

LABOUR HISTORY NEWS Spring 2023

Labour History Society (South Australia)

To study history means submitting yourself to chaos, but nevertheless retaining your faith in order and meaning

Herman Hesse, German writer and poet (1877-1962)



The Labour History News is produced quarterly for the LHSSA by the editorial collective:

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Contributions by members are welcome

STOP PRESS – this **REISSUE** of the newsletter incorporates comment on the REFERENDUM RESULT (p22-8)

- This Spring issue of *Labour History News* includes reports from the last three LHSSA meetings: **Henry Reynold's** talk at Adelaide Uni on May 7, the **Right to Protest** debate at the UWU on July 9, and the **AGM** on August 20 – which was preceded by a panel discussion on **Enterprise Bargaining: Past & Present**.
- Doug Melvin and Ron Slee provide interesting reviews of the **Peoples History Museum in Manchester** and **Anna Funder's** challenge to Orwell's reputation in her new book **Wifedom**.
- **Victoria Fielding** provides an interim report on Murdoch Press bias preceding the Voice referendum, while **Murray Goot** reveals how the framing of Gallup Poll questions leading up to the 1951 referendum to ban the Communist Party influenced the answers – leading to a referendum result which surprised everyone.
- This Spring issue ends with tributes to three people who have made important contributions to the world of work and workers: two local (**Vic Poticarry & Mark McEwen**) and another from interstate (**June Hearn**).

Ken Bridge & Ron Slee (eds)

REPORTS

The 2023 AGM (held on 20 August)

The major item of the 2023 AGM was a report from the Executive recommending a series of amendments to the Constitution. In delivering the report, the Chair of the Constitution Review Sub-Committee, Pat Wright, outlined the background to the review and highlighted the collective work the Executive had maintained during 2022-23 to ensure that in spite of four resignations: it co-opted two more excellent new members to ensure it did not need to cancel any Executive meetings (all of which were very well-attended and mostly chaired by the President), convened all of the scheduled General Meetings (all of which were very successful), published four excellent Newsletters and, most importantly, unanimously endorsed all of the **Amendments** to the Constitution being proposed.

- Designed to strengthen the management of the Society and in particular the Executive Committee, the amendments were all endorsed by the AGM with immediate effect. **The key amendments** are:
 - The duties of the President are now detailed.
 - The President and other seven members of the Executive will continue to be elected by the AGM but the other officer position (Vice-Presidents, Secretary and Treasurer) will now be elected by the Executive Committee along with the non-executive officers of the Society (Public Officer, Branch Representative to the National Executive, Trade Union Liaison Officer and the Editorial Collective responsible for the publication of newsletters).
 - All of these appointments will be communicated to the Society membership as soon as possible after the AGM. All co-options to the Executive will also be communicated to Society members.

(The AGM and Executive Committee election results are given below)

Other business carried out at the AGM:

- The AGM awarded Life Membership of the Society to Jude Elton for her sterling service over many years, including as President.

- The AGM saluted four recently departed comrades with a minute silence, and tributes were paid to their work for the Society and the labour movement: Vic Potticary (PKIU and LHS), Mark McEwen (CFMEU), Mick Tumbers (AMWU) and Dr Ray Broomhill (Labour Studies).
- David Faber read his 2022-23 President's report to the AGM (see below).

LHSSA executive committee meeting 11 October – election results for the various committee roles:

President: David Faber (elected at the AGM)	Elected members: Ralph Clarke, Doug Melvin, Jim Phillips
Vice-President: Vini Ciccarello	Branch Representative, National Executive: David Faber
Vice-President: Ron Slee	Public Officer: Greg Stevens
Secretary: Lyn Longo	Trade Union Liaison Officer: Doug Melvin
Treasurer: Kevin Kaeding (Ralph Clarke assisting)	Editorial Collective: Ken Bridge and Ron Slee
Co-opted member: Greg Stevens	

LHSSA AGM 2022-3 President's Report

Charles Dickens reported that the then recent Revolutionary Era was 'the best of times, the worst of times' and, as such, much like everyday experience at any time. So has been the experience of your Executive during the 2022-3 financial year. I am reminded also of Machiavelli's remark that reformer's attract opposition from vested interests. Certain problems must be addressed, if we are to move on from what can only be called an existential crisis for the Branch, & thus the Society in this State. A number of good Executives resigned during the year, as members will have noted. Tensions around implementation of the members reforming will, as expressed at last year's AGM. If they recur, will need to be referred to a Special General Meeting.

Members will recall, that in tendering my 2021-2 Vice-President's report, I advised I would be introducing administrative reform if elected President. That report was accepted *nem con* and I was elected President unanimously, democratically honour bound to implement that administrative agenda. During this past financial year, I issued the following reiteration of modernization policy.

