and Kangaroo: The Initiation of Australia, 1901–1919 (Sydney: Collins, 1976).

⁸ Ibid., pp. 173-4.

its capital London, was 10,000 miles (16,000 kilometres) away. Yet Australian artists, writers, musicians, dancers and singers all aspired to make their mark in the imperial centre. The 'Edwardian Excursion', as the art historian Bernard Smith called this mini-migration, included a host of household names: Nellie Melba, Henry Lawson, Peter Dawson, Percy Grainger, Will Dyson, Oscar Asche, Vance Palmer, Henry Handel Richardson, Tom Roberts, Arthur Streeton and Bertram Mackennal among them.⁹ A constant theme across the twentieth century was the stream of Australians aiming to 'try their fortunes' in the metropolis or going 'Home' for a visit, either as sightseers or sojourners.¹⁰ We read much about chips on shoulders, sensitive egos and colonial cringes or struts among these Australians abroad, but it must be remembered that they fitted in, too, among their fellow Britons, and often even relished it. Percy Grainger, for one, gloated: 'I love to meet and know titled and rich people. I feast on the smell of money and power. I feel such a ripping snob.'¹¹

There were some 15,300 Australian-born people counted in the England and Wales census for 1901, perhaps 20,000 for the whole of the United Kingdom. Their average age was 27, there were a shade more women than men, and they were overwhelmingly skilled in the trades and professions – a cross-section of the middle class on the move. Unlike classic diasporic communities, such as the Jews or Russians, they did not congregate but were spread across the whole country, suggesting family and personal links. Perhaps surprisingly, the ratio of this community to Australia's overall population remained constant across the century, dipping only for the Depression while rising (and masculinising) briefly in the two world wars. In personal terms, then, the British connection was important.¹²

Australian connections with the rest of the Empire were less significant. Those who travelled to and from Britain touched on other parts of the Empire, most often Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Bombay (now Mumbai, India) and through the Suez Canal (Egypt). There were trade links with Singapore and South Africa, particularly from Western Australia, and with

⁹ Craig Wilcox, 'Edwardian Excursion', *Meanjin*, 63, 3 (2004): 23–32. On an earlier wave, see K.S. Inglis, 'Going Home: Australians in England, 1870–1900', in David Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Home or Away: Immigrants in Colonial Australia* (Canberra: Division of Historical Studies, ANU, 1992), pp. 105–30.

¹⁰ Angela Woollacott, To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism, and Modernity (Oxford University Press, 2001).

¹¹ Wilcox, 'Edwardian Excursion', p. 27.

¹² See Carl Bridge, Robert Crawford and David Dunstan (eds), Australians in Britain: The Twentieth Century Experience (Melbourne: Monash University ePress, 2009), ch. 4.

the Pacific and New Zealand from the east coast. In the early years of the century Australian trade unionists were prominent in the mining unions of the Rand in South Africa, and journalists and other professionals worked imperial circuits. William Lane, the radical utopian who was among the founders of the Labor Party, was more peripatetic than most. He was born in England and worked successively in Canada, the United States, Australia and Paraguay, before ending up in New Zealand.¹³ For Australians, the term Commonwealth referred to their own Commonwealth of Australia. It did not come into use by the British, and particularly the Canadians and South Africans, as an alternative to Empire until late in World War 1, and was not widely used by Australians until well after World War 2.

As the Fisher Labor government won a third term of office in 1914, its leader spoke with the brogue of his Scottish birthplace when he committed his adopted country to fight for the Empire in the new war: 'To the last man and the last shilling'. William Morris Hughes, his attorney-general, was London Welsh. The new Australian navy that steamed into Sydney Heads in 1913 was British-built. And when the soldiers of the first Australian Imperial Force (AIF) stormed ashore and into legend at Anzac Cove on 25 April 1915, fully 40 per cent of them were British-born. Among them was John Simpson Kirkpatrick, the 'man with the donkey' who attained instant secular sainthood by rescuing the wounded and dying.¹⁴ Despite alarms and disagreements, Australians occupied this British world until the 1960s.¹⁵

The Treaty of Versailles and the Britannic experiment

Hughes was perhaps Australia's most colourful prime minister. Short of stature, lean and in constant motion, with rodent-like features and a ready wit, he was a cartoonist's dream. He was also the main intellectual force

¹³ Jonathan Hyslop, 'The Imperial Working Class Makes Itself "White": White Labourism in Britain, Australia and South Africa before the First World War', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, 12, 4 (1999): 398–421; 'William Lane', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 9, pp. 658–9.

¹⁴ Statistics supplied by Professor Peter Dennis, Australian Defence Force Academy, from his unpublished '1st AIF Database'; Peter Cochrane, *Simpson and the Donkey: The Making of a Legend* (Melbourne University Press, 1992).

¹⁵ See Carl Bridge and Kent Fedorowich (eds), *The British World: Diaspora, Culture and Identity* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (eds); *Rediscovering the British World* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005); Kate Darian-Smith, Patricia Grimshaw and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *Britishness Abroad: Transnational Movements and Imperial Cultures* (Melbourne University Press, 2007).

behind the Fisher Labor government and instrumental in the choosing of the site for Canberra, the establishing of the Commonwealth Bank, the founding of the Royal Australian Navy, compulsory military training and the AIF. For Hughes, a British immigrant 30 years in Australia, as for most of his fellow Australians, all of these things fitted into an imperial as well as an Australian context. The war was fought, he argued, in defence of the whole Empire; defending British interests was identical with defending Australian ones. But this did not mean that he was subservient – far from it. He went further than the British government in confiscating German assets, and in doing so began mineral processing in Australia under local ownership. In due course, he also divided up the previously German-owned plantations in the New Guinea mandate. Despite the British who wished to keep wartime shipping under their central control, he bought sixteen tramp steamers and set up the Commonwealth Shipping Line ('Billy's boats') to get Australia's wheat and wool to its overseas, mostly British, markets.¹⁶

Hughes famously lost two referendums in 1916 and 1917 over conscription for overseas service and is remembered in Labor circles for splitting the party by crossing the floor to lead a new Nationalist government. He was at his most abrasive in the early months of 1919 when he represented Australia at the peace treaty negotiations at Versailles in France. Most accounts have him standing up single-handedly against the might of the US president, Woodrow Wilson, and the British prime minister, David Lloyd George, to defend the white Australia policy against Japanese attempts to insert a 'racial equality clause' in the new League of Nations covenant; to assert Australia's claim to annex the former German colony of New Guinea, adjacent to Australian Papua; and to claim maximum reparations from the defeated Germans. He is portrayed as a nationalist David who resisted imperialist Goliaths.¹⁷

But the story was more complex. Hughes did taunt Wilson over the 'racial equality clause' by saying he spoke for Australia's 60,000 war dead – a number that exceeded those of the United States – but Wilson privately opposed the 'racial equality clause' himself, fully aware that its successful passage would have sunk his own re-election campaign on the Pacific coast, and he was secretly glad to let Hughes bear the blame for torpedoing the clause. Similarly, it was British backing and South African ingenuity that invented the 'C' class mandate idea, which gave Australia control of New Guinea.

¹⁶ See Carl Bridge, William Hughes: Australia (London: Haus Publishers, 2011).

¹⁷ For example, W.J. Hudson, Billy Hughes in Paris: The Birth of Australian Diplomacy (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1978); Peter Spartalis, The Diplomatic Battles of Billy Hughes (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983).

Hughes would not have secured New Guinea without solid imperial support. Likewise, Australia might have failed to obtain reparations, but it won a 42 per cent share of the formerly German island of Nauru – worth f_{168} million in superphosphate for Australian pasture and agriculture over the next 50 years – with the other shares going to Britain (42 per cent) and New Zealand (16 per cent). Without British and New Zealand support, this would not have been achieved. At Versailles, then, the British Empire hunted as a pack. It is something of a myth, too, that Australia signed the treaty in its own right. It did and it did not. Hughes signed for Australia under a British Empire indent and the legal 'High Contracting Party' was King George V, who formally agreed to the treaty on behalf of the whole British Empire.¹⁸

Towards the end of the war Hughes attended in London a select body of imperial prime ministers known as the Imperial War Cabinet and it was expected that after the war the leaders of the Dominions - Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Newfoundland, the new Irish Free State and the Union of South Africa - would continue to concert their defence, foreign and trade policies. This notion persisted in various imperfect forms for 30 years or so, suiting Australia and New Zealand more than the rest. It is part of what historian John Darwin has called the 'Britannic experiment'.¹⁹ No sooner had the idea been invented, however, than it began to fall apart. First the Irish Free State, Canada and South Africa began to appoint their own diplomats. Then, at the 1921 Imperial Conference, Canada and South Africa vetoed an Australian and New Zealand plan to have all Dominions contribute to funding an expansion of the Royal Navy, and Canada appeased the United States by opposing a renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902. Canada followed this up by explicitly refusing to support Britain during the Chanak crisis in 1922, when the British government assumed Dominion support in a confrontation with Turkey. Finally, during the Depression, Canada stayed out of the sterling area (countries that tied their currencies to the pound sterling after they went off the gold standard and chose to hold their reserves in sterling).

The legal right of the Dominions to go their separate ways was acknowledged by Britain's Balfour Declaration of 1926, made law in the British parliament's Statute of Westminster in 1931, and underlined when Britain declared war in 1939 while Ireland remained neutral and Canada and South

¹⁸ Bridge, William Hughes, pp. 73–104. On the wider contribution of the Dominions, and its racial dimension, see Avner Offer, *The First World War: An Agrarian Interpretation* (Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹⁹ John Darwin, The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830–1970 (Cambridge University Press, 2010), chs 4, 9, 10.

Africa deliberated before making their own declarations. But Australia and New Zealand refused to ratify the Statute of Westminster and thus were automatically at war. On the economic front, moreover, the Depression brought a coming together in 1932 at the Ottawa Conference, where a mix of substantial trade preferences, quotas and duties was introduced across the Empire ('empire free trade'), thereby cushioning Dominion commodity imports and British-manufactured exports against foreign competition. In adversity, then, even more Australian eggs went into the imperial basket. The short-term fix, however, proved illusory in the long term: by the 1950s the British economy was not strong enough to bear the strain and the Dominions needed wider markets to expand their economies.²⁰ In foreign policy terms, apart from New Zealand, which argued long and hard for League of Nations sanctions, the Dominions agreed with Britain's policy of appeasement of Germany, Italy and Japan in the 1930s.²¹

Points of friction

Three events in the 1930s offer further insights into the Anglo-Australian relationship: the Niemeyer mission of 1930, the Bodyline Test cricket series of 1932–33, and the Abdication crisis of 1936. Each in its different way shows Australia cleaving to the British world while at the same time qualifying its relationship to Britain.

Sir Otto Niemeyer was an Oxford-educated former British Treasury mandarin who, as a senior adviser to the Bank of England, visited Australia to tell the Scullin Labor government and the State governments the Bank of England's terms for extending further credit in the severely straitened economic conditions of the Depression. He said Australia was living beyond its means and recommended strong medicine, balancing budgets by slashing expenditure and wages while servicing debts to British bondholders. The federal government and all States except New South Wales, where the populist Labor premier Jack Lang was in power, feigned compliance. The Langite press castigated Niemeyer as a 'Mr Fat' Jewish capitalist out for Australia's

²⁰ R.F. Holland, Britain and the Commonwealth Alliance 1918–1939 (London: Macmillan, 1981). On the long-term economic consequences, see D.K. Fieldhouse, 'The Metropolitan Economics of Empire', in Judith M. Brown and Wm. Roger Louis (eds), The Oxford History of the British Empire. Volume IV, The Twentieth Century. (Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 88–113.

²¹ Ritchie Ovendale, 'Appeasement' and the English-Speaking World: Britain, the United States, the Dominions and the Policy of 'Appeasement' 1937–1939 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1975); Christopher Waters, Australia and Appeasement: Imperial Foreign Policy and the Origins of World War II (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012).

blood (though, in fact, he was none of these things), and Lang pushed for a further devaluation of the Australian pound.²² In the event, the federal government covered New South Wales' default while seeking to recover the money owed by that State. Labor split, Acting Treasurer Joseph Lyons crossed the floor to lead a new United Australia Party government, and Lang was dismissed from office by the governor, Sir Philip Game. Much of the left was confirmed in its anti-British prejudices, but the Lyons government was returned comfortably for the next seven years. Meanwhile, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, the former prime minister, Australia's representative at the Ottawa Conference and thereafter Minister Resident and High Commissioner in London, renegotiated the terms of Australia's loans and gained substantial financial relief while at the same time honouring repayments. Working within the imperial system was effective and supported by the majority of Australians.²³

Bodyline cast a different but related shadow. In 1930 Australia's cricket tour of England had unearthed a great batting prodigy, the 21-year-old Donald Bradman, who lifted Australian hearts during the gloom of the Depression by putting the English cricket team to the sword, averaging a phenomenal 139 for the series. To counter Bradman, the English captain, Douglas Jardine, employed tactics for the 1932-33 series in Australia that were not contrary to the rules of the game but widely regarded as unsporting. They worked. Bradman's genius was blunted - he was reduced to averaging a merely mortal 56 - and England won the series. But bones were broken, heads cracked, and the spirit of Anglo-Australian cricket shaken. The Australian cricket authorities threatened to abandon the series and cabled their British counterparts that Jardine's behaviour was 'unsportsmanlike'. Briefly, even the politicians were involved. Little known is that Jardine, irrationally hostile to Australians, confided to one young Adelaide private schoolboy that he knew that although he would win the series, the English authorities would stop the practice. And so they did, once they saw its gruesome consequences

²² For some of the background, see Nick Dyrenfurth and Marian Quartly, "All the World Over": The Transnational World of Australian Labour Cartoonists, 1880s to 1920s', in Marian Quartly and Richard Scully (eds), *Drawing the Line: Using Cartoons as Historical Evidence* (Melbourne: Monash University ePress, 2009).

²³ See Peter Love, Labour and the Money Power: Australian Labour Populism 1890–1950 (Melbourne University Press, 1984); David Lee, Stanley Melbourne Bruce: Australian Internationalist (London: Continuum, 2010); Bernard Attard, 'The High Commissioners, Empire Development and Economic Diplomacy between the Wars', in Carl Bridge, Frank Bongiorno and David Lee (eds), *The High Commissioners: Australia's Representatives* in the United Kingdom, 1910–2010 (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2010), pp. 69–81.

for themselves on English home pitches. Bradman went on to complete an all-conquering career, cementing over imperial cracks as he went.²⁴

The Abdication crisis in the last two months of 1936 asked another moral question. King Edward VIII had come to the throne in January on the death of his father, George V. For two years he had been linked romantically to the American Wallis Simpson, who was in the process of divorcing her second husband, and the new King sought permission to marry her. Her liberal sexual reputation and the thought of the head of the Church of England marrying such a person scandalised the British establishment and respectable opinion throughout the Empire. Among those most opposed were the Catholic prime minister of Australia, Joseph Lyons, and Bruce, the High Commissioner in London. The Labor opposition, no doubt mostly for tactical reasons, showed more support for Edward, but the debate was stopped in the House of Representatives before a vote of loyalty could be moved. Besides, Edward had abdicated before the matter came up in parliament.²⁵ In a democratic and increasingly media-conscious age, it was evident the crown had to be above reproach. In distant places such as Australia the monarchy relied even more than at home on its image; as Walter Bagehot remarked, it might not do to let 'much daylight in upon magic'. Yet if a King could be removed by public disapproval, then the door was open for some of a later generation, in Australia and elsewhere in the Commonwealth, to question whether there should be a hereditary monarch at all.

There were other points of friction. When the Lyons government looked to build a military aircraft, which it named the Wirraway, it chose an American model; and after World War 2 General Motors Holden would use the same industrial site of Fisherman's Bend in Port Melbourne to build the Holden motor car, again based on a US prototype. In 1936 Lyons' Minister of Trade and Customs, Henry Gullett, briefly introduced a policy intended to stimulate domestic secondary manufacturing by imposing restrictions on countries with favourable trade balances with Australia – notably the United States and Japan – and diverting Australian trade to Britain. It had the effect of

²⁴ The best account is by the Anglo-Australian cricket historian David Frith, *Bodyline Autopsy: The Full Story of the Most Sensational Cricket Series, Australia v England, 1932–33* (Sydney: ABC Books, 2002); see also Ric Sissons and Brian Stoddart, *Cricket and Empire: The 1932–33 Bodyline Tour of Australia* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1984). The Jardine anecdote is from Michael Davie, *Anglo-Australian Attitudes* (London: Secker & Warburg, 2001), p. 107.

²⁵ Lee, Stanley Melbourne Bruce, pp. 118–20; George Fairbanks, 'Australia and the Abdication Crisis, 1936', Australian Outlook, 20, 3 (1966): 296–302.

aggravating both those countries and was soon abandoned. For the moment, Australia's British centre held.²⁶

Curtin, Evatt, Menzies and the new Commonwealth

World War 2 and the fall of Singapore threw into sharp relief a strategic inadequacy that the Empire had overlooked for a generation and henceforth Australia's defence came to rely more on the might of the United States than Britain's declining power. John Curtin's wartime Labor government had no choice but to 'look to America', to use his famous phrase, as the British temporarily and rather ignominiously abandoned the Pacific, and Curtin had his famous 'cable fight' with a recalcitrant Churchill over the return of the 6th and 7th Australian Divisions from the Middle East to defend Australia. The British prime minister, who wished to divert elements of them to Burma, muttered privately to his doctor that the Australians were 'jumpy about invasion' and, in a reference to convict origins, that they 'came of bad stock'. Yet Curtin reversed Labor policy to appoint a Briton as governor-general, and the King's brother to boot, the Duke of Gloucester, in late 1944. After the war Britain was the United States' major Cold War ally, and Australia's British and Commonwealth connections still remained of key importance. Adjustments would have to be made in the post-war world, but Australia's place in the British world would be reaffirmed and in some ways even enhanced.27

The Curtin Labor government brought eight years of international activism in which the very energetic Minister for External Affairs, H.V. Evatt, had his finger in as many pies as were available, from wartime missions to Britain and the United States, the peace with Japan in 1945 and establishing the United Nations, to negotiating over the retention of an Indian republic in the Commonwealth.²⁸ Much of this has been characterised as 'busyness' of a

²⁶ Kosmas Tsokhas, Making a Nation State: Cultural Identity, Economic Nationalism and Sexuality in Australian History (Melbourne University Press, 2001); Philip Bell and Roger Bell, Implicated: The United States in Australia (Oxford University Press, 1993).

²⁷ David Day, The Politics of War: Australia at War, 1939–45: From Churchill to MacArthur (Sydney: HarperCollins, 2003), p. 237; David Lee, Search for Security: The Political Economy of Australia's Postwar Foreign and Defence Policy (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995).