It is necessary to future proof our Branch in the current era. Our membership is small and ageing, as is generally the case with associations in late capitalist civil society. So, the problem of how to prosper and rejuvenate ourselves so as to discharge our mission of keeping working class traditions alive historically is before us. A new generation of unionists and intellectuals has grown up with information technology. Joining an organisation for them is not a matter of responding to notices and attending meetings: it is a matter of websites and keystrokes. Only if the path to membership is smoothed for them technologically and a membership drive launched accordingly will our Branch have ongoing success.

But let us turn from the denunciation of these internal problems to a review of the achievements of the Executive under my Presidency during the 2022-3 FY. Your 2023 Executive has maintained the increasingly elevated quality of cultural offerings to members and friends in the community. The Henry Reynolds event in particular also attracted great support from the general public and the Universities. The high point of the historical projection of Labour History into the wider community during this past FY, it launched the Branch into the national debate about the political issue of the year, the Voice Referendum.

With my Presidential support, this event, better attended even than the 2021 State Conference, was almost wholly curated by (Dr) Adrian Graves (Oxon), employing his administrative talent & intellectual connections. His service as Secretary to the Executive was signal, and in regretfully receiving his resignation from that position, the Executive remarked upon his exemplary role as an event manager, over recent years. The service as Secretary of Dr Grant Banfield was also exemplary, & the appreciation of the Executive was made patent in regretfully accepting his resignation from that role.

I take this opportunity to emphasise the importance of the work of Dr Victoria Fielding as an Executive member & as Vice President for 2 terms. The youngest of all Executive members over 3 terms, her acumen & depth of experience were obvious. In sum, as VP, Dr Fielding was across every matter of policy & all things technical; with some Presidential support, she admirably curated the Frank Lundie General Meeting. I should note too, that VP Ron Slee wrote for the Executive a useful membership report, which remains on the books for realization by the incoming Executive.

Much positive comment has accrued during the year on improvement in the quality of our newsletter, *SA Labour History News*. Credit principally goes to co-editors Ken Bridge, Doug Melvin & Ron Slee, & of course to contributors.

(Dr) David Faber, President ASSLH SA Branch 2022-3



Voice to Parliament, Voice to the World
Emeritus Professor Henry Reynolds
Bragg Theatre, University of Adelaide
May 7, 2023

On Sunday, May 7th, this year's History Festival was celebrated by the LHSSA Branch's (jointly with the Graham F Smith Peace Foundation) with an address in the University of Adelaide's Bragg Theatre by the distinguished Professor Henry Reynolds, pioneer of Australian frontier historiography. His views on the Voice Referendum were highly topical, given that will be one of the most important events in the 2023 political calendar. Professor Reynolds was accompanied to Adelaide by his wife, former Queensland ALP Senator **Margaret Reynolds**, who remains active in the Party, particularly through the ALP women's network. The State Attorney General and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Honourable Kyam Maher, was also present. The event was well attended, the History Trust having given its support.

David Faber

To listen to the audio recording of Professor Reynolds' address [click here](#)

For a transcript of the talk contact the co-editor kbridge38@gmail.com

The following article by Henry Reynolds draws on themes from his May 7 address:

The Voice and the problem of race

Henry Reynolds

Pearls and Irritations July 13, 2023

Defeat for the Voice referendum will reverberate internationally. Surviving suspicions about our racist past will be refreshed. It will come at the same time as our renewed embrace of our 'forever friends' in Britain and the United States and our growing enthusiasm for closer ties with NATO. Henry Reynolds

Race is constantly referred to by both sides in the contentious debate about the Voice to Parliament. This is only to be expected. Australia has wrestled with the problem since the end of the Second World War. It became a matter of the highest priority for our foreign policy during the 1960's. Two questions stood out—the White Australia Policy and the treatment of the Aborigines. It was a case of two settled and still widely supported policies which were increasingly out of time and serious liabilities as world opinion underwent rapid and dramatic change.

The global commitment to racial equality intensified with the foundation of the United Nations and the passage of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Rapid decolonisation increased the momentum for change. Within a generation 96 erstwhile colonies gained their independence and by 1961 African and Asian countries had gained a majority in the U.N's General Assembly. White settler states – Australia, United States, Canada and New Zealand – came under mounting pressure to reform their common legacy of racial discrimination. South Africa's fate was a continuing warning. Deeply committed to Apartheid it was expelled from the U.N in 1974 and suffered from rapidly intensifying hostility.

Australia attempted to tough it out until the 1960's using well-worn rhetoric. The Aborigines, it was traditionally argued, were unique stone-age people who needed to be protected from the modern world not incorporated within it. Policy adopted towards them was an internal domestic matter as were our immigration programmes. These arguments had served Australia well during the first half of the C20th but by the 1960's they were totally discredited. Criticism rained down on Australia from many parts of the world. The Department of External Affairs, as it was at the time, collected critical editorials sent in, as requested, from their far flung ambassadors but, in reply, instructed them to avoid any public reaction. But it was clear that Australia had been left isolated as the currents of world opinion had swirled out of reach. The General Assembly passed a Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1963 the principles of which were embodied in the resulting Convention in 1965.

The Whitlam government reacted swiftly to meet the challenge. Immigration policy shed its racial bias, the provisions of the racial discrimination convention were embodied in legislation in 1975 and the Northern Territory Land Rights Act was introduced to parliament and eventually passed by the incoming Fraser government in 1976. After a period of failed attempts to push legislation further the High Court intervened with the radical decision in the Mabo judgement of 1992 to overturn the doctrine of terra nullius. It was a judgement that was widely studied and applauded overseas. Australia it was thought was in decisive retreat from its racist past.

The current debate about the Voice threatens to reverse that perception. At the heart of the controversy is the argument that it seeks to give powers and privileges to indigenous Australians not accorded to other minorities. It discriminates on the basis of race and is consequently divisive. The truly surprising feature of the debate is that there is virtually no reference to what by now is the settled global view about the distinctive rights of the world's nearly 500 million indigenous people. These were embodied in the ILO Convention 169 of 1989. Then in 2007 the General Assembly adopted the Declaration on Rights of Indigenous People. One hundred and forty three countries were in favour and eleven abstained. Australia signed the document in 2009. As with so many international developments the Declaration has received very little publicity in Australia. But attention has stepped up recently. A year ago the Law Council of Australia called on the federal government to comprehensively adopt the Declaration 'in order to protect the human rights of the First Nations People.' It was the Council observed, the authoritative international standard informing the way governments across the globe should engage with and protect the rights of indigenous people. The Human Rights Commission has provided similar support. Foreign minister Penny Wong has placed indigenous rights high among the priorities of her innovative foreign policy. A recently appointed Indigenous Ambassador has been briefed on his role to give global support to the Declaration.

What is clear beyond reasonable doubt is that since, at least 1989, both global opinion and international law have upheld the view that the world's indigenous people have a distinctive set of rights pertaining to them. Why then are the modest reforms embodied in the Voice so contentious? Are the proponents of the no case simply unaware of the widespread support for the principles contained in the 2007 Declaration? Or is it a consequence of a belief that Australia can ignore global opinion and international law and that they don't apply to us? That, after all, was the way many Australians resisted the global campaign against racial discrimination in the 1960's.

The absence of any reference to the international implications of the referendum campaign is surprising. No-one it seems has seen the intense debate as an opportunity to educate the electorate about the principles that Australian governments have committed us to. In a recent report to the U.N's Economic and Social Council the government declared that Australia was, committed to ensuring that our 'First Nations peoples are heard, respected and empowered' and that 'their voices have a say in the decisions that affect them.'

Defeat for the referendum will reverberate internationally. It may be as consequential as the Mabo judgement. Surviving suspicions about our racist past will be refreshed. And it comes at the same time as our renewed embrace of our 'forever friends' in Britain and the United States, our renewed allegiance to the English king and our growing enthusiasm for closer ties with NATO and an increasingly xenophobic Europe.



SA's Street Protest Laws

Public meeting

2.00 to 4.30pm

9 July 2023

United Workers Union training rooms

1st floor

101 Henley Beach Road, Mile End

The SA Labour History Society invites you to a discussion on Labor's Summary Offences (Obstruction of Public Places) Amendment Act. Speakers will include Dale Beasley, Secretary Unions SA, Steph Key, Social Justice Minister in the Rann government and Chris Sumner, Attorney General in the Bannon Labor government.

The event will be opened by Larissa Harrison, UWW Secretary.

SA's protest rights resulted from the Dunstan government's Royal Commission established after the 1970's Vietnam Moratoriums.



Campaign for peace in Vietnam, Adelaide 1972

Car parking at rear, entry from Henley Beach Road

All welcome - free event - no bookings necessary. For further information email tevans@internode.on.net or text Society President David Faber on 0488 079 753

The LHSSA meeting on South Australia's Street Protest Laws was held on July 9 2023. The event was opened by Larissa Harrison, UWW Secretary, and speakers included Dale Beasley, Steph Key, Ralph Clarke, and Chris Sumner, Attorney General in the Bannon Labor government. The following article by Chris Sumner discusses some of the key issues raised in the meeting.

Defending the Right to Protest: a commentary on speeches by Dale Beasley, Secretary Unions SA and Steph Key, Social justice Minister in the Rann Government, by The Hon CJ Sumner AM (Attorney General in the Corcoran, Bannon and Arnold Labor Governments)

Dale Beasley's talk (previously published in *In Daily* on Mon 29 May 2023) raises important issues about the recent amendments to sec 58 of the *Summary Offences Act* 1953. The amendments very substantially increased the penalties for obstructing the free passage of a public place from \$750 to \$50,000 or imprisonment for 3 months. There was also a completely new provision enabling a court to order an offender to pay the reasonable costs and expenses of action taken by any agency (including the Police) to deal with the obstruction. Also new was an extension of the offence to cover direct and indirect obstruction, so it is not accurate to say the legislation only increased penalties and that there was no increase in the scope of the offence.