²⁸ Christopher Waters, The Empire Fractures: Anglo-Australian Conflict in the 1940s (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1995); W.J. Hudson, Australia and the New World Order: Evatt at San Francisco, 1945 (Canberra: Australian Foreign Policy Publications Program, Australian National University, 1993); R.J. Moore, Making the New Commonwealth (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987).

useful but not vital kind.²⁹ Of more significance was his setting up of a proper diplomatic service and a network of legations and embassies in countries significant to Australia. The Lyons and Menzies governments had made a start with legations in the United States (1940), China and Japan (1940); a high commission in Canada (1940); and representatives in New Caledonia (1940) and Singapore (1941). The Curtin and Chifley governments far outstripped their predecessors by establishing missions to the Netherlands government-inexile (1942); in New Zealand and the USSR (1943); India (1944); Brazil, France, Germany and Indonesia (1945); Chile, Ireland, South Africa and the United Nations (1946); Ceylon (1947); and Italy and Israel (1949). Australia no longer relied on British embassies for its official contact with the rest of the world.

Australians still saw themselves as British, but perhaps by now there had been an adjectival shift from Deakin's day, and they were 'independent British Australians'. When he visited London for the Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in May and June 1944, John Curtin made a radio broadcast to Britain after a visit to Lord's cricket ground, then the control centre for the imperial game. In it, among other things, he summed up his and his compatriots' 'Britishness'. The war, he said, was being fought to preserve 'the very foundation upon which this great Empire has been evolved – the right of people to quarrel with their own government, to criticise it, to defeat it, to provide an alternative to it, one which would undertake, as it were, some legislation after their own heart's desire'. Curtin was an avid cricketer and he added, of the historic pitch, that 'Lord's is to Australia what it is to this country...we are helping to defend...those 22 yards of turf', which were as much Australian as English.³⁰

On that visit, however, echoing Deakin and to a lesser extent Hughes, Curtin unsuccessfully proposed the creation of a permanent imperial secretariat and more frequent meetings of prime ministers all over Commonwealth, to reflect better the commonwealth of equals that had fought the war.³¹ He was a generation too early. These meetings were established in 1965, along with the office of Secretary-General. The first Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (as the Prime Ministers Conference became), and the first outside Britain, was held in Singapore in 1971. This marked the transformation of the Commonwealth from a 'white man's club' to a 'third world' liberal democratic pressure group.

²⁹ In the introduction to W.J. Hudson et al. (eds), *Documents on Australian Foreign Policy*. Volume VII, 1944 (Canberra: AGPS, 1988), p. xi.

³⁰ John Curtin, 'Partners in a Free Association', The Listener (London), 11 May 1944.

³¹ James Curran, Curtin's Empire (Cambridge University Press, 2011), ch. 4.

In the 1950s and 1960s Australia still inhabited a British world in the sinews of its economy and international security, its immigration program and its attitude to the crown. In 1947, as the status of Australian citizenship was about to be introduced in line with legislation in Britain and all of the Dominions, 65 per cent of Australians polled by Gallup said they would not sacrifice their British nationality for Australian (though, if they had been asked, they would have overwhelmingly said they were happy to have both).³² Economically, Australia was a sterling bloc country and after the war Chifley made gifts of $f_{.45}$ million to prop up the British economy and help Britain buy Australian products. The lion's share of Australia's overseas borrowing remained in London, with Britain as Australia's major trading partner, both inwards and outwards, though as a percentage of the whole British trade was declining in the 1950s and trade with the United States and Japan increasing.³³ Australia, Britain, New Zealand and Malaya, through the Anglo-New Zealand-Australia-Malaya Area (ANZAM) agreement (1948) and other commitments in Southeast Asia, guaranteed Australia's front door, albeit with United States underwriting via the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS, 1951). Australian governments were happy for Britain to test the Commonwealth atomic bomb at Maralinga and rocket systems at Woomera, to have Australian scientists and uranium mines involved, and even to toy with developing their own reactor and bomb.³⁴ Australia followed the British lead, in defiance of the United States, during the Suez crisis in 1956.

Of the massive flood of post-war immigrants, one-third in the 1950s and half in the 1960s came from Britain, most of them assisted as 'Ten Pound Poms' or under schemes such as 'Bring out a Briton'.³⁵ The white Australia policy, though under challenge, was still firmly in place. The Royal Tour by the young Queen Elizabeth II in 1954, the first by a reigning monarch, saw the largest turnouts for any public events ever across the country. The trends, however, were moving inexorably in other directions.

'The wholesale slaughter of sacred cows'

Change came first in Britain. It was clear by the early 1960s that Britain needed more than Commonwealth trade to drag its languishing economy

³² Cited in Neville Meaney (ed.), Australia and the World: A Documentary History from the 1870s to the 1970s (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985), p. 549.

³³ Vamplew (ed.), Australians: Historical Statistics, pp. 201, 204.

³⁴ Wayne Reynolds, Australia's Bid for the Atomic Bomb (Melbourne University Press, 2000).

³⁵ Eric Richards, Destination Australia: Migration to Australian since 1901 (Manchester University Press, 2008), ch. 8.

out of the doldrums. The answer was to join its continental neighbours in what was then called the Common Market, or European Economic Community (EEC). There were three applications (1963, 1967 and 1971), the third successful. Britain's independent nuclear deterrent was scrapped in 1963 as too expensive, defence forces were withdrawn from 'east of Suez' after 1967, and the pound was devalued in that year. New Immigration Acts in Britain (1962, 1971) defined Australians as 'aliens' for the first time and required ever more restrictive visas. The *Times* editorialised that this reality check represented 'the wholesale slaughter of sacred cows'.³⁶ In the face of Britain's necessary shying away from its traditional global role, Australia had to reconsider its position.³⁷

Australia had in fact been hedging its British bets all along. ANZUS did not involve the British, nor did entry into the Vietnam War in 1965. A visionary trade treaty with Japan in 1957 paved the way for a trade boom with the former enemy. John McEwen, the Country Party leader and Minister for Trade and Industry, was alarmed at the threat to Australia's trade posed by Britain's first bid to join the EEC, but by 1967 Australian exposure had halved as trade diversified into Asia and elsewhere: in that year Japan became Australia's leading export partner and the United States its major import partner. The United States also usurped Britain's position as the main foreign investor in Australia. When Britain devalued the pound in 1967, Australia did not follow. The sterling bloc was dead; Australia was now a dollar economy. This turnaround came with astonishing speed and coincided, symbolically, with the end of the Menzies era. It also marked the demise of British Australia. Willy-nilly, Australia was sailing into uncharted waters, and after December 1972 it fell to Gough Whitlam's new Labor government to provide the compass.

Post-imperial Australia: discarding the 'relics of colonialism'

Quoting the Ghanaian leader, Kwame Nkrumah, Whitlam remarked early in his prime ministership that as an outward and physical sign of Australia's

³⁶ David Dimbleby and David Reynolds, An Ocean Apart: The Relationship between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century (London: BBC Books, 1988), p. 255.

³⁷ S.R. Ashton, Carl Bridge and Stuart Ward (eds), Australia and the United Kingdom, 1960–1975 (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2010); see also David Goldsworthy, Losing the Blanket: Australia and the End of Britain's Empire (Melbourne University Press, 2002).

transformation, he wished to remove the 'relics of colonialism'. Some of this proved relatively easy to achieve. 'Advance Australia Fair' replaced 'God Save the Queen' as the national anthem in 1974, and Australian honours replaced imperial ones in 1975. Other remnants were more difficult to expunge. Federal appeals to the Privy Council in London had been abolished by the Liberals in 1967, but Whitlam and his attorney-general, Lionel Murphy, found to their chagrin they had no jurisdiction over appeals at State level, nor could they interfere with the States' rights to have their governors appointed on their advice through the Queen of Britain and British parliament. These issues became entangled in the fight between Whitlam and Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen, the National Party premier of Queensland, though the other States, including Labor ones, also quietly took the States' rights line. It was not until the Australia Acts, passed by the Hawke Labor government in 1986, that these anomalies were finally removed. Whitlam summed up the spirit of these changes well in a speech in London in 1974 when he said that they were 'in no way anti-British...simply pro-Australian'.³⁸ The old Crown Commonwealth (those countries with the Queen as head of state) lost its formal meaning gradually after India became a republic in 1950 and finally expired in 1965 when the Commonwealth was 'de-Britannicised'.39 In between time, Menzies had responded with disgruntlement to the emergence of a multiracial Commonwealth that included republics such as India and Ghana. He regretted, yet had no choice but to accept, South Africa's exclusion from the Commonwealth in 1961 on account of its racial policy. The old Dominions, however, 'naturalised' the Queen and remained monarchies, thus preserving a simulacrum of the older order while at the same time proceeding with the new.

Perhaps paradoxically, as the material underpinnings of British Australia came apart or attenuated, the Boeing 707 and growing affluence allowed Australians and Britons to flock in ever increasing numbers to each other's shores from the 1960s. Short-term visitors from Australia to the United Kingdom were about 5,000 annually between the wars, jumped to 30,000 in 1950 and reached 250,000 by 1968.⁴⁰ Now they are 800,000, with a similar

³⁸ Whitlam's speech is in Ashton et al. (eds), Australia and the United Kingdom, 1960–1975, pp. 1083–7; see James Curran and Stuart Ward, The Unknown Nation: Australia after Empire (Melbourne University Press, 2010).

³⁹ W. David McIntyre, British Decolonization, 1946–1997: When, Why, and How Did the British Empire Fall? (New York: St Martin's Press, 1998), p. 122.

⁴⁰ Carl Bridge, Robert Crawford and David Dunstan, 'More than Just Barry, Clive and Germaine: An Overview of Australians in Britain', in Bridge et al. (eds), *Australians in Britain*, pp. 01.1–9.

number from the United Kingdom to Australia. The permanent Australian community in Britain numbers about 300,000.41 Four young Australians assaulted the citadel of Britain's cultural establishment in the 1960s – Germaine Greer, Barry Humphries, Clive James and Rolf Harris - with many others in their train, such as Geoffrey Robertson QC and the feminist publisher Carmen Callil, and later the satirical novelist Kathy Lette (who married Robertson), the singer-songwriter Nick Cave and the photographer Polly Borland. From being a 'rite of passage', then the working holidaymaker's destination of choice in the 1970s and 1980s, Britain, and especially London with its global city status, became once more and with increased potency a magnet for young Australians with skills to 'try their fortunes'. Accountants, lawyers, bankers, journalists, teachers, doctors, dentists and computer engineers sojourned there, often for five years or more, gaining international experience and hoping to benefit from the 'escalator effect' of quick promotion in careers open to the talents in the boom years surrounding the turn of the century. At one point, simultaneously, Australians edited the Times; headed British Airways and Rio Tinto, the Royal Society and the Science Museum; and ran the South Bank Centre, Wigmore Hall, the Cardiff Millennium Centre, the Royal Ballet, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority and much else.42 The British Australian Rules Football League kicked off in 1990 and the immensely successful, London-based community advertising website 'gumtree.com' in 2000. The Empire had struck back.

There were other movements, criss-crossing the old Empire, which were not at all Anglo-centric. Australia and New Zealand fully opened their borders and economies to each other in 1983 with the Closer Economic Relations (CER) agreement. Prime ministers Malcolm Fraser and Bob Hawke used Commonwealth forums and ad hoc instruments (notably the Eminent Persons Groups) to defy Thatcher's Britain and team up with the Indian president, Rajiv Gandhi, to support a transition to black rule in Zimbabwe, resist the Fiji coups of the late 1980s and oppose apartheid in South Africa. Similarly, Australia and New Zealand led South Pacific states in declaring their region a nuclear-free zone while Britain chose to adhere to its French and American allies.⁴³

⁴¹ Michael L'Estrange, The Australia–Britain Relationship Today: Patterns of History, Dynamics of Change (London: Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, 2004).

⁴² See Ian Britain, Once an Australian: Journeys with Barry Humphries, Clive James, Germaine Greer and Robert Hughes (Oxford University Press, 1997); Bridge et al. (eds), Australians in Britain, chs 14–16; David O'Reilly, Britain's Global Australians (London: Menzies Centre for Australian Studies, 2007); (London) Sunday Times, 14 March 2006.

⁴³ PJ. Boyce and J.R. Angel (eds), *Diplomacy in the Marketplace: Australia in World Affairs*, 1981–1990 (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1992).

The India–Australia relationship of the 1950s and 1960s had been frosty, a product of India's leadership of the non-aligned movement during a Cold War in which Australia identified strongly with the west, Australia's discriminatory immigration policy and the lack of rapport between Menzies and President Nehru, which culminated in a much publicised spat in the United Nations General Assembly in 1960. Yet India had sent to Canberra in the early 1950s a remarkable High Commissioner, General (later Field Marshal) K.M. 'Kipper' Cariappa, the first Indian to command the Indian Army and a veteran of the Middle East and Burma campaigns of World War 2. A fully Anglicised officer and gentleman, most adept at the foxtrot, in 1954 he was a prime mover in establishing the Commonwealth Club, Canberra's most exclusive, and perforce a very effective critic of, indeed foil for, the white Australia policy. On one notable occasion he and his driver stopped at the overgrown Gundagai war memorial and, brandishing spades, cleaned it up, telling embarrassed locals that they should have better looked after the shrine to their comrades in arms. Still, no Australian prime minister passed through India between 1959 and 1973; but Indira Gandhi toured Australia in 1968 and Whitlam resumed Australian prime ministerial visits to India in 1973. While the relationship appeared likely to benefit from his government's more independent foreign policy and post-cold war regionalism, India's refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and its nuclear tests were continuing sources of tension. After 1975 Malcolm Fraser visited India on several occasions and sought to breathe life into the Commonwealth as a multilateral context for Australian-Indian relations. A new era now blossomed in Indo-Australian relations, signalled by Rajiv's official visit to Australia in 1986, a reciprocal visit to India by Bob Hawke, and the setting up of the Australia India Business Council. The dismantling of white Australia policy restrictions and the liberalising of the Indian economy led to a burgeoning of the Indian diaspora in Australia (295,000 at the 2011 census) and an influx of Indian university students. Student numbers grew 40 per cent a year from 2002, and stand at over 100,000. Despite problems with a rash of teenage mobile phone and laptop street muggings of South Asian students, the flesh-and-blood link, weak in Cariappa's day, is now substantial.44

⁴⁴ Robin Jeffrey, 'The Good, Bad and the Section 420s', *Inside Story*, 4 June 2009, and 'Australia–India: Reimagining the Relationship', *Inside Story*, 15 February 2010 (both accessed at <http://inside.org.au> on 4 April 2012); Meg Gurry, *India: Australia's Neglected Neighbour? 1947–1996* (Brisbane: Centre for the Study of Australia–Asia Relations, Griffith University, 1996); David Walker, *Encountering Turbulence: Asia in the Australian Imaginary* (New Delhi: Readworthy Publications, 2013).

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Australia's relations with other Commonwealth countries tend to be mediated through regional organisations. Pakistan was seen as a good ally in the days of the formation of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), but the relationship wobbled when Australia aided in the birth of Bangladesh (1971), waned when Pakistan was suspended from the Commonwealth (1999-2004 and 2007) and fell into further disrepair as the 'war on terror' gathered pace. Relations with Sri Lanka have suffered over that country's ill-treatment of the Tamil Tigers. Malaysia and Singapore are important in security terms via the Five Power Defence Agreement, the successor to ANZAM, and have long links through Colombo Plan aid, particularly their sending of students to Australia.45 Relations have been rocky on occasions, such as when Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew said in 1980 that Australians risked becoming the 'poor white trash of Asia' if they did not reform their economy. Malaysia's Mahathir Mohamad clashed with Bob Hawke over the latter's condemnation of capital punishment as 'barbaric' on the occasion of the execution of two Australian drug-dealers in 1986; and with Paul Keating, who called Mahathir 'recalcitrant' for planning to boycott the second Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit. But relations, though somewhat formal when Australia has tried to get too close - Australia is still kept out of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – are still cordial enough to discuss serious business, such as refugee and anti-terrorism policy or a free trade agreement, as was finally signed with Malaysia in 2012.

With similar, though often competing, free-trading interests, Australia and Canada concluded a limited trade agreement in 1960 and work closely together in APEC and the Cairns Group of primary producing nations. Relations with Australia's closest neighbour, New Zealand, continue to be intimate, despite the two countries taking divergent paths over the question of visits by US nuclear ships in 1985, which led to New Zealand's suspension from ANZUS. Subsequently, there was disagreement along party lines when an Australian conservative government committed to the Iraq War in 2003 and New Zealand's Labour administration did not. As troubles arose in the Pacific Island states of the so-called arc of instability north of Australia, all of them in (or in Fiji's case, suspended from) the Commonwealth, Australia and New Zealand have cooperated to encourage peace and good governance by sending troops, police, administrators and other forms of

⁴⁵ On the origins and early working of the plan, see Daniel Oakman, Facing Asia: A History of the Colombo Plan (Canberra: Pandanus Books, 2004).

aid, most notably to Bougainville (1997–98) and the Solomon Islands (since 2003).⁴⁶

Australia's repositioning as an Asia-Pacific-based economy and society is complete. Three-quarters of Australia's trade is in the region, with China, Japan and Korea the main partners; Britain accounts for just 4 per cent of imports and exports.⁴⁷ Over a million Australians today were born in the United Kingdom, over twice as many as the next country of origin, New Zealand, and three times each of the next two, China and India.⁴⁸ In the latest published figures, the United States still led as the major foreign investor in Australia, but the United Kingdom was a substantial second, Japan third and New Zealand fourth, with Chinese investment rising quickly.⁴⁹ Visitors might comment that Australia still feels very British but the key economic, legal, security and social underpinnings of British Australia were weakened irreparably by the 1970s, almost disappearing with the British Empire itself. It is in the mutual affection, deeper values and the robust approach to current challenges that the British legacy truly lives on.

- 46 These events are best followed in James Cotton and John Ravenhill (eds), Seeking Asian Engagement: Australia in World Affairs 1991–1995 (Oxford University Press, 1997); The National Interest in a Global Era: Australia in World Affairs 1996–2000 (Oxford University Press, 2001); Trading on Alliance Security: Australia in World Affairs 2001–5 (Oxford University Press, 2007); and Middle Power Dreaming: Australia in World Affairs 2006–10 (Oxford University Press, 2011).
- 47 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 100 Years of International Trade Statistics, cat. no. 5368.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2007).
- 48 Richards, Destination Australia, p. 391; Australian Bureau of Statistics, Reflecting a Nation: Stories of the 2011 Census, 2012–2013 cat. no. 2071.0 (Canberra: ABS, 2012); see also Richards, Destination Australia, p. 391.
- 49 Foreign Investment Review Board: Annual Report, 2008–2009 (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2009), chart 4.1.

Australia in the Asia-Pacific region

23

In 1872 the colonies of Australia were connected to the British imperial cable network and by the time of Federation England was 100 minutes away from Australia, and 80 minutes from China. Although these technological developments made the world smaller, the new nation communicated with Asia and the Pacific region through the British network. This imperial arrangement was symbolic of a general pattern that continued well into the twentieth century.

Positioned within the British and then the US sphere, a full Australian engagement with the Asian region was slow.¹ There were individuals who sought to build a specifically Australian relationship with the countries of Asia, especially in periods of heightened regional consciousness. The mid-1930s – with the world economic crisis and the continued rise of Japan – was one such period. The years immediately following World War 2 constituted another. A third occurred in the late 1980s, when the scale of Northeast Asia's economic potential became apparent. For most of the twentieth century, however, Australians who were concerned about the wider world concentrated on their imperial relationships. Richard Casey, a future Minister of External Affairs, observed in 1928 that information about Asia was 'vague, muddled and defective'.² Even when faced with the Japanese threat in the 1930s, there was little community interest in Asian affairs, and a lack of interest in foreign relations generally.³

Although Australian universities created specialist expertise on the Asian region in the second half of the twentieth century, this seldom reached

I Michael Wesley, There Goes the Neighbourhood: Australia and the Rise of Asia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2011), pp. 1–9.

² Quoted in Shannon Smith, 'Towards Diplomatic Representation', in David Goldsworthy (ed.), *Facing North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia. Volume 1, 1901 to the 1970s* (Melbourne University Press, 2001), p. 62.

³ Ibid., p. 63.

mainstream Australia. Cultural awareness was also limited. Those Australian artists who decided to draw inspiration from Asia tended to do so via Europe: 'they travelled half-way round the world to learn from Europeans about art that had originated in their own hemisphere'.⁴ When Australians did reflect on their country's Asian context, they inclined to anxiety: a settler nation with a small population seemed at risk. Such is the dominant narrative of Australia's regional relations in the twentieth century.⁵

Australian foreign policy, it is true, developed a regional as well as an imperial dimension. Successive Australian governments throughout the twentieth century developed 'consistent, cohesive and comprehensive defence and external policies' because of their awareness of Australia's 'peculiar geo-political circumstances'.⁶ In defence thinking Asia tended to represent a threat, and the Pacific Islands a possible sphere of Australian influence; but very few members of the governing class sought a genuine accommodation with the societies of Asia and the Pacific. Regionalism, such as it was, developed within a British and then United States–led global framework. Even commercial opportunities in the Asian region were neglected: such initiatives to promote trade that were taken were compromised by State rivalries, lack of transport and other infrastructure, anxiety about unfamiliar business practices, and British metropolitan pressures. In general, the Australian preference was for familiar British imperial markets.⁷

Faced with booming Asian economies later in the century, larger numbers of Australians saw the potential for economic advantage, but there was a tendency to look for immediate monetary returns rather than long-term commitment. Although Australia became heavily dependent on Asian trade, investment levels – which represent a deeper engagement – remained strikingly low.

Regionalism and empire

Australia's direct communications with Asia and the Pacific were limited, partly because the government did not possess full control of its foreign

⁴ Alison Broinowski, *The Yellow Lady: Australian Impressions of Asia* (Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 45.

⁵ David Walker, Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850–1939 (Brisbane: UQP, 1999).

⁶ Neville Meaney, A History of Australian Defence and Foreign Policy, 1901–23. Volume 1, The Search for Security in the Pacific, 1901–1914 [1976] (Sydney University Press, 2009), pp. 1–2.

⁷ Sandra Tweedie, Trading Partners: Australia and Asia 1790–1993 (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1994), pp. 36–54, 56–8, 70–1.

policy. Australia had no diplomatic missions of its own until 1940, when legations to the United States, China and Japan were established: its official information was gathered through the British Foreign Office and the Royal Navy. Most countries in the region were under European, American or Japanese rule. As a result, apart from Tokyo, the centres of power for Asia and the Pacific were London, Paris, The Hague, Washington and Berlin.

Alfred Deakin, who held office for much of the first decade, was pivotal in developing regional policy for the newly federated nation. He was a regionalist in the sense that his policies were strongly influenced by Australia's geographical location,⁸ but he was exceptional in also taking a genuine interest in India and other Asian countries and civilisations. His nationalism was 'conceptualised and structured...in racialised terms',⁹ with citizens' rights extending only to the British race.¹⁰ While racialised nation-state building was common at the time,¹¹ the Australian project was marked by its determined exclusion of people from neighbouring Asia and the Pacific. Attempting to establish a new, British nation on the periphery of a populous region, Deakin and other Australian leaders sought more restrictive immigration laws than Britain favoured. The *Immigration Restriction Act* and the *Pacific Islands Labourers Act* passed by the first Commonwealth parliament were commonly referred to as the white Australia policy, a policy that characterised Australia in the rest of the region even after it had been overturned in the 1960s and 1970s.¹²

Its regional location also led Australia to diverge from the British government in defence policy. London's strategic priority at the beginning of the century was the rising power of Germany, and it viewed Japan as a potential strategic ally and trade partner. The British hoped that the emergent Asian power would check Russia's southern advance, and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 allowed Britain to withdraw most of its Pacific naval force to Europe. In contrast, Australians tended to see the Japanese empire as a security threat and London's policy caused alarm, especially after Japan's defeat of Russia in 1905. Australian perceptions of an inadequate imperial

11 Lake and Reynolds, Drawing the Global Colour Line, p. 4.

⁸ Tomoko Akami, 'The Liberal Dilemma: Internationalism and the Institute of Pacific Relations in the USA, Australia and Japan, 1919–1942', PhD thesis, ANU, 1996, p. 119.

⁹ Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Mens' Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Melbourne University Press, 2008), p. 156.

¹⁰ John Docker, 'Can the Centre Hold?: Conceptions of State 1890–1925', in Sydney Labour History Group (ed.), What Rough Beast?: The State and Social Order in Australian History (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), p. 61.

¹² David Dutton, 'A British Outpost in the Pacific', in Goldsworthy (ed.), Facing North, p. 32.

defence system in the region led Deakin to seek support from the United States – another emerging Pacific power – and the Great White Fleet was given a warm welcome when it visited Australia in 1908. In the following year the government began forming the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), the first navy of a British Dominion.

While regionally minded Australians tended to view Asia in terms of threat, some saw the Pacific as a legitimate Australian sphere of influence, an aspiration that has been described as 'Australian imperialism'.¹³ Worried about French and German advances, Deakin and his fellow colonial politicians had called from the 1880s for an Australasian Monroe Doctrine for the South Pacific.¹⁴ They demanded the British state annex not only the Fiji islands, but also New Guinea, the New Hebrides and the Solomon Islands.¹⁵ Like the Meiji state in Northeast Asia in the same period, the new Commonwealth of Australia viewed the islands of the south-west Pacific as a potential security buffer zone. Control of Papua was taken over from Britain in 1902, and it became an Australian territory in 1906. Australian imperial aspirations were pursued, however, within the framework of the British Empire.¹⁶ In Deakin's view, just as Australians considered British imperial interests to be their own, so colonial interests ought to be 'considered and felt to be Imperial interests'.17 He therefore expected the Royal Navy to protect Australia in the Pacific.18

Some also viewed Asia as a market. The State governments and Australian producers sought to export pastoral and agricultural products before Federation, and they continued to do so in the new century. New South Wales sent a trade commissioner to Kobe in 1903 and dominated the wool trade with Japan in the following decades. Other States sent agents to Shanghai, Hong Kong, Manila, Singapore and Java.¹⁹ As strategic and commercial interests grew, so did the realisation of a need for greater knowledge of the region. In 1909 the federal government set up a small naval intelligence unit, which

15 Meaney, The Search for Security in the Pacific, pp. 17–22.

17 Meaney (ed.), Australia and the World, p. 84.

19 Tweedie, Trading Partners, pp. 36-50.

¹³ Roger C. Thompson, Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: The Expansionist Era, 1820–1920 (Melbourne University Press, 1980).

¹⁴ Neville Meaney (ed.), Australia and the World: A Documentary History from the 1870s to the 1970s (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1985), pp. 54–9, 63–4.

¹⁶ Gordon Greenwood and Charles Grimshaw (eds), *Documents on Australian International Affairs* 1901–1918 (Melbourne: Thomas Nelson, 1977), pp. 43–4.

¹⁸ Adam Hughes Henry, Independent Nation: The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy 1901–1946 (Darwin: Charles Darwin University Press, 2010), p. 1.

recruited the Tasmanian-born science and law graduate Edmund Leolin Piesse.²⁰ Three years later, the first course in Asian language and history was established at the University of Sydney.²¹ The Defence Department helped fund a Japanese-language lecturer,²² who worked closely with Piesse. Piesse became director of a new Pacific Branch in the Prime Minister's Office in 1919.²³ Ironically, this small intelligence group argued consistently against the alarmist view of Japan's intentions toward Australia.²⁴

Prime Minister William Morris Hughes (1915–23) pursued a strong foreign policy characterised by fear of Japan and commitment to white Australia. He was aggressive at the post-war Paris Peace Conference and he opposed Japanese demands – including the call for the inclusion of a racial equality clause in the Covenant of the League of Nations.²⁵ He also claimed the islands of the south-west Pacific, arguing they were 'as essential to Australia as the Channel Ports were to England'. Hughes' concern, he insisted, was Australian security, not imperialist ambition.²⁶ In response, the Paris Conference made Australia and New Zealand the administrative powers of new mandates over the former German colonies in the Pacific south of the equator. Australia now pursued a 'civilising mission' towards the people of the mandate, as well as towards Papua.

Australia's Asian trade grew significantly during the war. Exports to Asia increased from 5.6 per cent of total Australian exports in 1913 to 9.2 per cent in 1918–19, and imports from 3.7 to 12.9 per cent.²⁷ Hughes appointed the first federal trade commissioner in 1919 – though not to Japan, which was the principal customer, but to Shanghai. Another commissioner was appointed to Singapore in the following year. Business groups questioned the government's commitment – but they also failed to respond to opportunities – and the appointments were soon abandoned.²⁸

- 20 Neville Meaney, Fears & Phobias: E.L. Piesse and the Problem of Japan 1909–39 (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 1996), p. 3.
- 21 Akami, 'The Liberal Dilemma', p. 123.
- 22 David C.S. Sissons, 'Australia's First Professor of Japanese: James Murdoch, 1856–1921' (unpublished paper, 1982), pp. 66, 71, 75, NLA MS 3092.
- 23 Peter Edwards, Prime Ministers and Diplomats: The Making of Australian Foreign Policy, 1901–1945 (Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 53.
- 24 Meaney, Fears & Phobias, pp. 6–14; Peter Spartalis, The Diplomatic Battles of Billy Hughes (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1983), p. 175.
- 25 Naoko Shimazu, Japan, Race and Equality: The Racial Equality Proposal of 1919 (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 23–7, 125–35.
- 26 Spartalis, The Diplomatic Battles of Billy Hughes, p. 58.
- 27 Tweedie, Trading Partners, p. 71.
- 28 Ibid., pp. 82–6.

Accommodating the American regional order in the 1920s

The League of Nations provided an impetus for a more independent Australian contribution to regional affairs in the 1920s. John Latham, who attended the Paris Peace Conference (and in 1925 became attorney-general in the Bruce–Page Coalition government) was president of the Victorian branch of the League of Nations Union, and at its first meeting in 1921 stressed Australia's new responsibility as a mandate power for 'backward races'.²⁹ Australia was also a key player when the League set up its first extra-European office in Singapore.

It was the United States that defined the new regional order. The USA did not join the League and Republican administrations of the 1920s pursued regional leadership independently of European politics. Thus the Washington Conference of 1921–22 produced a multilateral treaty framework that guaranteed Anglo-American maritime supremacy and the strategic status quo in China and the Pacific.³⁰ The Bruce–Page Coalition government (1923–29) interpreted the growing US regional involvement not as a challenge to the British imperial order, but as an opportunity for Anglo-American cooperation.³¹ The British government still retained a strong presence in the region and, mindful of Japan's possible aggression, began building a naval base at Singapore. In the 1920s, however, both British and Australian officials saw little immediate threat, and it was only in the 1930s that the construction was speeded up. Content with the Anglo-American cooperative framework, the Bruce-Page government did not pursue its own involvement in Asia, and abandoned Hughes' regional trade initiative. Its preference for Empire trade came at the expense of Asian and also US trade relations.³²

Although Stanley Melbourne Bruce is known for his later contribution to international organisations, in the 1920s he supported a specific form of American-initiated Pan-Pacific regionalism.³³ This was best captured in the idea of the 'Pacific Community', which organisations such as the Institute of

²⁹ Akami, 'The Liberal Dilemma', p. 135; Alexander Cameron-Smith, 'Australian Imperialism and International Health in the Pacific Islands', *Australian Historical Studies*, 41, 1 (2010): 57–74.

³⁰ Akira Iriye, After Imperialism: The Search for a New Order in the Far East, 1921–1931 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 16–18.

³¹ Akami, 'The Liberal Dilemma', p. 143.

³² Tweedie, Trading Partners, pp. 65-7.

³³ David Lee, Stanley Melbourne Bruce: Australian Internationalist (London: Continuum, 2010), p. ix.

Pacific Relations (IPR) (founded in Honolulu in 1925) advocated.³⁴ Although some suspected that the IPR was an American propaganda organisation, its Australian supporters, including Bruce, saw it as fostering Anglo-American regional cooperation.³⁵ A majority of IPR members in Australia also belonged to the local branches of the Round Table (an imperial discussion forum first established in London in 1910) and the Royal Institute of International Affairs, headquartered in London. Australian members of the Royal Institute formed the Australian Institute of International Affairs (AIIA) in 1933.³⁶

While Prime Minister Bruce paid limited attention to the countries of Asia, the IPR and other Pan-Pacific organisations provided regionally conscious public intellectuals with a forum for discussion, and some visited the region to exchange views with their counterparts. Leading members such as Griffith Taylor, Frederic Eggleston, John Latham, Jack Shepherd, Ian Clunies Ross, Harrison Moore and Ernest Scott produced pioneering analyses of regional affairs, hoping to create a better informed Australian public. The Pan-Pacific women's network also promoted strong, yet complex engagements on the part of Australian feminists.³⁷ Many of their research projects and publications were aided by grants from the Rockefeller Foundation, the financial backer of the IPR.³⁸

Eggleston, one of the most active IPR participants, argued in 1930 that Australia needed to develop 'a Pacific sense', and that its economic future was bound up with the region.³⁹ At the same time he guarded white Australia, insisting that the country needed to defend its standard of living by excluding migrants who would accept lower standards.⁴⁰ His colleagues seem to have shared the view that for Australia to be more engaged with the region it needed stronger national

- 34 Tomoko Akami, Internationalizing the Pacific: The United States, Japan and the Institute of Pacific Relations in War and Peace, 1919–45 (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 39–40.
- 35 John D. Legge, Australian Outlook: A History of the Australian Institute of International Affairs (Canberra: Allen & Unwin, 1999), pp. 31–46; Nicholas Brown, 'Australian Intellectuals and the Image of Asia, 1920–1960', Australian Cultural History, 9 (1990): 80–92.
- 36 Legge, Australian Outlook, p. 45.
- 37 Angela Woollacott, 'Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms: Australian Women's Internationalist Activism in the 1920s–30s', in Mrinalini Sinha, Donna Guy and Angela Woollacott (eds), *Feminisms and Internationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999); Fiona Paisley, *Glamour in the Pacific: Cultural Internationalism and Race Politics in the Women's Pan-Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009).
- 38 James Cotton, 'Rockefeller, Carnegie, and the Limits of American Hegemony in the Emergence of Australian International Studies', *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, 12, I (2011): 170–8; Stuart Macintyre, A History for a Nation: Ernest Scott and the Making of Australian History (Melbourne University Press, 1994), pp. 129–43.
- 39 Warren G. Osmond, An Intellectual in Australian Politics (Sydney: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), p. 139.
- 40 Akami, Internationalizing the Pacific, pp. 103-4.

unity – a unity, so it was argued, based on a British imperial citizenship that excluded Indigenous Australia and the people of Asia and the Pacific.

A turning point, 1932–39

The wider Australian public still had little knowledge or interest in Asia and the Pacific. A minority of the cultural elite took an interest in 'Oriental' arts, reflecting European trends of japonisme and chinoiserie. Some of the small Chinese Australian community participated in the Chinese Nationalist Party, deciding in 1925 to establish an Australasian club in Guangdong (Canton) to help travellers to settle and do business in China. The club became the most important overseas office for the Canton-based Nationalist Party. While the party network helped to facilitate Chinese settlement in 'Australia's Pacific spheres of influence', it also played a surveillance role, censoring critical views of the Nationalist government among Chinese Australians.⁴¹

The Lyons government (1932–39) faced major conflicts in the region – the Manchurian Crisis (1931–33) and the Sino-Japanese War (1937–45). Hitherto, Australia had demanded more aggressive policies towards Asia and the Pacific than Britain wanted. In contrast, during the Manchurian Crisis and in its aftermath the Lyons government consistently argued for appeasement of Japan. Dominions located far away from the conflict could afford to advocate a stronger stance against Japan, but Australia could not.⁴² Furthermore, to resurrect the Depression-damaged domestic economy, the government had to secure overseas markets, including those in Asia. Accordingly, there was a renewed effort to send trade commissioners to key cities in Asia.⁴³

These concerns culminated in the 1934 'Goodwill Mission' to Southeast Asia, China and Japan, led by Latham as Minister for External Affairs. The mission – with its objectives of trade promotion, intelligence gathering and public relations – was significant for four reasons.⁴⁴ First, it was the first independent Australian government initiative to engage directly with governments in the Asian region. Second, it signified a new regional

⁴¹ John Fitzgerald, Big White Lie: Chinese Australians in White Australia (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2007), pp. 141–9, 153–4, 166–76.

⁴² E.M. Andrews, The Writing on the Wall: The British Commonwealth and Aggression in the East 1931–1935 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1987), p. 70.

⁴³ Tweedie, Trading Partners, pp. 87-8.