The parliamentary process followed was not a model way to approach important amendments to legislation. The Leader of the Opposition David Speirs proposed it on talk back radio on Thursday 18 May 2023, and the Premier Peter Malinauskas responded immediately by saying the Government intended to introduce the same legislation - which he did on the same day. The normal processes of Parliament were dispensed with by suspending Standing Orders to enable the Bill to be introduced without notice and pass through all stages without delay. Contrary to almost universal practice the Bill was introduced at 12.06 pm and passed the third reading at 12.26 pm; the Standing Orders provide that if the second reading of a Bill is moved immediately after its first reading, then debate is at once adjourned to a future day to allow proper consideration to be given to legislation. Good governance and democratic processes were also set aside. Prior to introduction there was no Cabinet consideration of the Bill and the Labor Caucus which is the body that should ensure democratic accountability of Ministers to elected Members was not consulted.

Why the rush? There was no immediate emergency; the incident of earlier in the week where the Extinction Rebellion protester absailed from the Morphett Street Bridge had been resolved and she had been charged with existing offences; other protest action such as smearing paint on buildings was already against the law and prosecuted (the amendments were quite properly not retrospective and could not be used in these cases).

The political context hardly suggests a need for urgency and legislative short cuts. It might be thought that the Labor Government would feel comfortable enough in its own skin not to be panicked by the Leader of the Opposition; at the 2022 election Labor won a convincing victory with 27 seats to the Liberals 16 and 4 Independents. It is the dominant political force while the Liberals remain in disarray with an ineffectual Leader.

The dire state of the Liberal Party has been emphasised by the recent resignation from it of the Member for MacKillop Nick McBride. He is from a long-standing pastoral owning family whose great grandfather Sir Phillip McBride was a confidant of Sir Robert Menzies and Minister in his governments. That a conservative establishment figure such as Nick McBride does not feel comfortable in the Liberal Party demonstrates the parlous state it is in. His reference to "dark forces" and "divisive factionalism" is no doubt a reference to the ultra-right conspiracy theorist Senator Alex Antic who is trying to take over the Party.

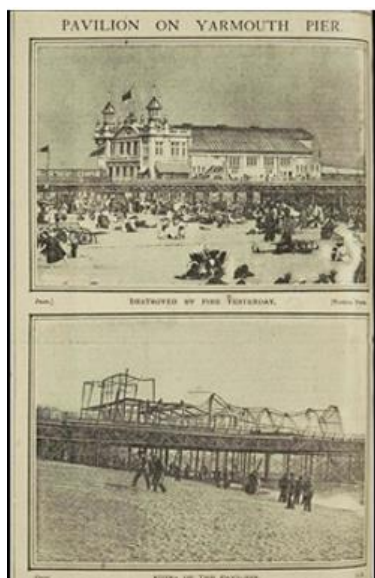
Rather than due to panic, perhaps the Government's motivation was just simple (even if unnecessary) populism about law and order. The action of the Extinction Rebellion protestors was a hot button political issue, there was public opposition and anger towards them and a media pile on particularly from talk back radio. However, the subsequent protests about the Bill (including from trade unions and ALP members, other community groups and the Law Society and Bar Association) show that the debate was not all one way. There was no reason for a dominant Labor Government to ignore its members and rush through the legislation the implications of which were not properly considered.

The Bill offends against the principle of proportionality in the criminal law. There should be some relationship between the seriousness of the offence and the penalty imposed. The obstruction of a public place could be relatively minor and apply to someone handing out pamphlets or even to a homeless person. It is no answer to say that the police would exercise a discretion not to prosecute minor offences or that a court would impose a minimal sentence; it is not good legislation to give the police broad powers and rely on discretion as to how they are enforced. The Parliament has passed legislation that the courts cannot ignore, and they must have regard to the very substantial increase in penalties for the obstruction offence. Had the Bill been the subject of greater scrutiny it would have been possible to devise a graded approach to activity that constitutes obstruction of a public place and establish appropriate penalties.

There has also been some misunderstanding of the *Public Assemblies Act* 1972 introduced by the Dunstan Government following the Royal Commission into the 1970 Vietnam Moratorium demonstration that led to arrests for obstruction of the King William Road and North Terrace intersection. This Act does not have an adverse effect on the right to protest. It establishes a voluntary procedure whereby anyone who wishes to hold an assembly or proceed through a public place *may* give notice of their intention to the police or other authority. If there is no objection the assembly may proceed without fear of prosecution for obstruction; if there is an objection the matter is resolved by a judge. In 1972 the Liberal Party moved an amendment to make it an offence to organise and to participate if there were more than 50 persons in an assembly or proceed through a public street or road without giving notice of it and following the procedures outlined. Labor opposed this amendment, which meant that the law on obstruction remained, and protestors run the risk of committing an offence and taking the consequences.