⁴⁴ Ruth Megaw, 'The Australian Goodwill Mission to the Far East in 1934: Its Significance in the Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 59, 4 (1973): 247–63.

perspective: Latham referred not to the 'Far East' but the 'Near East'.⁴⁵ Third, it ran counter to the League of Nations' decision of 1933 to reject Japan's post-1931 claims in Manchuria. In exchange, Latham sought to safeguard Australia's interests in the Pacific by obtaining a guarantee from the Japanese government not to fortify its own Pacific mandates. The government used the mission to promote its appeasement policy and Australian newspapers presented largely pro-Japan views, expressing a degree of admiration for the country's industrialisation and social reforms, and contrasting these with the disorder in China.

Fourth, the mission suggested the Lyons government's non-compliance with imperial trade preference policy, which had been decided at the British Empire Economic Conference at Ottawa in 1932. Still recovering from the Depression, Australia sought additional markets and saw them in Asia. The mission, which visited Japan, the Dutch East Indies, Malaya and China, resulted in the appointments of trade commissioners to Shanghai, Tokyo and Batavia in 1935. A proposed bilateral trade treaty with Japan did not materialise, however.⁴⁶ Rather, after the Lyons government increased restrictions on non-Empire imports in 1936, Japan cut its imports of Australian wool. Members of the IPR and AIIA argued strongly against this Australian policy of trade diversion and had some success in changing public sentiment.⁴⁷ In 1938 the economist John Crawford even put forward an innovative idea of 'economic appeasement' of Japan and 'collective agreement' on trade as an alternative security policy.⁴⁸

In developing regional policies independently from Britain, the Lyons government expanded its diplomatic capacity, creating a separate Department for External Affairs in 1935. In coordination with the Japanese Ambassador in Britain, Lyons also proposed a non-aggression pact among the Pacific powers in 1937.⁴⁹ After this proposal failed, his government decided

⁴⁵ Neville Meany, 'Introduction', in Australia and the World, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Ian Nish, 'Relations with Japan', in Carl Bridge and Bernard Attard (eds), *Between Empire and Nation: Australia's External Relations from Federation to the Second World War* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2000), pp. 161–2.

⁴⁷ Paul Jones, 'Trading in a "fool's paradise"? White Australia and the Trade Diversion Dispute of 1936', in Paul Jones and Vera Mackie (eds), *Relationship: Japan and Australia*, 1870s–1950s (Melbourne: History Department, The University of Melbourne, 2001), pp. 154–5.

⁴⁸ Osmond, Frederic Eggleston, p. 183; Legge, Australian Outlook, p. 63; Peter Drysdale, Crawford and the Relationship with Japan: Despite the Vicissitudes (Canberra: Australia–Japan Research Centre, ANU, 1986), pp. 3–9.

⁴⁹ Nish, 'Relations with Japan', pp. 164–5; Smith, 'Towards Diplomatic Representation', p. 90.

to send its own diplomatic representatives to Washington and Tokyo.⁵⁰ It is not clear, however, that such initiatives amount to a new era of foreign policy independence and Asian engagement; they were responses to the growing danger of a conflict that threatened to envelop the region. It is also noteworthy that when hostilities began in Europe, Robert Menzies, the new prime minister, explained that Great Britain had declared war and 'as a result, Australia is also at war'.⁵¹

The Pacific War

Japan's entry into the war at the end of 1941 confirmed Australian fears. The destruction of Allied seapower, the fall of Singapore and the rapid advance of Japanese forces into the south-west Pacific presented a most serious threat to Australian security. Australia's wartime engagement took place within the framework of the Anglo-American military alliance, which once again tended to postpone a more direct Australian reckoning with the peoples of Asia.

Yet the war transformed Australia's entire regional context. The spectacular Japanese conquests were critical in bringing the colonial age to an end in Asia. New or rejuvenated nations emerged quickly, and Australia's security and prosperity would depend ultimately on how well the country engaged with these countries. In the South Pacific, by contrast, European rule continued. Papua and New Guinea were united under Australian administration in 1945 and only gained independence in 1975, giving Australia an extended colonial experience.⁵² Some today see colonial legacies in Australia's continued involvement in development and nation building in the South Pacific.³³

The signing of the Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS) in 1951 was anticipated by Australia's appeal to the United States a decade earlier, when Japanese forces were bearing down on Singapore – and confirmed that Australia's regional relations would continue

⁵⁰ Bird therefore calls Lyons the 'father' of Australian diplomacy: David Bird, J.A. Lyons, the 'Tame Tasmanian': Appeasement and Rearmament in Australia, 1932–39 (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2008), p. 287.

⁵¹ A.W. Martin, Robert Menzies, A Life. Volume 1, 1894–1943 (Melbourne University Press, 1993), p. 284.

⁵² J.D. Legge, Australian Colonial Policy: A Survey of Native Administration and European Development in Papua (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1956); Hank Nelson, Taim Bilong Masta: The Australian Involvement with Papua New Guinea (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1982).

⁵³ Greg Fry, 'Framing the Islands: Knowledge and Power in Changing Australian Images of the "South Pacific", *The Contemporary Pacific*, 9, 2 (1997): 305–44.

to be encased in an American imperial setting. Nevertheless, the period immediately following the Pacific War was exceptional. Some Australian leaders understood that the war was a turning point, and paused to deliberate on Australia's geopolitical position. They looked beyond imperial alliances, believing a specifically Australian accommodation with Asia could be postponed no longer. Confronted by a turbulent and confusing postcolonial Asia, these strategists questioned the willingness and capacity of Britain or the United States to underwrite Australian security. In 1949, for example, the Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, John Burton, observed that the 'war-time experience of "Beat Hitler first" came as a shock to those who were content to regard Australia as a Western country which could count on the support of other Western countries in an emergency'. Is Australia, he asked, 'to set itself against Asia and rely upon Western powers to assist it when an unco-operative policy has antagonised Asia?'54 Concern about the new international circumstances was conveyed sharply in an influential school text of the time, edited by the Melbourne University historian R.M. Crawford. Australia was no longer a 'sheltered country', the text explained, and its people now knew 'the significance of the fact that we are a European outpost on the edge of a restless Asia'. Here again was the 'anxious nation', though the book finished with the constructive insistence that Australians had no choice but to 'study our neighbours'.55

What role would a Communist China play in a postcolonial Asia? Had Japan really been transformed into a peaceful, pro-western state? Of all the Allies, the Australians were the most determined to impose a harsh peace.⁵⁶ The form that the new Indonesian republic, so strategically vital to Australia, would take was also unclear. Would it be defined territorially by the borders of the former Dutch East Indies, or reach across to the British-governed territories in the archipelago? Might the Dutch state be broken into smaller, ethnic-based units? Some Australian observers hoped for a democratic Indonesia, and were to be disappointed.⁵⁷ Such urgent concerns led to the establishment of Asian studies at the new Australian National University and in older universities: like the Australian pioneers who wrote on Asia of the

⁵⁴ Quoted in David Lee (ed.), Australia and Indonesia's Independence: The Transfer of Sovereignty (Canberra: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 1998), pp. 110–11.

⁵⁵ R.M. Crawford (ed.), *Ourselves and the Pacific* [1941] (Melbourne University Press, 1952), pp. 269, 272.

⁵⁶ Neville Meaney, Towards a New Vision: Australia and Japan through 100 Years (Sydney: Kangaroo Press, 1999), p. 103.

⁵⁷ Herbert Feith, The Decline of Constitutional Democracy in Indonesia (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1962).

1920s and 1930s, these specialists focused more on contemporary affairs than was usual among Oriental Studies scholars in Europe.⁵⁸

The role Australia itself might play in Asia's radical transition was given sharp attention in the immediate post-war period. In certain ways Australia mattered more then than subsequently. As a war victor, and with a century's experience of developing modern legal, political and educational institutions, Australia was a country of substance, while most people in Asia were in the early stages of postcolonial state building or still locked in struggle with the old colonial powers. Japan was devastated and under Allied occupation; war was developing in Korea; in exchange-rate terms Australia had an economy no smaller than China's. 'What we are claiming now', the Minister for External Affairs, H.V. Evatt, declared in a confident tone, is 'a primary and principal responsibility in determining the future of the particular region in which we live'.⁵⁹ There was a strong belief that Australia had to oppose the Indonesian claim to Dutch New Guinea, a vital defence buffer.⁶⁰ Eggleston contemplated Australia 'extend[ing] her control over the whole of New Guinea, the Solomons and New Hebrides and, if France would make a deal, New Caledonia'. He also suggested that Australia promote a concert of powers to ensure post-war regional stability.61

Eggleston considered that the 'collectivism' influential in his country could be an advantage to Australia's Asian relations. 'There are already signs', he observed in 1947, that Asian people 'feel far more affinity with the social philosophy of Australia than to the school of rugged individualism' – presumably associated with the United States.⁶² The influential Sinologist C.P. FitzGerald believed Australians had enough 'memory of their own colonial past to feel sympathy rather than antagonism to the nations of Asia who have recently become self-governing'.⁶³ In John Burton's view, the 'countries of Asia' wanted technical and administrative advice but did not 'feel like turning to the one-time colonial power – French, Dutch, British – nor do they wish too close a connection with United States private enterprise'. They saw Australia as a 'country which has inheritance from the West without being a colonial

- 60 Crawford (ed), Ourselves and the Pacific, p. 269.
- 61 Osmond, Frederic Eggleston, pp. 224, 240.

⁵⁸ Anthony Milner, 'Approaching Asia, and Asian Studies, in Australia', Asian Studies Review, 23, 2 (1999): 193–203.

⁵⁹ Quoted in Hugo Wolfsohn, 'Foreign Policy', in Peter Coleman (ed.) Australian Civilization: A Symposium (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1963), p. 233.

⁶² Ibid., p. 297.

⁶³ C.P. FitzGerald, 'Australia and Asia', in Gordon Greenwood and Norman Harper (eds), Australia in World Affairs 1950–1955 (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1957), p. 201.

or financial power'. Australia, so Burton suggested, had to become in a sense 'an Asian country'. $^{\rm 64}$

In this spirit, Australian representatives were present at the Asian Relations Conference held in New Delhi in 1947, where the Indian prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, declared that 'the countries of Asia can no longer be used as pawns by others'.⁶⁵ In the case of Indonesia, Australia did support the emerging Asian forces – though there was a degree of vacillation and internal disagreement in the development of Australian policy.⁶⁶ Unlike the United States, Australia resisted Dutch requests for military assistance, and also supported India in requesting UN intervention. President Sukarno declared that he 'loved' the Australian representative on the United Nations Committee of Good Offices, Tom Critchley. When a conference was held in New Delhi in 1949 to examine the Indonesia issue, senior Australian officials attended – and British diplomats expressed concern about the 'line-up of Australia with this purely Asiatic group'.⁶⁷

One severe obstacle to Australian initiatives in Asia in this post-war period was the country's immigration policy. This was apparent when the political scientist W. Macmahon Ball led a goodwill mission to Southeast Asia on behalf of the government in 1948. Although offering Australian relief aid and scholarships to postgraduate students, Ball regretted that the mission took place at a time when 'the Australian Government was deporting Asians with racialist contempt and inhumanity'. Faced with criticism of 'white Australia' on his arrival in the region, Ball indicated that the policy might change and provoked bitter criticism at home in Australia, including from the Minister for Immigration, Arthur Calwell. Evatt conspicuously failed to defend Ball and the 'white Australia' tag continued to damage Australia's regional endeavours.⁶⁸

The Cold War as a further postponement

The Opposition had criticised some of the Labor government's efforts to work with the new countries of Asia, seeing danger in alienating western

65 Peter Gifford, 'The Cold War across Asia', in Goldsworthy (ed.), Facing North, p. 204.

66 Margaret George, *Australia and the Indonesian Revolution* (Melbourne University Press, 1980); David Lee, 'Indonesia's Independence', in Goldsworthy (ed.), *Facing North*, p. 155.

- 67 Lee, 'Indonesia's Independence', pp. 160, 165.
- 68 Alan Rix, W. Macmahon Ball: A Pioneer in Australian Asian Policy (Brisbane: Centre for the Study of Australian–Asian Relations, Griffith University, 1988), pp. 2–13.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Lee (ed.), Australia and Indonesia's Independence, p. 110.

allies, but when the Coalition won office at the end of 1949 the new Minister of External Affairs, Percy Spender, took up the challenge of forging an Australian role in the region. He was central in establishing ANZUS and also in launching the Colombo Plan, which was designed to foster closer relations with the new Asian members of the British Commonwealth and promote political stability.⁶⁹ By 1951 the United States joined the Plan and soon became the largest donor as the scheme reached well beyond the Commonwealth to become an instrument for winning 'hearts and minds' in the Cold War.

In the words of Spender's successor, Richard Casey, ANZUS gave Australia 'close and re-assuring association with American planning and policy-making'; but it also meant Australian relations with the Asian region were to a large extent shaped and limited by Cold War imperatives.⁷⁰ The Korean and Vietnam military commitments illustrated this clearly – as did Australia's continued support for the containment of China. In 1954 Australia signed the treaty establishing the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), along with the United States, New Zealand, France, Britain, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand – a grouping of countries that would not win the approval of the emerging nationalist forces in the region (including Indonesia) and was explicitly opposed to China.

It is incorrect to view Australia in these years as merely following Britain or the United States. Just as Australia encouraged these powers to be wary of Japan in the early twentieth century, so from the early 1960s the government urged American military action in Indochina, seeing this as enhancing Australian security.⁷¹ The Australian government also favoured what the chiefs of staff called a 'forward defence strategy' that would provide 'strength in depth' for Australia,⁷² and sent approximately 50,000 Australian troops to Vietnam from 1965 to 1972 (with some 500 killed and 3,000 wounded). Although the communists were victorious, some Australians argued that making a stand in Vietnam gave other states in Southeast Asia the respite to gain strength. Other commentators, such as the former diplomat Gregory Clark, believed that the Australian leadership – including the Department of External Affairs – was poorly prepared to understand political developments in the Asian region.⁷³

⁶⁹ Gifford, 'The Cold War across Asia', pp. 173-4.

⁷⁰ W.J. Hudson, Casey (Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 242.

⁷¹ David Lee and Moreen Dee, 'Southeast Asian Conflicts', in Goldsworthy (ed.), Facing North, p. 282.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Gregory Clark, In Fear of China (Melbourne: Lansdowne, 1967).

The Vietnam War did help to stimulate a wider public debate in Australia about the country's relationship with the region. Jim Cairns, a leading member of the Labor Party and an eloquent opponent of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War, complained that for Australians – living in 'affluence-induced comfort under the physical and psychological wing of the United States' – Asia remained 'foreign and not understood'. Although new forces were emerging in the region, Cairns insisted that Australia could 'find a way to live with Asia'.⁷⁴ On the other side of politics, Prime Minister Harold Holt sought to promote a greater public consciousness of Australia's Asian context, and to lift Australia's profile in the region itself. His moves to dismantle the white Australia policy were designed to further these aims.

Other conservative leaders pressing for stronger Australian engagement with the Asian region in the Cold War years included Casey, the Minister for External Affairs from 1951 to 1960. Having initially urged diplomatic recognition of China, he became an active diplomat, expressing respect for Asian aspirations and expanding Australia's diplomatic representation. His widely read *Friends and Neighbours* argued that although Australia was a 'European community', Australians were nevertheless 'living alongside and working with Asia'.⁷⁵ Casey urged a forgiving policy toward Japan, and in 1957 the powerful Minister for Trade, John McEwen, took the brave step of signing a trade agreement with that former enemy. McEwen recalled that in setting out 'to convince the government and the Australian public that the Japanese could be trusted', he had taken 'my political life in my hands.'⁷⁶ By the late 1960s some 26 per cent of Australian exports were going to Japan, and only 11 per cent to Britain. In the early 1950s, 8 per cent had gone to Japan and 36 per cent to Britain.

Some public commentators argued for a more independent Australian role in the region. Macmahon Ball said that while Australians in the past had not needed to be 'actively concerned with how the peoples of East Asia reacted to our policy, today we can only ignore their attitude at our peril'. The 'antagonism of one or two countries in South-East Asia', he pointed out in 1961, 'would hardly matter much to the United States; it might matter

⁷⁴ J.F. Cairns, Living with Asia (Melbourne: Lansdowne, 1965), pp. 2, 81.

⁷⁵ R.G. Casey, *Friends and Neighbours: Australia and the World* (Melbourne: Cheshire, 1954), p. 16; Werner Levi, *Australia's Outlook on Asia* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1958), ch. 12.

⁷⁶ Peter Golding, Black Jack McEwen: Political Gladiator (Melbourne University Press, 1996), p. 192.

a good deal to Australia'. Like C.P. FitzGerald, he worried that Australia continued to adopt policies in opposition not just to communist Asia but also to non-aligned Asia.⁷⁷ Another minority view at the time was that Australians needed to see the Asian region 'through the eyes and traditions of the people' living there.⁷⁸ Academics such as John Legge, Jamie Mackie, A.L. Basham, Geoffrey Fairbairn, Nancy Viviani and Milton Osborne were in these Cold War years attempting to build up the study of Asia (and Asian languages) in the universities and often entered public debate about Australian foreign policy, particularly with respect to Vietnam.

Guam and Asian economic growth

From the end of the 1960s the Australian leadership faced the need to focus more sharply on the nation's Asian context because of policy reversals by Australia's allies. Increasingly preoccupied with Europe rather than its former empire, the United Kingdom announced the withdrawal of most of its forces from Southeast Asia. In 1969 President Nixon enunciated the Guam Doctrine, telling allies that in time of military confrontation the United States would 'look to the nation directly threatened to assume the primary responsibility of providing the manpower for its defense'.79 The sense of a new era was soon reinforced by the shock of the Nixon rapprochement with China, and the Whitlam government (1972-75) moved quickly to establish Australian diplomatic relations with that country. A further loosening of the white Australia policy was in part a response to this new international context. Spender's Colombo Plan had continued to bring numbers of Asian students to Australia, helping to accustom the community to a larger Asian presence; and public intellectuals in the Immigration Reform Group had argued persuasively that Australia's immigration policy was having an 'appalling impact' on the country's international reputation, particularly in Asia.⁸⁰ By the mid-1970s racial

- 78 Peter Russo, 'Challenge of Political Change in Asia in the Sixties', in Wilkes (ed.), Asia and Australia, p. 18.
- 79 'The Wars for Vietnam President Nixon's Speech on "Vietnamization", November 3, 1969' http://vietnam.vassar.edu/overview/doc14.html, accessed 4 July 2012.
- 80 Kenneth Rivett, Immigration: Control or Colour Bar? (Melbourne University Press, 1962), p. 103.