The protest methods of Extinguishment Rebellion are not ones which I approve of - or would participate in - but the issues they raise are serious. The conflict between human activity and the natural environment is of profound significance and potential danger, whether it be global warming, pollution, the destruction of biodiversity or the depletion of natural resources such as fish stocks. [History is replete with examples of peaceful but disruptive and illegal protests](#) objected to by many in the general public at the time, but which were eventually accepted to be in support of a just cause. Demonstrations over [working conditions](#); civil rights protests (Martin Luther King was arrested but now has a public holiday in the US to commemorate his memory and struggle); the Vietnam War (protests saw Lynn Arnold later Premier of SA arrested and who could have expected to spend considerably longer in prison had the increased penalties been in place); Anti-Apartheid protests against the visits of South African sporting teams. [The suffragette protests in the UK were not always peaceful](#) but their cause of full voting rights eventually established.

The Summary Offences Act and other legislation dealing with public protest may have needed updating but there was no basis for proceeding with amendments without following the normal parliamentary processes and properly examining the implications of the changes.



Suffragettes and Violence: 1912 proved to be an escalation point in the violence of the militant suffragettes. Glasgow Art Gallery has its glass cases smashed^[9]; bank and post office windows were smashed from Kew to Gateshead; in September, 23 trunk telegraph wires were cut on the London road at Potters Bar; and on 28 November simultaneous attacks on post boxes occurred across the entire country.^[10] By the end of year, 240 people had been sent to prison for militant suffragette activities.^[11] Once in prison, these inmates were often subjected to the torture of force feeding at the hands of the prison authorities – actions which only further radicalised them and increased their commitment to the militant campaign on their release. <https://www.bl.uk/votes-for-women/articles/suffragettes-violence-and-militancy>

Left: before & after photographs of Yarmouth pier showing damage by suffragettes in 1914



SA Labour History Society

Bargaining for a better deal

Enterprise bargaining past and future

Sunday, 20 August

2.30 to 4.30 pm

Box Factory, 59 Regent St South, Adelaide

Speakers include

Larissa Harrison, United Workers Union

Professor Andrew Stewart

Ralph Clarke, former Clerks Union Secretary



How much per hour did you say?

All welcome – free event – no bookings necessary. For further information email tevans@intermode.on.net or text Society President David Faber on 0488 079 753

After the AGM on August 20, the topic *Enterprise Bargaining – past and future* was addressed by three speakers: Larissa Harrison (UWU) outlined the current complexities of Enterprise Agreements, Ralph Clarke (previously secretary of the Federated Clerks Union) detailed the history of *Comparative Wage Justice*, and Prof Andrew Stewart discussed the comparatively recent history of decentralised IR. A brief summary of the issues in this last topic is given below.

The Industrial Relations Reform Act, 1993-1996

Andrew Stewart & Mark Bray

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, key union leaders and the federal Labor government then in office became convinced that a more ‘decentralised’ approach to the setting of pay and conditions was necessary if Australian businesses were to be more productive and competitive in increasingly globalised markets. This was reflected in the Industrial Relations Reform Act 1993 (Cth), which amended the 1988 Act to privilege enterprise-level bargaining as the main rule-making process, while retaining vestiges of the arbitral model.

Employers and unions could now apply to have agreements certified by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) if certain criteria were met. The AIRC could still reject a multi-business agreement on the basis that it was contrary to the ‘public interest’, but no such discretion applied to agreements for the whole or part of a single business. More contentiously, as far as unions were concerned, employers were given a new option of asking a group of their employees to approve an Enterprise Flexibility Agreement (EFA), even without union involvement. This had the same status as a union-negotiated agreement, though it was subject to additional procedural safeguards. For the first time too, employees were given a legal right to take ‘protected’ industrial action in support of an enterprise-level agreement. Strikes and other work bans had previously been common in practice, but almost invariably unlawful. Awards remained, though their role changed to that of providing a ‘safety net’ for enterprise bargaining. Although overridden to the extent of inconsistency with a certified agreement or EFA, awards could and did still apply on matters not dealt with by the agreement, as well as applying in full for workers not covered by any agreement. Importantly too, the AIRC had to be satisfied before approving an agreement that it did not disadvantage the affected employees compared to their award entitlements. This ‘no-disadvantage test’ ensured that if an agreement sought to derogate from certain award conditions, it would usually have to offer some compensating benefit – very often in the form of higher pay.

From “Australia’s Layered and Evolving System of Labour Regulation”, Andrew Stewart & Mark Bray, pp152-3, *The Sources of Labour Law*, Tamas Gyulavari & Emanuele Menegatti (eds), Wolters Kluwer 2020



CWU August 2023

REVIEWS

People's History Museum, Salford, Greater Manchester

A review by Doug Melvin

Thought-evoking, exciting, educational, daunting, historic, moving, confronting just a few adjectives to describe my visit to the Peoples, History Museum in Salford, Greater Manchester. The past, the now and the future are all on display.



A walk through the permanent display of 19th century Union Banners is spell-binding, and the artistic talents use to create the banners (given the materials on hand) is a wonder to behold - including the oldest surviving trade union banner, the Tin Plate Workers Society banner of 1821. Other union banners represent dock workers, textile workers, printing workers, and many more unionised industries – as with Australian unions of course.