⁷⁷ W. Macmahon Ball, 'Australia's Political Relations with Asia since 1945', in John Wilkes (ed.), *Asia and Australia: Proceedings of the 27th Summer School* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1961), pp. 40, 43, 75.

difference was removed from government policy; and then the Fraser government (1975–83) took the decisive practical step of admitting some 76,000 Indochinese refugees.⁸¹

Australia also moderated its image as a colonial power with the granting of independence to Papua New Guinea in 1975. Although Australia had been responsible for developing its institutions and society since 1920, the independent state tended to be politically unstable, with a weak and dependent economy, secessionist movements, corruption and other problems. Far from disclaiming any continuing responsibility, Paul Keating reflected that as 'prime minister, I probably spent more time dealing with the complex, psychologically sensitive bilateral relationship with Papua New Guinea than with any other relationship, apart from Indonesia'.⁸² As one specialist on Asian relations observed in 1991, 'the leverage of Australia in foreign affairs, or the credibility of Australia in foreign affairs, is substantially diminished if there is a mess in Melanesia'.⁸³

A further consequence of the decline of 'imperial' protection was a revision of Australian defence thinking. In place of 'forward defence', the Fraser and then the Hawke government (1983–91) stressed the need for greater 'defence self-reliance', and gave stronger emphasis to countries of primary strategic interest to Australia. There was debate about how far into the Asian region this area should reach.⁸⁴ The influential Dibb Report (1986) argued the need to recognise that 'the archipelago to the north is the area from or through which a military threat to Australia could most easily be posed'.⁸⁵ Another response was greater engagement with regional security processes – seen as opportunities to draw Australia into 'confidence-building' measures such as collaborative military training and strategic discussions. Australia had tried without success to establish a non-communist 'Asia and Pacific Council'

- 81 Moreen Dee and Frank Frost, 'Indochina', in Peter Edwards and David Goldsworthy (eds), *Facing North: A Century of Australian Engagement with Asia. Volume 2: 1970s to 2000* (Melbourne University Press, 2003), p. 196; Goldsworthy et al., 'Reorientation', in Goldsworthy (ed.), *Facing North*, p. 329.
- 82 Paul Keating, Engagement: Australia Faces the Asia-Pacific (Sydney: Macmillan, 2000), p. 205.
- 83 Ross Garnaut, quoted in Graeme Dobell, Australia Finds Home: The Choices and Chances of an Asia Pacific Journey (Sydney: ABC Books, 2000), p. 150.
- 84 Roderic Pitty, 'Strategic Engagement', in Edwards and Goldsworthy (eds), *Facing* North, pp. 52–7.
- 85 Paul Dibb, Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities: A Report to the Minister of Defence (Canberra: AGPS, 1986), p. 4; Garry Smith, 'Australia's Political Relationships with Asia', in Mark McGillivray and Gary Smith (eds), Australia and Asia (Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 109–12.

in the 1960s to deal with 'external threats' from Indochina and to provide 'a framework for more widespread cooperation'.⁸⁶ In 1974 Australia became a 'Dialogue Partner' of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the more successful regional grouping that has gradually incorporated every country in Southeast Asia. Then, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as the Cold War came to a close, Australia was active in building the ASEAN Regional Forum, a security dialogue bringing together ASEAN and the Northeast Asian states of China, Japan and South Korea with other interested countries, including the United States. In 1992 Australian security specialists joined Asian, New Zealand and North American colleagues in a meeting in Seoul in order to determine ways to promote regional security cooperation; this led to the formation of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific.⁸⁷

In economic relations a new direction was also determined, in reaction to the extraordinary economic growth in Japan and other countries in East Asia. By the end of the 1980s Australia had an economy less than a quarter the size of China's; it had been three-quarters the size in 1965. The figures for Japan were approximately an eighth and a fifth.⁸⁸ The basis for an Australian response had been established in 1956 with a British–Australian trade agreement, which ended the preferential tariffs that had limited Australia's capacity to expand trade with Asia. In 1988–91 the Hawke government noted the continued failure to take advantage of the global economic shift to Asia, and took the dramatic step of unilateral tariff reductions, specifically 'to encourage trade flows with partners in the geographic region'.⁸⁹

Building regional economic institutions was another strategy. In 1980 John Crawford was central in initiating the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council, which sought to promote a Pacific community. This 'community', also strongly supported by Japan, was to encourage economic liberalisation and be open to all the countries of the Pacific, including the United States and Canada.⁹⁰ In 1989 Prime Minister Hawke proposed a

⁸⁶ Amitav Acharya, Whose Ideas Matter? Agency and Power in Asian Regionalism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), p. 82.

⁸⁷ Desmond Ball and Kwa Chong Guan (eds), Assessing Track 2 Diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific Region: A CSCAP Reader (Singapore: Rajaratnam School of International Studies, 2010).

⁸⁸ Ross Garnaut, Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendency (Canberra: AGPS, 1989), p. 4.

⁸⁹ Tweedie, Trading Partners, p. 200; Ross Garnaut, Social Democracy in Australia's Asian Future (Canberra: Asia Pacific Press, 2001), p. 52.

⁹⁰ Roderic Pitty, 'Regional Economic Co-operation', in Edwards and Goldsworthy (eds), *Facing North*, 2003, pp. 14–17; Stuart Harris, 'Policy Networks and Economic Cooperation: Policy Coordination in the Asia-Pacific Region', *Pacific Review*, 7, 4 (1994): 381–95.

government-level 'vehicle for regional co-operation' that became known as APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), and his successor Paul Keating helped to add an annual heads of government meeting. Keating saw APEC as having a strategic as well as economic purpose, in particular keeping the United States in dialogue with China, Japan and others: behind APEC's economic superstructure, he later observed, there 'stands a silent, strategic sentinel'.⁹¹

'Pacific' and 'Asia-Pacific' regional organisations had clear advantages for Australia. Geographically broader than 'Asian' or 'East Asian' groupings, they offered no impediment to Australian involvement. Also, like the 'Pacific' initiatives favoured by Australian regionalists before the war, they carried the reassuring idea of a region still under the western superpower, the United States. Some Asian governments were not comfortable with this. Malaysian prime minister Mahathir Mohamad, for example, proposed in 1991 an East Asian Economic Group that would bring Northeast and Southeast Asian countries together, and would not include the United States or Australia. He told Australians: 'If you want to become Asian...you should say we are Asian because we have an Asian culture, an Asian mentality'.⁹² In the short term APEC gained more momentum than the Malaysian concept, but this changed with the Asian economic crisis of 1997–98, when there was a perception that western countries had been unhelpful and that the time had come for Asian countries to assist one another. APEC also had been accused of advancing an essentially American agenda.93

The emergence of the ASEAN Plus Three process in 1997 – the three were China, Japan and South Korea – was to a large extent a revival of the 1991 Mahathir proposal. It represented a triumph for 'East Asian' rather than 'Asia-Pacific' regionalism, and its exclusiveness challenged Australia as well as the United States. The Howard government was careful not to highlight the competition between APEC and ASEAN Plus Three; and in 2005 it accepted an invitation to meet with the ASEAN Plus Three leaders (along with India and New Zealand) in a new forum, the East Asia Summit. At last Australia

⁹¹ Quoted in Pitty, 'Regional Economic Co-operation', p. 32.

⁹² Anthony Milner, 'The Rhetoric of Asia', in James Cotton and John Ravenhill (eds), Seeking Asian Engagement: Australia in World Affairs 1991–1995 (Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 39.

⁹³ Richard Higgott, 'Alternative Models of Regional Cooperation? The Limits of Regional Institutionalization in East Asia', in Mario Telò (ed.), *European Union and New Regionalism: Regional Actors and Global Governance in a Post-Hegemonic Era* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 90; Anthony Milner, 'Asia-Pacific Perceptions of the Financial Crisis: Lessons and Affirmations', *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 25, 2 (2003): 284–305.

had joined an Asian organisation where the United States was not a player. Both the USA and Russia, however, eventually joined in 2011.⁹⁴

Mahathir had been hostile but perceptive. In the decades following the Nixon Guam statement positive initiatives had been taken to change Australia's immigration policies, defence posture and economic ties with the Asian region. Australia had also seen the importance of creating institutional structures to promote regional cooperation. The effort, however, had always been to build Australia into a US-oriented 'Asia-Pacific' rather than an 'Asian' entity, conveying to some an Australian reluctance to engage directly with the societies of Asia itself.

The observation would apply to the majority of Australians, but not all. A small number, for instance, had been engaging culturally over a long period: the architect Hardy Wilson, composer Peggy Glanville-Hicks, poet Harold Stewart, painter Ian Fairweather and novelist Christopher Koch had not merely invoked Asian themes but had responded creatively to the new aesthetic perspectives and artistic styles they encountered.⁹⁵ Other Australians had begun to open up the identity dimension of Australia's relationship with the Asian region. A 1968 conference asked if Australia was 'a part of Asia': one answer, however, was that Australia did 'not share common social institutions, religious attitudes, or styles of political behaviour with most Asian countries'. The Australian National University's Wang Gungwu reported that he had 'never met the Asian who ever thought of Australia as part of Asia',⁹⁶ and Melbourne University's Sibnarayan Ray said the only country that 'remotely compares with the Australian situation is Israel in the Arab world'.⁹⁷

The Asian boom

With the end of the Cold War and the rapid economic growth of Southeast as well as Northeast Asia, there was a burst of enthusiasm in some quarters for a whole-hearted identification with the Asian region. Whitlam's ambassador

- 95 Broinowski, The Yellow Lady; Murray Bail, Ian Fairweather (Sydney: Bay Books, 1981); Christopher Koch, Crossing the Gap: A Novelist's Essays (London: Hogarth, 1987), ch. I.
- 96 Australia: A Part of Asia? (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1968), pp. 20, 59.

⁹⁴ Anthony Milner, 'Analysing Asian Regionalism: What Is an 'Architectural Perspective''?', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, 65, 1 (2011): 109–26.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 63. See also Ouyang Yu, 'A Clash of Cultures: Recent Representations of Australians in Mainland Chinese Fiction', in Bruce Bennett, Jeff Doyle and Satendra Nandan (eds), Crossing Cultures: Essays on Literature and Culture of the Asia-Pacific (London: Skoob Books, 1996), pp. 205–12.

to China, Stephen FitzGerald, declared that Australia's real 'Asian challenge' was not economic but 'intellectual, and the issues are political and cultural'.⁹⁸ He urged a strong expansion in the study of Asian societies in Australian schools and universities – as did the 1989 Garnaut Report, *Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendency*, which presented the fast-growing Northeast Asian economies as the answer to Australia's economic problems.⁹⁹ Prime Minister Keating said he wanted a 'national culture' that was 'shaped by, and helps to shape, the cultures around us';¹⁰⁰ and the foreign editor of the *Australian* referred (with considerable exaggeration) to the 'Asianisation of almost every sphere of Australian life' and the emergence of a 'honey-coloured' Australian population.¹⁰¹

Predictably, talk of such comprehensive 'Asianisation' alienated many Australians and provoked a defence of the country's western heritage. The philosopher John Passmore responded that the 'leading ideas which have constructed our society are European';¹⁰² the diplomat Rawdon Dalrymple claimed 'the average Australian' was 'less ''Asian'' than almost anyone on earth'.¹⁰³ A social analyst warned that elite invoking of 'Asia' was beginning to cause public anxiety: opinion polls – and the short-lived but diplomatically damaging rise of Pauline Hanson, who criticised Asian immigration – seemed to support him.¹⁰⁴

The identity and values dimensions of Australia–Asia relations were explored at this time in a wide-ranging research project initiated by former Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs, Stuart Harris, and hosted by the Academy of the Social Sciences. Involving intensive consultation with academic and other commentators from a range of Asian countries, the project was based on the assumption that despite the new global dominance of the United States, Australia had at last no choice but to build itself into its region. The project findings were in one respect reassuring for those troubled by the call for 'Asianisation'. First, a clear distinction needed to be

- 98 Stephen FitzGerald, Is Australia an Asian Country? (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), p. 4.
- 99 Garnaut, Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendancy.
- 100 Milner, 'The Rhetoric of Asia', p. 33.
- 101 Greg Sheridan, Living with Dragons: Australia Confronts Its Asian Destiny (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1995), p. 18.
- 102 John Passmore, 'Europe in the Pacific', Quadrant, 36, 9 (1992): 9-10.
- 103 F. Rawdon Dalrymple, *East and West from Down Under* (Austin: Edward A. Clark Center for Australian Studies, University of Texas, 1992).
- 104 Hugh Mackay, 'A National Identity? Wait and See...', in Joan Beaumont (ed.), Where to Now? Australia's Identity in the Nineties (Sydney: Federation Press, 1993), pp. 12–25. On the effects of Hansonism, see James Cotton and John Ravenhill, 'Australia in World Affairs 1996–2000', in James Cotton and John Ravenhill (eds), The National Interest in the Global Era: Australia in World Affairs 1996–2000 (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 6–7.

made between 'Asianisation' and 'engagement' – in fact a closer involvement in the Asian region might lead many Australians to a sharper understanding of their own society's dominant values and institutions (largely western); second, a real engagement with Asia presented an intellectual and cultural challenge. Economic development and the end of the Cold War were not bringing a global convergence of values, and Australia was likely to continue to be seen as an outsider – a society marked by its British institutions and liberal political culture. Apart from the need for cultural knowledge of the different societies with which Australia interacted, the project suggested Australians would benefit from a better appreciation of their own civilisational positioning with respect to Asia – and of the way people in the region itself saw Australia.¹⁰⁵

The issue of values had come to the fore when the Japanese government proposed in 1987 to create in Australia a Japanese Australian 'future city' known as the Multifunction Polis (MFP). The Australian government welcomed the proposal and identified a preferred site north of Adelaide. The leader of the Opposition, on the other hand, feared it could become an 'enclave'. Protracted negotiations revealed a lack of clarity about the scheme, which was eventually abandoned.¹⁰⁶ The Chinese government's brutal suppression of pro-democracy demonstrations in the 'Tiananmen Square Massacre' in June 1989 brought a further challenge to Australian values. The opening up of China in the 1970s had met with enormous acclaim in some quarters, but now Stephen FitzGerald regretted that 'we fell into such a national embrace with China', and had been so 'craven' and 'obsequious'. It was time, he argued, to oppose such human rights abuses and also the repression of Tibet.¹⁰⁷

Human rights concerns arose sharply later in the 1990s with respect to Indonesia. Keen to stabilise relations with a close neighbour, the Australian government had accepted the Indonesian takeover of East Timor in 1975 – though this was unpopular with the Australian public, the majority of whom had long been suspicious of Indonesia. The Indonesian occupation was marked by repression of the independence movement and mounting

¹⁰⁵ Anthony Milner, 'Defining Australia in Asia', in Gavin Jones (ed.), Australia in Its Asian Context (Canberra: Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, 1996), pp. 1–21; John Ingleson, 'Australia in Asia', Asian Studies Review, 23, 1 (1999): 93–101.

¹⁰⁶ Gavan McCormack, 'Coping with Japan: the MFP Proposal and the Australian Response', in Gavan McCormack (ed.), *Bonsai Australia Banzai: Multifunctionpolis and the Making of a Special Relationship with Japan* (Sydney: Pluto Press, 1991), p. 48.

¹⁰⁷ Lachlan Strahan, Australia's China: Changing Perceptions from the 1930s to the 1990s (Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 304–6.

violence against the civilian population by pro-integration militia. In 1999 both the Coalition government and the Labor Opposition changed course, the prime minister declaring that he had been concerned about the 'disconnect between the goals [of foreign policy] and the aspirations of the Australian people'.¹⁰⁸ The Australian military played a leading role in the UN force, which supervised the transition to independence. Its role was popular with the Australian public but less so in many quarters in Asia.

Despite the difficult post-Timor period, the everyday practical engagement with Asian societies expanded rapidly in the last two decades of the century. Exports boomed, to Japan and the ASEAN countries, and then most of all to China. By the early years of the twenty-first century Australia's trade with the Asian region was much larger than with the rest of the world; Japan, China and India had also become serious investors in Australia. The government negotiated free trade agreements and new levels of security cooperation. The rise of Islamic terrorism brought fear but also a surprising degree of regional police cooperation. Growing numbers of Australian business people were working in Asian societies, Asian students flowed into Australian tertiary institutions and tourism also increased.¹⁰⁹ In 1958 only 20 per cent of tourist departures were to Asia; this rose to 30 per cent in 1973. In 1990, 650,000 tourists went to Asia and in 2007 there were 1.5 million.¹¹⁰ In Paul Battersby's words, 'millions of Australians say yes to telephone services provided through a local subsidiary of the Singapore Singtel corporation - Tasmanians drink a local beer owned by the Philippine brewing company, San Miguel'.^{III}

Despite these trends, short-term economic objectives were dominant in Australian thinking about the region. Australian investment, for example, remained low, and company boards included extraordinarily few people with direct experience of working and living in Asia. A survey of Australian businesses in 2011 indicated the growing realisation that they lacked 'local cultural knowledge' and language skills.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Australian, 1 October 1999.

¹⁰⁹ The PricewaterhouseCoopers Melbourne Institute Asialink Index is an important source of statistics beginning in 2008; see also the two Howard government white papers: In the National Interest: Australia's Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper (Canberra: AGPS, 1997) and Advancing the National Interest Australia's Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper (Canberra: AGPS, 2003).

IIO PricewaterhouseCoopers Melbourne Institute Asialink Index, 2008, p. 38 http://www.pwc.com.au/publications/asialink/assets/Asialink-Deco8.pdf, accessed 4 December 2012.

III Paul Battersby, To the Islands: White Australians and the Malay Archipelago since 1788 (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), p. 208.

¹¹² Greg Earl, 'PM Should Take Business Map for Trip', Australian Financial Review, 14 April 2011.

Australian governments, it is true, had established bilateral institutes over the previous decades to strengthen people-to-people links with Asian countries of special importance to Australia; Australia Council allocation of arts funding to Asia or Pacific projects increased, at least in the 1990s.¹¹³ Asialink and other organisations developed initiatives to bring influential Australians into closer contact with their contemporaries in the region, exploring differences in perspective and understanding. Such projects, however, involved only a small number of Australians. Study of the region expanded in a number of universities but the hope of the 1989 Ingleson Report on Asian studies and languages that teaching about Asia would become part of the Australian curriculum was not achieved.¹¹⁴ The Garnaut Report of the same year called in vain for all students to be exposed at school to the serious study of Asian history, geography, economics, politics and culture – and by the year 2000.¹¹⁵

In 2011 the government seemed to recognise the failure to prepare for the 'shift of economic power' to Asia when it launched a White Paper process to examine ways to 'enhance Australia's navigation' of the new 'Asian Century'.¹¹⁶ The challenge for the White Paper would be cultural and intellectual, and not merely about the economic and security adjustment necessary in a world where the United States – Australia's long-term ally – was in relative decline. The Australian population had itself changed, with those of Asian origin reaching more than 10 per cent by 2011. Entering this 'Asian century', it would be hard to argue that Australia's reckoning with Asia could be postponed any longer.