Exhibits on the development and growth of the women's movement including some great posters on the Suffragettes campaign, a pike use to kill and maim the Peterloo protesters, political stories of victory and defeat for the labour movement. Two big issues of the now Climate change and Racism are at the forefront. The future is of course about issues relating to Artificial Intelligence.

A brief History of the Peoples History Museum (PHM)

The People's History Museum is a national museum of democracy, telling the story of democracy's development in Britain past, present and future. It is the home of ideas worth fighting for – where the radical past can inspire and

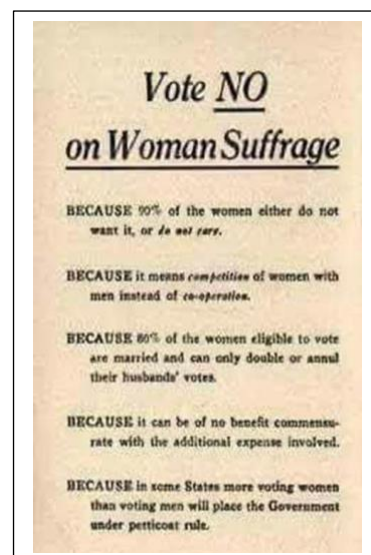
motivate people to act – to shape a future where ideas of democracy, equality, justice and co-operation are thriving. The Museum promotes and believes in a thriving society; one where people are engaged, involved and actively playing their part. As the 'go to' place for democratic engagement the museum wants to help shape this future. The origins of the current Peoples History Museum was in the 1960's when a group of activists, including the Trade Union Labour and Co-operative History Society (TULC), began to collect historical campaign materials about the rights of working people. A great advance was made in 1975 when the National Museum of Labour History was opened by then Prime Minister Harold Wilson in Limehouse Town Hall in Tower Hamlets, London. The collection on display to the public included writer and political activist Thomas Paine's (1737-1809) desk and Political and Union Banners that would go on to form what has become the largest collection of political and trade union banners in the world.

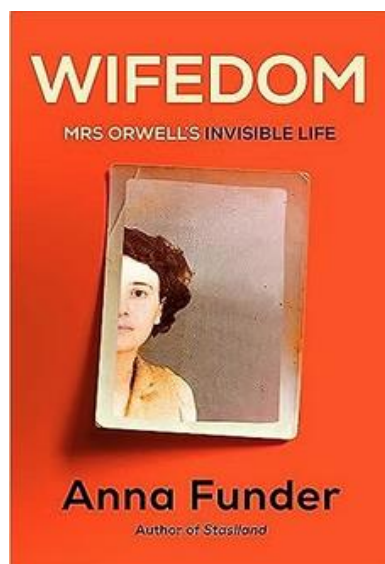
The Museum continued to expand its collection throughout the 1970's and 1980's increasing its physical presence from one room at the Limehouse Town Hall to taking over the entire building. However, in the late 1980's when the museum's future was threatened by a lack of funding, the collection was rescued by Manchester City Council and the Greater Manchester authorities, with the help of the Trades Union Congress (TUC). In 1989 Director Dr Nick Mansfield was appointed and built up a team of qualified staff, with the existing collection beginning to be properly catalogued and conserved. In 1990 the move of the museum to Princess Street in central Manchester, to the building where the first meeting of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) took place over one hundred years earlier, was completed.

At about the same time the museum received the Labour Party archive – the most complete political party archive in the world, which was later followed by Labour Party poster, photographic and object collections. The increasing popularity of the Museum saw it acquire a second building at the Manchester Edwardian Pump House. The archives were further expanded when the Museum acquired, following the disbandment of the Communist Party of Great Britain, the party's collections of working-class material. This included several hundred early 19th century radical and anti-radical cartoons, posters from the Tory and Liberal parties and women's suffrage movement posters.

The Museum had a name change in February 2002 when it became formally known as the People's History Museum (PHM) and in 2008 the extension to the Pump House site was completed which meant that all the exhibits could be housed in one building. The new museum opened its doors to the public for the first time and featured two permanent galleries, a state-of-the-art conservation studio, a changing exhibition gallery, archive and study centre and extensive learning and community spaces where visitors are invited to explore ideas worth fighting for. The first annual banner exhibition took place and has taken place every year since and results in the revamp of a quarter of the museum's main galleries and its visitor experience. The PMH continues to have public exhibitions and embark on an ambitious contemporary collecting programme, linking to programme themes; LGBT+ stories, contemporary campaigns for women's rights, modern protest, migration and disabled people's rights and activism.

During my recent visit to the PMH I was privileged to meet with the archive team. The archives hold an enormous collection on the history of the British Labour Party, trade unions, Communist Party of Great Britain, the women's movement and other organisations sympathetic to the working class. The archives also hold an extensive collection of international labour history, including a large folio of Australian labour history dating back to the 1800's. I was particularly impressed with the coverage that they hold regarding the visit to Australia of Tom Mann in 1906, including a photo (see below) from the Melbourne based *Socialist* newspaper of the day and his full address to a packed Bijou Theatre in Melbourne.





Anna Funder has lit a fire under George Orwell's reputation as a man of integrity and decency. Her latest book **Wifedom** reveals its ground-breaking history in the sub-title *Mrs Orwell's Invisible Life*. Focussing on Eileen O'Shaughnessy, Orwell's first wife, and her unacknowledged role in his literary output, it's the best non-fiction book I've read this year. Not just for its message but because it is exceptionally well written.

Orwell (his real name was Eric Blair) is widely regarded as one of the great twentieth century writers, remembered especially for his novels **Animal Farm** (first published in 1945), **Nineteen Eighty-Four** (1949), **Coming Up For Air** (1939) and **Burmese Days** (1934) as well as his masterly journalism, essays, letters and other non-fiction such as **Down and Out in Paris and London** (1933), **The Road to Wigan Pier** (1937), **Homage to Catalonia** (1938) and **Politics and the English Language** (1946). His reputation, built over the last 90 years, is captured by Funder when she writes:

"If Orwell were sitting behind a table signing books today, a fan in the queue would see ... a skinny fellow in an ancient, battered sports jacket too short for his arms, chain-smoking rolls-ups and coughing, acute blue eyes, high-pitched Etonian drawl, a bit of a stutter. They would see the grand wizard of plain-speaking, of decency, of the underdog. They would see a self-deprecating man who investigated the lives of the poor, who risked his own life to fight fascism in Spain, and who denounced hypocrisy in essay after brilliant essay. A sympathetic mensch who, clearly, from the look of him, had no thought for himself."

After reading Funder's book, however, I was forced to reconsider that reputation. My review will focus on **Homage to Catalonia**, Orwell's account of his experience and observations fighting in the Spanish Civil War for the Republican army against General Franco's Nationalists between December 1936 and June 1937. During those months he made diary notes, collected press cuttings and took photographs. Unfortunately all these were stolen, but after returning to England, he nevertheless finished writing his book on New Year's Day 1938, and the first edition was published in April 1938. *

In **Wifedom** and, in particular its **Chapter 2 - Invisible Warrior**, Funder restores Eileen O'Shaughnessy's rightful place as a volunteer fighter in the war along with her famous husband. She is scarcely mentioned in **Homage to Catalonia**, but the discovery in 2005 of six letters she wrote to her best friend while she was married to Orwell from 1936 until 1945 (when she died in horrendous circumstances in hospital aged 39) has enabled her role to become more visible.

And what a role it was! Working as a secretary in the Independent Labour Party Office (ILP) in Barcelona, in addition to being its French-English shorthand typist, she ran their supply, communications and banking operations, and also organises for their men (including her husband) fighting at the front *"all their letters, telegrams and parcels between the trenches and home ... finds them clothes, money, tobacco, treats (chocolate, margarine, cigars) and medical supplies"*.

The ILP also had a propaganda department in which she and an American volunteer produced the party's English Language newspaper and radio programs. While her husband is in the trenches, she *"is at the heart of the operations. She knows from all their despatches ... exactly what's happening – when the men come under fire, how few munitions they have, that they have only three greatcoats between them which they ... swap when they take turns at sentry duty ... she knows how this woeful situation is being spun into glorious propaganda about the advancement of the ... anti-fascist effort because she is writing and typing it."*

She also had to run the gauntlet away from the office where she was staying just a hundred yards up the street in the Hotel Continental - *"a hotbed of revolutionaries, idealists, spies and journalists from all nations. Some are working for the revolution and against fascism. Others are working to scuttle it. Some are reporting to newspapers around the world. Others to their handlers. Doors open and close along carpeted corridors buzzing with news, rumours, intrigue."*

She knew she was under surveillance for her political work, that she was a target. She suspected there were spies in her office but risked her life daring to protect everything of value in the office including the inch thick manuscript she had typed of George's hand written notes made on scraps of paper while in the trenches. When George was shot and severely wounded in the throat she immediately went to the front to nurse him as she organised transport to hospitals for treatment and recovery.

On one occasion, having not seen her husband for three months, she arranged to spend three nights at the front – in dugouts by day and barracks by night. She had spent every day worried about George and this visit enabled them to spend precious hours together – yet, remarkably, it is not mentioned in **Homage to Catalonia**. Funder writes:

*"After I had pieced together Eileen's time in Spain I still puzzled over how I could have read Homage to Catalonia twice before and never understood she was there. Eileen had worked at the political headquarters, visited him at the front, cared for him when wounded, saved Orwell's manuscript by giving it to McNair (John McNair was Director of the IDP in Spain), saved the passports, saved Orwell from almost certain arrest at the Hotel (Continental), and somehow got the visas to save them all. How is it that she remains invisible? I scanned through the electronic text of the book. Orwell mentions 'my wife' 27 times. And then I see: not once is Eileen named. No character can come to life without a name. But from a wife, which is a job description, it can all be stolen." ***