¹¹³ Pamela Hansford, 'The "Impossible" Aesthetic: Asia and Australian Visual Arts', in Maryanne Dever (ed), Australia and Asia: Cultural Transactions (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), pp. 8–9.

¹¹⁴ John Ingleson (ed.), Asia in Australian Higher Education (Sydney: Asian Studies Council, University of New South Wales, 1989), p. 33.

¹¹⁵ Garnaut, Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendancy, pp. 304, 317.

¹¹⁶ Australia in the Asian Century: White Paper (Canberra: Australia in the Asian Century Task Force, 2012).

²⁴ The history anxiety

MARK MCKENNA

Australia has no history to speak of, or let us say, sing of. Adelaide Advertiser, 1 February 1907

'Tarraganda' (an Indigenous word meaning chain of ponds) is a rich, well-watered stretch of country close to the town of Bega on the far south coast of New South Wales. A narrow strip of bitumen cuts its way from Bega through the surrounding pastureland and small farms, eventually turning to dirt as it winds over forested hills to the Pacific Ocean, barely 14 kilometres away.

When British settlers first set eyes on the area in the 1830s they immediately saw its potential for grazing. As was so often the case, they desired the same tracts of land that Aboriginal people prized, for the land was fertile and, due to regular Aboriginal firing, already partly cleared. The Imlay brothers -Peter, George and Alexander - Scottish squatter-barons with an insatiable eye for acquiring vast tracts of crown land, saw Tarraganda as one link in their pastoral empire on the far south coast and beyond. The homestead built in the late 1830s by the former Scottish surgeon, Dr George Imlay, was the first European structure to stand in the area. Eager to commemorate the occasion as one of historical significance, Imlay planted cuttings from a weeping willow (salix alba caerulea or 'cricket bat willow') that he had nurtured on the long voyage out to Australia. The cuttings were particularly dear to him because he had collected them during a short stay in St Helena, the isolated island in the South Atlantic Ocean where Napoleon Bonaparte was exiled in 1815 and died in 1821. Imlay, a devotee of French language and culture, took the cuttings from the willows that grew close to Napoleon's grave. His plantings at Tarraganda were the first weeping willows in Australia, and from this stock willows were planted later throughout New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory, including along the Molonglo River near present-day Canberra. In subsequent years and well into the twentieth century, the story of Imlay's willows from Napoleon's grave survived in local oral culture – an allegory for the planting of history in a history-less land.¹

The idea of Australia as a land without history has proved remarkably resilient. Even in the early twenty-first century, it is common to hear Australians refer, half in jest, to their history as slight, boring or inconsequential compared to that of Europe or America. The relative absence of history is both a source of discomfort and relief, a nagging reminder of the lack of a deep past at the same time as it represents freedom or escape from the war-torn landscape of European history. For British settlers in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Australia's past was, as the explorer James Calder remarked on encountering Tasmania in the 1840s, 'a verifiable blank'. The land had 'nothing to reveal'. In Australia, there was no such thing as 'classical soil'. If history existed, it could not be found in the 'empty' land in which the settlers had arrived, a land without architecture or 'civilisation'.² Rather, it could only be embodied in memory, story and song; in the objects and family keepsakes that had travelled with the settlers from the mother country; in the literature they read; in the theatre, dance and music they performed; and in the law, politics and religious rituals they practised. History was exiled within them. The incongruity of living in an ancient country in which settler society was 'new' only heightened the sense of impermanence, fragility and anxiety concerning the past. The antiquity of the country was hidden from the settlers by their failure to know the Aboriginal languages and cultures that might have afforded them understanding. Shifting the centre of historical consciousness from Britain to their adopted land would prove to be a slow transition. In Australia, history was latent: a weeping willow planted but yet to grow to maturity, a story waiting to be created before it could be told.

All settler societies are marked by a particular self-consciousness concerning the past. Ann Curthoys has referred to the manner in which 'the project of colonisation, and later nation building, is inherently and self-consciously historical'.³ Settled in the wake of the American and French revolutions, the Australian colonies were born into a post-Enlightenment world that foresaw their inevitable destiny as independent and republican. Self-consciousness regarding history was marked by a craving for continuity and a deep past, as well as an extreme sensitivity to the convict birth stain and, later, in

¹ Australian Town and Country Journal, 18 November 1871; Cairns Post, 1 March 1947.

² Calder quoted in Tom Griffiths, Hunters and Collectors: The Antiquarian Imagination in Australia (Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 104.

³ Ann Curthoys, 'History and Identity', in Wayne Hudson and Geoffrey Bolton (eds), Creating Australia: Changing Australian History (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1997), p. 31.

the twentieth century, to the frontier violence and Indigenous dispossession associated with settlement. There was also the undeniable absence of any clear foundational narrative independent of the British inheritance. Embarrassment regarding the society's penal origins, which revealed itself either as silence or shame in former convict colonies such as New South Wales and Tasmania, or shrill proclamations of a colony's freedom from the convict taint as in South Australia, tended to sever colonial history from its origins. As Tom Griffiths has noted, this remained the case well into the twentieth century. The colonists were 'constantly looking forward, straining after conflict, trial, sacrifice – after a proper history of which people could be proud'.⁴

Every nation is brought into being through the writing of history. Australian societies developed during an era that witnessed the 'zenith of the modern nation state' (1850–1940) and the emergence of national history in both Europe and the United States.⁵ The connection between national identity and the writing of history, one increasingly fostered by the state, would remain strong in Australia until the late twentieth century. Thus the trajectory of Australian history, which slowly emerged as a distinct field of inquiry after Federation in 1901, paralleled the growth of the new nation state.

History and nation

The core elements of British mythology regarding the process of historical and political change were expressed powerfully by Edmund Burke in 1790. Historical change occurred by osmosis. It was a process of mysterious and gradual evolution, one that separated Britain from the rivers of blood that flowed in France and provided the rationale for the expansion of the British Empire.⁶ When the Australian colonies federated in 1901, it was this fundamentally conservative view of history that was exalted. In the words of the *Adelaide Advertiser*, 'no act of oppression has organized [us] for resistance, and no dread of invasion has caused [us] to huddle together for mutual defence...[Federation] is a process of evolution not revolution... [and one that] will form one of the great landmarks...to be noted by future historians'.⁷ Federating under the crown on I January 1901, the

7 (Adelaide) Advertiser, 1 January 1901.

⁴ Griffiths, Hunters and Collectors, p. 118.

⁵ David Cannadine, Making History Now and Then: Discoveries, Controversies and Explorations (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 38, 173.

⁶ Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France [1790] (London: Penguin, 1986), pp. 119–20.

colonies celebrated their union within the Empire at the same time as they championed the myth of popular sovereignty that had given birth to the nation through a series of referendums: 'the Commonwealth has come from the people by the people to the people'.⁸ If history was to be celebrated, then it was Australia's connection to the history of Britain, the stories that had been passed down from time immemorial. For compared to British heritage Australian history was as nothing. It was 'still in the making', or, in the words of Charles Bean, 'a blank map...waiting to be filled in'. Aside from the predictable rollcall of explorers pressing on through 'the trackless wastes' and the statistical evidence of economic, social and political progress, there was, as yet, no Australian history to sing of.⁹

Although the men and women who forged Federation believed that their efforts would be remembered as 'one of the most momentous events' of the twentieth century, their expectations were soon disappointed. As John Hirst has eloquently observed: 'The myth died – and with it all knowledge of federation. All the people, events, and places, that federalists declared would be historic never became so...all are forgotten.'10 The story of Federation lacked the necessary ingredients of national self-realisation: blood sacrifice and the heroic casting-off of an oppressive overlord. As a consequence, in the decade after Federation there was a hunger for the blooding of the national character, perhaps in an imperial war, one that would finally establish the credentials of Australia as a nation in its own right. Throughout this period, the labour press frequently bemoaned the 'feeble' state of national sentiment, pointing out that the majority of Australians knew more about the history of Britain than they knew of the history of Australia and still thought of England as 'home'. Australian democratic history, they insisted, was actually of its own making.11

Before the outbreak of war in 1914, none of these calls to venerate Australia's democratic history could match the growing realisation that Australians would soon have the opportunity to 'show what they were made of' on the battlefield. When Charles Bean was appointed as official war correspondent to the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), George Foster Pearce, the Minister for Defence, reminded him that his job description entailed much

⁸ Adelaide Advertiser, 2 January 1902, quoted in John Hirst, The Sentimental Nation: The Making of the Australian Commonwealth (Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 297.

⁹ Bean quoted in Jay Arthur, *The Default Country: A Lexical Cartography of Twentieth Century Australia* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2003), p. 58.

¹⁰ Hirst, The Sentimental Nation, p. 297.

^{11 (}Broken Hill) Barrier Miner, 21 June 1905.

more than simply reporting from the front. Bean, insisted Pearce, would 'have to write part of the history of Australia'. He would need to chronicle the brave deeds of Australian soldiers in such a way that the first chapter of the nation's story would be written.¹² Within weeks of the Anzac landing in April 1915, a consensus was clear: the Anzacs had 'written in blood the first pages of Australia's history', a belief that immediately supplanted all other narratives of nationhood – the march of the explorers, the advance of settlement, Eureka, Federation and Australia's record of progressive democratic legislation.¹³ As Billy Hughes proclaimed 20 years later, before 25 April 1915, Australia was 'a land without a history and without tradition of its own, living sheltered under the wing of the mother country and only vaguely conscious of its own existence'.¹⁴ The myth was forged. Australian 'history' and the Australian nation were born in the same place and time, not on Australian soil but at the Gallipoli peninsula in Turkey, on the narrow sands and steep hills of Anzac Cove in April 1915.

Both the proclamation of Federation in 1901 and the glorification of the Anzac landing in 1915 were built upon the total denial of Indigenous history. On the inauguration of the Commonwealth Aboriginal people were described as 'treacherous' savages, a 'stone age' people who, living in 'modern times', were 'bound to die out'.¹⁵ Edward Jenks, former Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of Melbourne, epitomised this view of Aboriginal people in his *History of the Australian Colonies*, observing emphatically: 'the aborigines of Australia...have had no influence on Australian history'.¹⁶

Jenks' view was confirmed in the years after Federation, both in the popular press and in educational literature such as Walter Murdoch's school text of 1917: 'when people talk about "the history of Australia" they mean the history of the white people who have lived in Australia...[the Indigenous people] have no history, as we use the word'.¹⁷ The Commonwealth, founded on the principle of 'white Australia', represented the assertion of one history over another. Indigenous people were largely invisible in the federal Constitution. On 1 January 1901, in what would become an ominous reference, the *Sydney Morning Herald* described the Aboriginal person as 'a happy animal', warning

15 Editorial, Sydney Morning Herald, 1 January 1901.

^{12 (}Hobart) Mercury, 5 October 1914.

¹³ Ararat Advertiser, 19 June 1915.

¹⁴ Sydney Morning Herald, 26 April 1937.

¹⁶ Edward Jenks, *The History of the Australasian Colonies (from the Year of Their Foundation to the Year 1893)* (Cambridge: The University Press, 1895), p. 16.

¹⁷ Bain Attwood (ed.), In the Age of Mabo: History, Aborigines and Australia (Sydney: Allen & Unwin 1996), p. xii.

that if Australia was to avoid the same 'colour trouble' as America and South Africa, it would have to deal with the growing number of 'half-blood' Aboriginal people.¹⁸

Yet the Indigenous history that was destined for extinction in 1901 would ultimately come to unsettle the moral legitimacy of the Commonwealth. The gradual surfacing of the very history that had allegedly been 'vanquished' would come to represent the most significant shift in historical consciousness in twentieth-century Australia. For non-Indigenous Australians, this would prove to be a slow and traumatic realisation. There was no history of Australia that was non-Indigenous. From the moment of first contact, settler history became part of Indigenous history and Indigenous history became part of settler history.

History between the wars

When the cantankerous surgeon Frederick Watson was appointed as the inaugural editor of the Historical Records of Australia in 1912, the Sydney Morning Herald responded enthusiastically: 'Dr Watson has a unique opportunity... Australia's history under the white man's rule is not too old that its records cannot be rendered easily accessible'. Watson's task was seen as relatively straightforward. To give the nation what he called its birth certificate, he merely needed to compile the documents that would allow the nation's history to be written.¹⁹ Federation had created a state apparatus conscious of its nation-building role, yet the establishment of national archival collections would prove to be a slow and unwieldy process. Although the forerunners of what would eventually become state libraries were founded in the nineteenth century (Victoria, 1856; South Australia, 1866; New South Wales, 1869; Queensland, 1896; and Hobart, 1909), it was not until the 1920s that the first autonomous state archives were established in South Australia, while other States would wait until after World War 2. The Australian Archives resulted from the appointment of a War Archives Committee in 1942, headed by Charles Bean. Responsibility for all archives not related to defence was assumed by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library in 1944, before the Commonwealth Archives was finally established as an autonomous authority in 1961. It was not until 1998 that the redesignated 'National Archives' were given a prominent position in Canberra's parliamentary triangle.

¹⁸ Sydney Morning Herald, 1 January 1901.

¹⁹ Sydney Morning Herald, 28 August 1912.

The funding of military history proceeded on a much less circuitous route. Between 1921 and 1942 Charles Bean received government backing to produce his monumental twelve-volume history of Australia in the Great War at the same time as he worked for the opening of the Australian War Memorial in Canberra in 1941. Long before the Commonwealth government had decided on the national buildings that would represent Australia's civic history, it had institutionalised and memorialised the history of Australia's participation in World War I, a development that was consistent with the prominence of war memorials in towns and cities across the country. In the interim, historical organisations dedicated to the collection of archives and the remembering of local and regional pasts had developed more quickly in the wider community.²⁰

In the first two decades after Federation, historical societies were formed across the country (New South Wales' Australian Historical Society in 1901, the Historical Society of Victoria in 1909, and those of Queensland and South Australia in 1913). Founded largely by progressive, middle-class, non-professional 'educationalists' of distinctly antiquarian bent, the members of these first historical societies busied themselves advancing heroic stories of discovery, exploration and pioneering, and cultivating benign, self-congratulatory genealogies. Dedicated to 'the priority of original documentation and the need for "precision and accuracy" in historical research', and believing firmly in history's potential to serve as a source of civic cohesion, members erected monuments and tablets that reflected the material progress and noble ideals of community 'founders'.²¹

Because so much of Australia's settler history had been built on denuding the land of the Indigenous presence, historical societies remained silent on the subject of Aboriginal history. What mattered for settlers telling their own creation stories was the suffering and hardship experienced by their forebears. None were admitted to have been convicts and none were involved in the taking of Indigenous land. Rather, in local histories pioneers simply 'took up' land as if the country was uninhabited, while the 'few' Aboriginal people who preceded them either 'withdrew' or politely 'disappeared'.²² In the countless hours members spent searching for, sifting, collecting and preserving historical documents, they helped to build archival collections

²⁰ Stuart Macintyre, 'The Writing of Australian History', in D.H. Borchardt and Victor Crittenden (eds), *Australians: A Guide to Sources* (Sydney: Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987), p. 17.

²¹ Griffiths, Hunters and Collectors, p. 206.

²² Griffiths, Hunters and Collectors, pp. 108–9. See also Mark McKenna, Looking for Blackfellas' Point: An Australian History of Place (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2002), pp. 89–93.

that would be consulted by historians – both professional and amateur – for many years to come. Perhaps even more importantly, they demonstrated the profound human and social need for the past. Without histories of origin that could be passed down from one generation to the next, there was no foundation for community belonging.

Yet another key contributor to this nascent literary culture was the emerging academic historical profession. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century Australian universities were established in every State capital. In 1891 the Lancashire-born, Oxford-educated George Arnold Wood was appointed to the first chair in history at an Australian university. Wood's appointment at the University of Sydney was followed by the appointment of his student, the Australian-born George Henderson, who secured a chair at Adelaide University in 1905, and later by the English migrant Ernest Scott, who was appointed to the chair of history at the University of Melbourne in 1913. Wood's advocacy of history as a branch of literature, his research interest in Australian maritime history, and his promotion of British imperial history as a source of civic pride in the secondary school curriculum, not to mention the outstanding quality of his teaching, proved to be extremely influential in shaping the early historical profession. Max Crawford, another of Wood's students, would head the history department at Melbourne from 1937 to 1970, creating what would eventually become the most dynamic and influential department in twentieth-century Australia. Yet until World War 2 and shortly afterwards, history departments in Australian universities remained relatively small. Boundaries between academic disciplines were not sharply defined, with politics, archaeology, classics and literature commonly subsumed in the study of history.²³

One of the crucial contributions of the early practitioners such as Wood, Henderson and Scott was to mark out the distinctive aims, methods and approaches of academic history. All three drew on both the German and English traditions of historical scholarship, combining a Rankean adherence to the scrupulous examination of primary sources and 'objective truth' with a high-minded, almost 'romantic' literariness, somewhat in the vein of Macaulay and Gibbon. Factual accuracy was prized as much as an accessible, literary style. Professional history would increasingly be defined by a detached, rigorous examination of documentary evidence. The poetry in history was encased within the facts of history. The tension between

²³ Stuart Macintyre and Julian Thomas (eds), *The Discovery of Australian History* 1890–1939 (Melbourne University Press, 1995), pp. 1–9.

these two rival traditions – history as a science, epitomised in J.B. Bury's 1903 lecture of that title, and history as art, espoused in G.M. Trevelyan's *Clio, a Muse*, published in 1913 – would continue to surface in public debates over Australian history until the early twenty-first century.²⁴

George Arnold Wood, Ernest Scott and the outstanding historians who emerged under their wings (including Henderson, Crawford, G.V. Portus, W.K. Hancock and Stephen Roberts) believed that Australia was indeed fortunate to be the distant offshoot of the most superior civilisation the world had yet known. This celebratory account of the progress of British societies and institutions, otherwise known as Whig history, would not be challenged in Britain and Australia until the 1930s and 1940s – this was when Marxist historians employed class analysis to expose the economic and social inequalities embedded within liberal capitalism and others. At the same time other historians, such as Herbert Butterfield, a thinker highly attuned to the inbuilt bias of historical narrative, critiqued the self-serving and uncritical dimensions of Whig history.²⁵

The triumphant view of British history prevailed in Australia until World War 2. The first general popular histories and commentaries written by professional historians – Ernest Scott's *Short History of Australia* (1916), W.K. Hancock's *Australia* (1930) and G.V. Portus' *Australia since 1606: A History for Young Australians* (1932) – assumed Britain's cultural and political superiority. These views were hardly surprising, emanating as they did from scholars (Scott excepted) who had undertaken second degrees in British universities and returned to Australia eager to proclaim the virtues of the Empire. The British 'genius for liberty', it seemed, had left Australia's path almost predetermined. As Tocqueville said of historians in New World democracies, 'they consider a nation that has reached a certain place in its history and affirm that it was constrained to follow the path that led it there. That is easier than instructing us on how it could have acted to take a better route.'²⁶

In schools across the country, the position of 'Australian history' reflected its status within the universities. Stuart Macintyre and Graeme Davison have both pointed to the absence of Australian history in the school curriculums

²⁴ Ibid; see also Macintyre, 'The Writing of Australian History', pp. 19–21. On Bury and Trevelyan, see Ann Curthoys and John Docker, *Is History Fiction*? (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2006), ch. 4.

²⁵ Curthoys and Docker, Is History Fiction?, pp. 98–100, 122–5. See also Michael Bentley, Modernizing England's Past: English Historiography in the Age of Modernism 1870–1970 (Cambridge University Press, 2005).

²⁶ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* [1835], eds Harvey C. Mansfield and Delba Winthrop (University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 472.

of the early twentieth century. Australian history was presented largely as 'a brief and colourless epilogue to the history of the mother country'.²⁷ As a result, 'any child brought up in the Australian school system before the Second World War was likely to remember more about the exploits of Nelson and Wellington...than of Arthur Phillip or Henry Parkes'.²⁸ Only the history of exploration stoked the fires of national history, a quality that was also found in the work of Wood and Scott, although throughout their careers both men sought to advance the study of Australian history within the wider orbit of British imperial history. For these historians, there was a duality of allegiance to both Australia and Britain that was shared by the majority of the population. This view informed Scott's editorship of the Australian volume of the *Cambridge History of the British Empire* (1933) and W.K. Hancock's *Australia* (1930). Similar themes were evident in the public representation of Australia's past.

On 26 January 1938 Australia marked 150 years of British settlement. The sesquicentennial celebrations, organised by the New South Wales government, were largely Sydney-based events with a 'gala' street parade and an inaccurate re-enactment of Arthur Phillip's landing at Sydney Cove as the highlights. On the streets of Sydney, a succession of floats bearing actors in period costumes drew on predictable historical themes of discovery and exploration, pastoral expansion, gold rushes, economic progress and the advance of British institutions. Sheep played a prominent role. At the Sydney Cove re-enactment, Arthur Phillip managed to land without any convicts, then delivered a speech he had never made. Aboriginal people, who were bused in from Menindee in western New South Wales, appeared on the beach in shorts, holding their spears in trepidation. As Phillip came ashore they retreated swiftly into the bush, never to be seen again. Less than 3 kilometres away, in a meeting opened at 1.30 p.m. in Sydney's Town Hall on George Street, 100 Aboriginal protesters, led by William Cooper, William Ferguson and Jack Patten, declared 26 January 'a Day of Mourning' for Aboriginal people. Patten, as president of the newly formed Aborigines' Progressive Association, spoke of 'arousing the conscience' of white Australians over the 'callous treatment' of Aboriginal people and 'the white man's seizure of our country'. The final resolution of the meeting was grounded in the acknowledgement of historical injustice:

²⁷ Macintyre, 'The Writing of Australian History', p. 18.

²⁸ Graeme Davison, The Use and Abuse of Australian History (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000), p. 182.

The history anxiety

We, as aborigines, have no reason to rejoice on Australia's 150th birthday. This land belonged to our forefathers 150 years ago, but today we are pushed further and further into the background...We have had 150 years of the white man looking after us and the result is our people are being exterminated... We ask for ordinary citizen rights and full equality with other Australians.²⁹

In these two events – the thin theatre of a state-organised event to commemorate the history of British civilisation and a minority Aboriginal protest determined to expose the same history as a cause for mourning and a catalyst to demand justice – the seeds of Australia's future history anxiety were contained. This fragile history had no clear foundational narrative but was instead consigned to State and federal government committees for crudely choreographed celebration. Australia would become increasingly troubled by its long history of frontier violence and 'callous treatment' of Indigenous people.

The rise of Australian history

The second half of the twentieth century witnessed an unparalleled expansion in the study, writing and production of history, particularly in the western world. In the space of less than 50 years, Australia went from being 'a land without history' to a nation preoccupied with its past and bitterly divided over its history of settlement.

The sudden expansion of history was evident both within and outside the academy. In Australia, as in Britain and the United States, the number of local and regional historical societies rose dramatically, with well over 1,000 in existence in Australia by the end of the century. Interest in family history boomed, facilitated by increased leisure time and the far greater range and accessibility of archival sources. With this came a growing obsession with historical 'roots', particularly in immigrant nations, where many individuals who lived in rapidly globalising economies sought mooring in the past. Similar motivations were evident in the emergence of the 'heritage industry'. Heritage, a word previously applied to British traditions or the preservation of the natural environment, quickly came to incorporate the 'saved' architectural remnants of the past. National trusts modelled on the English National Trust were formed in several Australian States in the late 1940s and 1950s. By the end of the century, buildings and places competed for heritage 'listing' in a hierarchy of orders: local heritage, state heritage, national

29 The Abo Call, April 1938; Sydney Morning Herald, 27 January 1938.

heritage and world heritage. With the arrival of transcontinental air travel, the past became yet another commodity in a surging tourist market, a more 'authentic' differentiator of late capitalist societies that looked increasingly alike. In Australia, 'Historic Site' signs sprang like mushrooms along major roads and highways, each diversion yet another reflection of the country's longing for a deep past – in this instance, one that could be experienced, photographed and easily consumed within the hour.³⁰

As well as promoting the protection of historic buildings and 'sites', tourism played a role in encouraging the erection of public monuments, which then served as interpretative 'stop-off' points for both domestic and international visitors. Jay Winter has described the 'memory boom' of the late twentieth century, one that was frequently shaped by the state-funded commemoration of war, and in turn fostered a culture in which popular memory proved more influential in determining understandings of war than the publications emanating from the academy.³¹ Nonetheless, the two were not mutually exclusive. By the 1980s an ever-increasing number of university-trained historians took up employment in the new field of 'public history', working in museums, writing commissioned histories, advising State or Commonwealth institutions, providing historical research for media productions or carrying out research for heritage bodies.

Between the wars, there were barely a dozen university posts in history. By the early 1980s well over 500 historians were teaching history in tertiary institutions across the country. From the 1940s to the 1960s, the decades of the most rapid university expansion, the History Department at the University of Melbourne alone produced over 550 honours graduates, almost half of them securing employment as academics.³² In Canberra, the Australian National University (ANU) was established in 1946 explicitly to foster Australian research capacity in fields of national significance, including the social sciences but not the humanities. The History Department within the ANU's Research School of Social Sciences provided for research academics, a species later given succour through the establishment of the Australian Research Grants Committee (1965) and Australian Research Council (1988). The unprecedented growth of history in Australian universities was accompanied

³⁰ Noelene J. Kyle, 'Genealogy', Don Garden, 'Historical Societies' and Graeme Davison, 'Heritage', in Graeme Davison, John Hirst, and Stuart Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History* (Oxford University Press 1998), pp. 277–9, 308–9, 318–19.

³¹ Jay Winter, Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

³² Paul Bourke, 'Melbourne School of History', in Davison, Hirst and Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, pp. 425–6.

by more rigorous and standardised modes of professional practice across the academy. $^{\scriptscriptstyle 33}$

The first academic journal, *Historical Studies Australia and New Zealand*, was founded in 1940. The journal's founding editors intended that it would serve 'the growing interests and pressing problems of research' in both Australian and New Zealand history. By the 1950s, the circulation had doubled, along with academic publications in Australian history.³⁴ Student enrolments increased sharply after the war, as did popular interest in Australian history. A trend that was already evident before the war now became more pronounced. In Stuart Macintyre's words, a 'deficiency of historical consciousness' became 'a national fault to be remedied'.³⁵ University courses in history grew quickly to cater for the upsurge in demand. One historian who set out to remedy this 'national deficiency' was the young Manning Clark (1915–1991), who in the late 1940s embarked on what he called the uncharted sea of Australian history.

Over the next decade Clark produced two volumes of historical documents that quickly became the core texts for university courses in Australian history and remained so until the 1970s. With the publication of the first volume of *A History of Australia* in 1962, he emerged both as a leading academic historian and public intellectual. Although joined in the 1950s and 1960s by Russel Ward (*The Australian Legend*, 1958) and his former pupil, Geoffrey Blainey (*The Tyranny of Distance*, 1966), Clark proved the most adept at forging the connection between national identity and history, and in enlarging Australians' imagination of their past.³⁶

From the 1960s to the Bicentenary in 1988, a series of countervailing developments served to heighten a profound anxiety over Australia's past. History was pushed centre-stage, politicised as never before. What began in the 1960s as an attempt to discover Australia's 'untold story' ended in the 1990s as a demand for 'balance' as history became an emblem of national shame or pride. Throughout this period, governments, major political parties, writers, artists, intellectuals and the advertising industry looked to Australian history

- 33 Stephen Foster and Margaret M. Varghese, *The Making of the Australian National University* 1946–1996 (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1996).
- 34 Stuart Macintyre, 'Historical Journals', in Davison, Hirst and Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, pp. 315–17.
- 35 Stuart Macintyre, 'Ernest Scott', in Macintyre and Thomas (eds), *The Discovery of Australian History*, p. 89.
- 36 Carl Bridge, 'Manning Clark', in Davison, Hirst and Macintyre (eds), *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, pp. 128–9; Stuart Macintyre and Anna Clark, *The History Wars* (Melbourne University Press, 2003), pp. 50–7; Mark McKenna, *An Eye for Eternity: The Life of Manning Clark* (Melbourne University Press, 2011).

to provide the pillars of national identity and national unity. Yet well before a new national narrative had time to gain a secure foothold, it found itself attacked from different vantage points.

When news of Britain's impending membership of the European Economic Community (EEC) was first mooted in the early 1960s, the idea of Australia as a white British society quickly unravelled. The political and cultural verities that had held sway for more than a century were overturned. White Australia came to an uneasy and piecemeal end. Non-British immigration increased as Australia's geopolitics altered dramatically. Foreign policy shifted from the role of the loyal, distant member of the British Empire to a supplicant of the United States, while seeking to craft independent relations in Asia and the South Pacific. Britain's withdrawal provided the catalyst for a cultural and intellectual awakening. Together with Manning Clark and other intellectuals, artists and writers, the journalist and author Donald Horne sought to articulate the spirit of a 'new nationalism', a broad and undefined movement that occasionally spilt over into outright republicanism and was always more convinced of the British Australia it sought to reject than the new order it intended to create. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, successive Commonwealth governments attempted to invent an Australian national identity in order to fill the vacuum left by Britain's departure, either by placing greater emphasis on Australia Day (often clumsily), promoting a new national anthem (often comically), advocating the study of Australian history in schools (often in ad hoc fashion) or funding various initiatives to promote a uniquely Australian culture. James Curran and Stuart Ward have explained how in less than one generation a society that had been so certain of its British character suddenly found itself 'floundering' for new narratives of nationhood. The country was confronted with a paradox: a 'new nationalism' needed to be self-consciously invented at the very moment conventional nineteenth-century understandings of race-based nationalism were being challenged.37

From the 1950s to the 1970s, as Australian history was increasingly mined to reveal the national character, the Whig project that had characterised professional history from the time of Scott and Wood was shattered by a wave of critical histories that emerged in tandem with the new social movements – labour history, women's history and Indigenous history. The Australian nation and its British colonial past were exposed as racist, sexist

³⁷ James Curran and Stuart Ward, *The Unknown Nation: Australia after Empire* (Melbourne University Press, 2010).

and exploitative. As if to offer a belated reply to the triumphant British liberalism espoused by an earlier generation of historians, the tone of the new histories was pessimistic, frequently depicting a brutalised historical landscape incapable of redemption. For many historians on the left, the writing of history became a corrective to past injustice, an account that was 'necessarily biased' (Humphrey McQueen) and 'politically utilitarian' (Henry Reynolds).³⁸ Yet the bulk of the profession refrained from such open declarations. As academic history proliferated, its intellectual directions became less generalist and less cohesive, ultimately fracturing into myriad specialist pursuits, each with its own self-referential terminology. Inclined to cautious, oblique prose, instinctively distrusting popularisers such as Clark and largely suspicious of the electronic media, the majority of professional historians avoided media engagement. Sobriety, objectivity, factual accuracy and distance were the watchwords that defined their disciplinary practice. Their audience was not the general public but one another.

By the 1980s a significant chasm had opened between academic history and popular history. The influence of French post-structuralism in the humanities only served to entrench this gap and further undermine traditional narratives of national progress. From this perspective, the nation was merely a construction, a web of myth hung on the artifice of narrative. The forms of historical writing that had previously framed national history, such as political, institutional and economic history, declined sharply. Thus at the same time as historians were asked to speak to the nation, they began to desert the nation. Verity Burgman and Jenny Lee's introduction to A People's History of Australia, for example, published in 1988, left readers in no doubt about their intentions: 'This history is critical not celebratory. It rejects myths of national progress and unity. It starts from a recognition that Australian settler society was built on invasion and dispossession.'39 When, in the same year, the Opposition leader, John Howard, rose to address Queen Elizabeth II, parliamentarians and assembled guests at the opening of the new Parliament House in Canberra, he condemned the politics of the 1960s and 1970s as 'probably the most cynical and sceptical of modern times'. In Howard's eyes, historians and other intellectuals on the left had failed the nation because they had condemned Australia's history as chauvinist, racist and sexist. Echoing Geoffrey Blainey, Howard later condemned the dominance

³⁸ Reynolds quoted in McKenna, *Looking for Blackfellas' Point*, p. 50; Humphrey McQueen, *Aborigines, Race and Racism* (Melbourne: Penguin, 1974), introduction.

³⁹ Verity Burgmann and Jenny Lee (eds), *Making a Life: A People's History of Australia since* 1788 (Melbourne: McPhee Gribble 1988), p. I.

of 'black-armband history' that had denied Australians the possibility of celebrating their past achievements.⁴⁰

In the last decades of the twentieth century, anxiety concerning the potential loss and dishonouring of British heritage, and the equal determination of historians to expose the callous treatment of Indigenous Australians in the past, resulted in history occupying an unusually prominent position in Australia's public culture.⁴¹ Both the Liberal and Labor parties sought to define partisan ideology through competing historical narratives: the former prosaic, utilitarian, self-satisfied, congratulatory and overly sensitive to criticism of Australia's British heritage; the latter mildly republican, acutely self-conscious and self-serving in the construction of its own historical mythology, and willing to acknowledge historical injustice.

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s there was a growing awareness that history had the power to make or unmake the nation. The Cook bicentenary in April 1970, the Bicentenary in 1988, the centenary of Federation in 2001 and the annual commemoration of Australia Day (which critics were now calling 'invasion day') were all undermined by the nagging suggestion of illegitimacy. The land of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people had been taken, often violently, without treaty and compensation. With the handing down of the High Court's Mabo decision in 1992, in which 'native title' was recognised as having existed within the common law, the fiction of terra nullius was exposed. The nation appeared to be without 'ethical roots'. Consequently, foundational historical narratives that relied upon the history of settlement (now tainted by the acknowledgement of illegal dispossession) or constitution making (now sullied by the discriminatory history of white Australia) were unable to gain traction, a development that only intensified the conservative backlash when John Howard was elected in 1996 after thirteen years of Labor government.42

Anxiety and apology

From the mid-1990s until Howard's departure as prime minister in 2007, 'history wars' dominated the nation's media. Ranging across a wide cultural and political front, led by conservative politicians, journalists and intellectuals,

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⁴⁰ Howard in Sally Warhaft (ed.), Well May We Say...The Speeches That Made Australia, (Melbourne: Black Inc., 2004), pp. 551–2.

⁴¹ Bain Attwood, Telling the Truth about Aboriginal History (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005), p. 14.

⁴² On Mabo, see Attwood (ed.), In the Age of Mabo.

and fuelled by the vigorous support of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, they were marked by intense and often acrimonious public debate regarding the history of Indigenous-settler relations. At stake for conservatives were the honour and integrity of successive colonial and Commonwealth governments throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Consequently, they responded defensively and vigorously to a range of questions posed by historians and the Indigenous protest movement. Was there a frontier war? How many Indigenous people died on the frontier? Were Indigenous people massacred? How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were removed from their parents by state authorities? Did these children constitute the Stolen Generations? Should the Australian government offer a formal apology for the forced removal of Indigenous children? How was it possible for the nation to build a history of honour and pride if its history of settlement was perceived as shameful? In this political climate historians were frequently asked to declare their position, a trend noticed by Richard White in 1997: 'Are we positive or negative in our view of Australia? Is Australian history a history of violence and exploitation? Or is it a history of achievement and creativity and originality?' The historian's primary aim was to understand the past, yet this was not what was being asked of history in the public domain. Rather, Australian history was being conscripted, either to justify or condemn the nation.43

The profound dislocation that resulted from the decades-long confrontation with Australia's Indigenous history had far-reaching ramifications for the body politic. History was increasingly imagined through Christian metaphors of evil, atonement and absolution, the nation personified as a soul stained by sin or a conscience plagued by repressed memories. In 1968 W.E.H. Stanner described 'a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale'.⁴⁴ Twelve years later, in a subsequent series of Boyer Lectures, Bernard Smith diagnosed the causes of the 'guilt problem' that 'haunted' Australian culture – the 'spectre' of 'homicide, rape, [and] the forcible abduction of [Indigenous] children from their parents'.⁴⁵ Throughout the debate over British settlement in the 1980s 'white guilt', 'shame' and 'mourning' plagued the Bicentenary celebrations. In 1993 the Labor prime minister Paul Keating spoke in a confessional tone of the nation's responsibility for murder, dispossession and the removal

43 Richard White, 'Inventing Australia Revisited', in Hudson and Bolton (eds), *Creating Australia*, p. 21.

⁴⁴ W.E.H. Stanner, After the Dreaming: Black and White Australians – An Anthropologist's View, Boyer Lectures, 1968 (Sydney: ABC, 1969), ch. 2.

⁴⁵ Bernard Smith, *The Spectre of Truganini*, Boyer Lectures, 1980 (Sydney: ABC, 1980), pp. 8, 10, 17.

of Indigenous children, as if to take the first step in 'reconciliation' with Indigenous Australians. In 1997, with the release of the *Bringing Them Home* report on the Stolen Generations, and the establishment of 'National Sorry Day' soon afterwards, the language of moral disquiet, shame and atonement reached its climax.

The nation's media was deluged with stories of the personal tragedies in Indigenous families caused by the child removal policies of previous governments. Through the public telling of these stories, as Bain Attwood has shown, individual testament became one of the most powerful and authoritative forms of historical understanding.⁴⁶ Gradually, church groups, State parliaments and many individual citizens, prompted by the annual commemoration of Sorry Day on 27 May, apologised formally to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 'Sorry books' were passed around in workplaces and public spaces, filling the public culture with the language of contrition for past transgressions. Only the Howard government remained steadfast in its refusal to offer an apology. In February 2008, when Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd finally apologised on behalf of the nation, his speech was much more than an apology to the Stolen Generations. In its content and tone, Rudd's speech sounded an admission of responsibility for two centuries of 'mistreatment', a cathartic purging described by the Sydney Morning Herald as 'a nationwide emotional release...a gesture of atonement for the full disastrous history of indigenous relations since 1788'.47 The Christian spirit of Rudd's speech, with its talk of 'healing', the end of 'denial' and a nation that had been 'wrestling with its own soul', was as much a cry for absolution - for an end to the history anxiety - as it was an acknowledgement of wrongdoing.

Contemporaneous with these developments, a more comforting historical narrative emerged in response, one that completely circumvented the dilemmas of building a foundational story from the history of settlement on Australian soil. The Anzac legend – now refashioned in the image of conservative nationalism as the embodiment of Australian 'values' and conveniently positioned 15,000 kilometres offshore – provided a solution to decades of divisive debate over the history of Indigenous–settler relations. Here, at last, was a heroic foundational narrative that was secure, one that was not haunted by the troubled history of dispossession, and one that gave

⁴⁶ Bain Attwood and Fiona Magowan (eds), *Telling Stories: Indigenous History and Memory in Australia and New Zealand* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2001).

⁴⁷ Sydney Morning Herald, 14 February 2007.

rise to feelings of honour and pride rather than guilt and shame. Promoted by Prime Minister John Howard and a genuine hunger in the community for an uncomplicated and positive historical narrative that could serve as a source of national communion, Anzac Day became Australia's de facto national day, the nation's exalted moment of creation.

From the early 1990s, encouraged by a burgeoning tourist industry, thousands of 'pilgrims', many of them around the same age as the soldiers whose deaths they sought to understand, began to attend Anzac Day ceremonies at Anzac Cove in Turkey. Prime ministers also journeyed to Gallipoli, delivering misty-eyed speeches at the Dawn Service as part of fully choreographed spectacles that resembled concert entertainment, all beamed to nationwide television audiences back home. The stories of the Australian soldiers' experience at Gallipoli were told repeatedly in the nation's media and publishing industry, stories of trauma, death and survival. Over time, they constituted something akin to national sagas, a body of myth that re-created the Anzacs as earlier, more naive versions of contemporary Australians. Thus the history of the Anzac landings became less relevant than 'the Anzac spirit', a more malleable concept that could be used by politicians eager to be identified as latter-day incarnations of the soldiers they eulogised. As the nation approached the centenary of the Anzac landings in 2015, it appeared that the remaking of the Anzac myth had managed to provide many of the things that history on Australian soil could not: a history that was immutable, sacred and free of rancour and political division, a history that could justify the existence of the nation and remain uncontested.⁴⁸

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the future of history in Australia is at once less certain and more hopeful than it was at the time of Federation in 1901. New technologies have altered our perception of time. An ever-quickening present obliterates an ever-receding past. Yesterday appears as distant as 1788. Even more history will be produced in the course of the next century than ever before, the majority not by professional historians but by history makers in the popular culture – in museums, government institutions and private corporations; in the tourist industry; in film, radio and television; in an ailing print media, and 'online', the place most likely to subsume all others.

Such history already shapes popular memory far more powerfully than the history emanating from the academy, although it often draws on academic

⁴⁸ Mark McKenna, 'Anzac Day: How Did It Become Australia's National Day?', in Marilyn Lake et al., What's Wrong with Anzac? The Militarisation of Australian History (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2010), pp. 110–34.

expertise. In popular memory, the *distance* from the past prized by professional historians takes second place to being *present* in the past, to the language of immediacy, spectacle and recreation. The boundaries that once separated history from fiction and myth appear more blurred. Increasingly, the popular embrace of history is an emotional embrace, one that runs counter to the more critical understanding brought to the past by historians. Although historians have in some ways moved even further from national history with the study of 'transnational' and global history, other sub-disciplines such as environmental history and cultural history remain closely concerned with the unique particularities of place.

Australia enters the third century of European settlement continuing to come to terms with the land and its Indigenous past, an antiquity non-Indigenous people still struggle to access. The shift in historical consciousness has been hesitant and uneasy. Along the edges of the country's major river systems, the weeping willows that clog the riverbanks are being removed.

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1900	Edmund Barton (Protectionist) appointed first prime minister
1901	Inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia (1 January)
1901	First federal election; Protectionists retain office with support of Labor
	Party
1901	Immigration Restriction Act
1901	Pacific Island Labourers Act
1902	Franchise Act extends vote to women and takes it from Aboriginal
	people
1903	High Court of Australia established
1903	Alfred Deakin (Protectionist) succeeds Barton as prime minister
1904	NSW royal commission into decline of the birth rate reports
1904	Deakin resigns; J.C. Watson (Labor) forms ministry
1904	George Reid (Free Trade–Protectionist Coalition) forms ministry
1904	Conciliation and Arbitration Act
1905	Reid defeated by Deakin, who forms Protectionist ministry
1906	Transfer of Papua from British to Australian administration
1907	Australasia wins Davis Cup for tennis
1907	Rugby League begins in Sydney
1907	First surf lifesaving association established in NSW
1907	Harvester judgment introduces first basic wage
1908	Lyne Tariff establishes protection of local industry
1908	Visit of the US 'Great White Fleet'
1908	Commonwealth old-age pension introduced
1908	Deakin resigns; Andrew Fisher (Labor) forms ministry
1909	Fusion of Free Traders and Protectionists forms Liberal Party
1909	Alfred Deakin (Liberal) forms ministry
1909	Australian Institute of Tropical Medicine established
1909	Vic. becomes last State to adopt female franchise
1909	University of Queensland established
1910	Andrew Fisher (Labor) wins federal election
1911	Royal Australian Navy established
1911	ACT created
1911	Administration of NT transferred from SA to the Commonwealth
1911	Compulsory military training introduced

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1911	University of Western Australia established
1911	Commonwealth Bank created
1911	Compulsory enrolment for federal elections
1912	Maternity allowance introduced
1912	Construction of transcontinental railway begins
1913	Canberra named capital of Australia and foundation stone laid
1913	Joseph Cook (Liberal) wins federal election
1914	World War 1 commences (4 August)
1914	Andrew Fisher (Labor) wins federal election
1915	Australia New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) formed
1915	Broken Hill Proprietary (BHP) begins steel production in Newcastle
1915	Australian forces land at Gallipoli (25 April)
1915	William Morris Hughes (Labor) succeeds Fisher as prime minister
1916	Australian forces join Western Front
1916	Referendum on conscription for overseas service fails
1916	Labor Party splits over conscription for overseas service; Hughes forms
	new ministry
1917	Federal election returns Hughes (Nationalist) ministry
1917	General strike in NSW
1917	Second referendum on conscription fails
1918	John Monash leads Army Corps in advance on Western Front
1918	Armistice with Germany (11 November)
1918	Preferential voting for federal elections introduced
1918	Influenza pandemic reaches Australia
1919	Red Flag riot in Brisbane
1919	New Guinea becomes a mandate of Australia
1919	Arbitration Court confirms female basic wage of 54 per cent of the male
	wage
1920	Country Party formed in federal politics
1920	Qantas (Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services) established
1920	Communist Party of Australia founded
1921	Tariff Board established
1921	First woman, Edith Cowan, elected to parliament (Legislative Assembly,
	WA)
1921	Labor government abolishes Qld's Legislative Council
1922	Country Women's Association founded in NSW
1922	Empire Settlement Act assists British migration
1922	Federal election leaves Nationalist ministry dependent on support of
	Country Party
1923	S.M. Bruce forms Nationalist–Country Party Coalition ministry
1923	Radio broadcasting commences
1924	Compulsory voting introduced for federal elections
1925	Australian War Memorial founded; opened 1941
1926	Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) founded (CSIRO 1949)
1926	Imperial Conference in London defines Dominion status
1927	Federal government moves to Canberra
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1927	Loan Council establishes control over public borrowing
1927	Australasian (from 1947 Australian) Council of Trade Unions (ACTU)
	established
1928–29	Waterside workers' strike
1929-30	Lockout of coalminers
1929	Bruce–Page government defeated on Maritime Industries Bill
1929	James Scullin (Labor) wins federal election
1929	Onset of Depression
1930	Election of J.T. Lang (Labor) as premier of NSW
1930	Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) established
1931	Arbitration Court cuts basic wage by 10 per cent
1931	Isaac Isaacs becomes first Australian-born governor-general
1931	Premiers' Plan of cuts to public spending adopted by Commonwealth
-25-	and States
1931	First airmail service to United Kingdom
1931	Lang's supporters in federal parliament bring down Scullin ministry
1931	Joseph Lyons (United Australia Party) wins federal election
1932	Sydney Harbour Bridge opened
1932	Dismissal of NSW premier Jack Lang
1932	Australian Broadcasting Commission (ABC) established; becomes
20	Corporation in 1983
1932	Ottawa Agreement on imperial trade preference
1932-33	Bodyline cricket series
1933	Australian Antarctic Territory declared
1933	Australian Aborigines' League formed (Vic.)
1933	WA votes to secede from Commonwealth
1933	Commonwealth Grants Commission established
1933	Australian Women's Weekly begins publication
1934	John Latham leads Goodwill Mission to Asia
1934	Federal election returns Lyons to office; United Australia Party and
	Country Party form coalition
1935	BHP begins steel production at Port Kembla (NSW)
1935–37	Royal Commission into Banking
1936	Trade diversion dispute
1936	National Health and Medical Research Council established
1937	First interstate conference of Native Administrators and Protectors,
	Canberra
1937	Aborigines' Progressive Association formed (NSW)
1938	Sesquicentennial celebrations and Aboriginal Day of Mourning
1938	National insurance scheme enacted; abandoned in 1939
1939	'Black Friday' (13 January) bushfires in Vic., 71 deaths
1939	After death of Lyons, Robert Menzies (United Australia Party) becomes
	prime minister
1939	Arbitration Court standardises 44-hour working week
1939	Menzies announces war against Germany (3 September)
1940	First Australian diplomatic representative appointed

1940	First contingent of Australian Imperial Force (AIF) leaves for Egypt
1940	Communist Party declared illegal
1940	Federal election leaves Menzies (United Australia Party–Country Party)
	ministry without a majority
1941	Siege of Tobruk and evacuation of Greece
1941	Child endowment introduced
1941	Arthur Fadden (Country Party–United Australia Party Coalition) replaces Menzies as prime minister
1941	John Curtin (Labor) replaces Fadden as prime minister
1941	Japan enters war (7 December)
1942	Fall of Singapore
1942	Bombing of Darwin
1942	Battle of Coral Sea
1942	Japanese advance halted on Kokoda Track, PNG
1942	Uniform taxation introduced by federal government
1943	First women (Dorothy Tangney and Enid Lyons) elected to Commonwealth
	parliament
1943	Conscription for overseas service in the Pacific
1944	Referendum to provide federal government with powers for post-war
	reconstruction defeated
1944	Liberal Party of Australia formed
1945	Ben Chifley (Labor) becomes prime minister following death of John
	Curtin
1945	Victory in Europe (8 May)
1945	Victory in the Pacific (15 August)
1946	Aboriginal pastoral workers strike in Pilbara region, WA
1946	Australian National University established
1947	Qantas nationalised
1947	First displaced persons arrive from Europe
1947	Chifley government legislates for nationalisation of banking; High
_	Court declares legislation unconstitutional
1948	Nationality and Citizenship Act creates status of Australian citizen
1948	Enlargement of Commonwealth parliament; proportional representation
	introduced for Senate elections
1948	General Motors–Holden launches Holden motor car
1949	Snowy Mountains hydro-electric project commences
1949	National coal strike
1949	Robert Menzies (Liberal–Country Coalition) wins federal election
1950	Colombo Plan established
1950	Menzies legislates to dissolve the Communist Party; High Court
	declares the legislation unconstitutional
1950	Australian troops sent to Korean war
1951	Australia, New Zealand and United States Security Treaty (ANZUS)
1951	Referendum to ban the Communist Party fails
1952	Nuclear testing at Monte Bello island, off coast of WA; later tests at Maralinga, SA

1953	Atomic Energy Commission established
1954	Royal tour of Queen Elizabeth II
1954	Defection of Vladimir Petrov, Soviet diplomat
1954–55	Royal Commission on Espionage
1954	Formation of Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO)
1955	Labor Party splits and anti-communists form Democratic Labor Party
1955	Lake Pedder area in Tas. declared a national park
1956	Television transmission begins
1956	Olympic Games held in Melbourne
1957	Murray review of Australian universities
1957	Australia–Japan trade agreement
1958	Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement formed; became Federal
	Council for the Advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders
	(FCAATSI) in 1964
1958	Immigration Restriction Act repealed; Migration Act passed
1960	National Library of Australia established
1961	Iron ore deposits discovered in WA
1961	Introduction of contraceptive pill
1962	Australia provides military aid to Malaya against Indonesia (to 1966)
1962	Right to vote in federal elections extended to all Aboriginal Australians
1963	Yirrkala bark petition
1964	Compulsory military service reintroduced
1965	Australia commits troops to Vietnam War
1966	Retirement of Menzies; Harold Holt becomes prime minister
1966	Decimal currency introduced
1966	Visit of US president L.B. Johnson
1966	Gurindji walk-off from Wave Hill, NT
1967	Ronald Ryan hanged, the last execution in Australia
1967	Referendum gives the Commonwealth power to make special laws for
	Aboriginal Australians
1967	Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) established
1967	Harold Holt disappears while swimming at Portsea, Vic.
1968	John Gorton becomes prime minister
1968	Australia adopts metric system of weights and measures
1968	Appeals from High Court to Privy Council in federal and constitutional
	cases abolished
1969	Arbitration Commission introduces equal pay to women for equal work
1969	Abortion law reform begins (SA)
1970	First Moratorium demonstration against Vietnam War
1971	William McMahon replaces Gorton as prime minister
1971	McMahon announces withdrawal of Australian troops from Vietnam
1972	Aboriginal Tent Embassy established in front of Parliament House,
	Canberra
1972	Gough Whitlam (Labor) wins federal election
1972	Department of Aboriginal Affairs established
1972	Male homosexuality partly decriminalised in SA
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1973	Opening of Sydney Opera House
1973	Patrick White awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature
1973	Australia Council for the Arts established
1974	Tertiary fees abolished; full cost of higher education absorbed by
	Commonwealth
1974	Gough Whitlam returned as prime minister in double dissolution
	election
1974	Cyclone Tracy destroys much of Darwin
1975	Country Party renamed National Country Party, from 1982 National
	Party
1975	Racial Discrimination Act
1975	Appeals from High Court to Privy Council abolished
1975	Family Law Act provides for no-fault divorce
1975	Arrival of first refugees from Vietnam
1975	Whitlam transfers land to Gurindji people
1975	Universal medical insurance scheme, Medibank, introduced
1975	PNG independence
1975	Dismissal of Whitlam ministry (11 November); Malcolm Fraser becomes
	prime minister
1975	Federal election returns Fraser (Liberal-National Country Coalition)
	ministry
1976	Sir Douglas Nicholls first Aboriginal Governor (SA)
1976	Federal Court of Australia established
1976	Tasmanian Wilderness Society formed to prevent damming the Franklin
	River
1976	Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act
1977	Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian churches form Uniting
	Church
1978	Establishment of Special Broadcasting Service (SBS)
1978	NT begins self-government
1978	Australia ends whaling
1978	First Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras
1979	Maternity leave introduced
1979	Australian Refugee Council established
1980	Merger of Melbourne and Sydney exchanges creates Australian Stock
	Exchange
1982	National Gallery of Australia opened
1983	R.J.L. (Bob) Hawke (Labor) wins federal election
1983	National Economic Summit
1983	High Court upholds legislation to prevent damming of Franklin River
	in Tasmania
1983	Float of the Australian dollar
1984	Charles Perkins appointed Secretary of Department of Aboriginal
	Affairs
1984	Universal medical scheme, Medicare, restored
1984	Equal Opportunity Act

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1985	Uluru (Ayers Rock) returned to Indigenous ownership
1986	Australia Acts cut last legal ties to Britain, and abolish appeals from State
	courts to Privy Council
1986	Affirmative Action Act
1988	Australian Bicentenary
1988	Introduction of Unified National System of higher education, followed
1900	by reintroduction of fees
1989	Fitzgerald Royal Commission reveals extensive corruption in Qld
1989 1990	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) established
	Australia enters Gulf War
1991	Paul Keating (Labor) defeats Hawke in leadership challenge and
1991	becomes prime minister
1001	Privatisation of Commonwealth Bank and Qantas begins
1991	Universal superannuation introduced
1992	Council of Australian Governments (COAG) established
1992	Mandatory detention of asylum seekers introduced
1992	
1992	Mabo judgment recognises native title in Australia (June)
1992	The Green Party of Australia created
1993	Industrial Relations Reform Act introduces enterprise bargaining
1996	Wik judgment
1996	John Howard (Liberal–National Party) wins federal election
1996	<i>Workplace Relations Act</i> restricts scope of Industrial Commission awards
1997	Privatisation of Telstra commences
1997	Formation of Pauline Hanson's One Nation party
1997	Bringing Them Home report on the Stolen Generations
1998	Howard government amends Native Title Act
1999	Referendum on the formation of the Australian republic fails
2000	Introduction of goods and services tax (GST)
2000	Olympic Games held in Sydney
2001	MV Tampa prevented from landing asylum seekers, and Australian
	islands excised from migration zone
2002	Bali bombing kills 202, including 88 Australians
2003	Australia joins invasion of Iraq
2004	ATSIC abolished
2007	Commonwealth report leads to 'Intervention' into NT Aboriginal
	communities
2007	Kevin Rudd (Labor) wins federal election
2008	Rudd apologises to Stolen Generations
2008	Global financial crisis
2008	Quentin Bryce becomes first female governor-general
2009	Black Saturday (7 February) bushfires (Vic.), 173 deaths
2010	Julia Gillard defeats Kevin Rudd in leadership challenge and becomes
	first female prime minister
2010	Federal election leaves Gillard (Labor) ministry without a majority
2011	Clean Energy Act
2011	Paid parental leave introduced

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