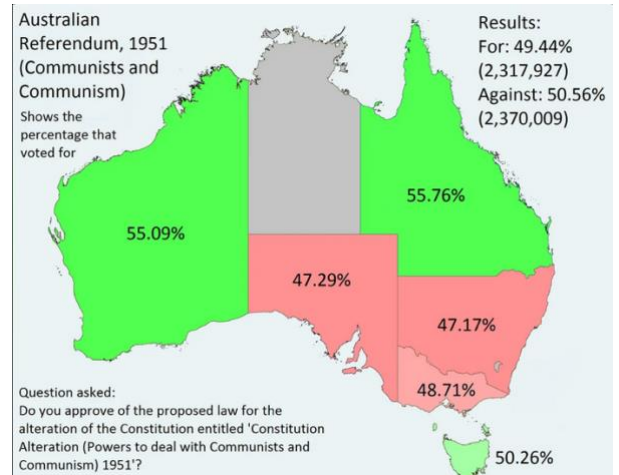
To conclude, I draw attention to Orwell's classic novel, **Animal Farm**. In 1945 he was planning to write an essay accusing Stalin of betraying the 1917 Russian Revolution but, writes Anna Funder, *"Eileen thinks it's a terrible idea. Russia is helping them fight Germany and no one wants to undermine that right now ... Eileen suggests it be a novel, an animal fable ... Animal Farm is written in three months."* Funder has more to say about Animal Farm and Mrs Orwell's contribution to *"this masterpiece of allegory"* in her brilliant **Wifedom** – it's a forensic analysis of how patriarchy stains the best literature. George Orwell is one of Funder's heroes (and mine, too!) but the stunning scholarship and stylish narrative of this book upends not only his standing as a political hero but also compels us to question his pre-eminent literary reputation. And, after nailing Orwell, who else in the pantheon of English literature will be next?

** Labour History's Winter 2023 Newsletter included an article by Paul Daley from The Guardian of 30 April 2023 titled 'Brothers in arms, a long way from home: the first Australians to fight fascism overseas'. This article (pp10–13) is worth re-reading along with Orwell's firsthand account.*

*** Funder comments further: "Stalin's people, though, could see Eileen perfectly clearly. As Eileen and Orwell are arriving in the UK an indictment for treason against both of them is issued. Had they been caught, they would have been killed. The indictment read: Tribunal of Espionage & High Treason, Barcelona 13 July 1937 ERIC BLAIR and his wife EILEEN BLAIR Their correspondence reveals that they are rabid Trotskyites"*

ARTICLES

The 1951 referendum to ban the communist party: how Gallup Poll questions can frame the results



Referendums Opinion Polls and Public Relations: The Australian Gallup Poll and the 1951 Referendum... Murray Goot · International Journal of Public Opinion Research, December 2014

The distinction between polling and public relations—publicizing particular angles, setting expectations, and encouraging certain actions—is problematic. So, too, the assumptions that accurate predictions depend on pollsters asking unbiased questions, and that opinion polls are miniature referendums. The attempt to predict the outcome of the 1951 referendum on communism in Australia by Roy Morgan's Gallup Poll illustrates these points. Morgan, wanting the referendum to pass, framed the issue accordingly. But he also thought the Government's framing offered the best basis for predicting the result. Opponents reframed the issue and the referendum was defeated. This article, in exploring the relationship between polling and public relations, analyses Morgan's questions, his forecasts, and his explanations for predicting the wrong result.

[View full-text](#)



SA Labour History Society

If you haven't paid your fees yet It's time to renew your membership or subscription.

As you might be aware the society has held a number of events in the last year, more are planned. You will have just received our latest newsletter, and I'm sure you found it informative.

Membership fees are \$15 for concession card holders, ordinary membership is \$30, while small organisations pay \$50 and large organisations \$100.

Payment should be made in cash at Society meetings or by EFT to People's Choice Credit Union, BSB 805 050, A/C No. 2313116. Make sure your name is recorded on the payment advice.

For further information contact Ron Slee
(ron.slee@bigpond.com)



Poisoning the debate: HOW THE MURDOCH PRESS IS CAMPAIGNING AGAINST THE VOICE TO PARLIAMENT

**Murdoch Referendum
Accountability Project**

INTERIM REPORT: 17 JULY - 27 AUGUST

By Dr Victoria Fielding
The University of Adelaide

Murdoch Referendum Accountability Project

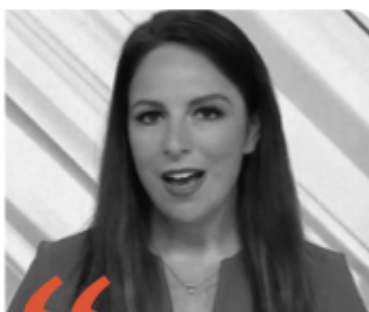
Australians for a Murdoch Royal Commission commissioned the Murdoch Referendum Accountability Project to hold News Corp accountable for their coverage of the Voice referendum. As Australia's largest and most powerful media organisation in a highly concentrated industry, News Corp's Voice referendum coverage has important implications for how this democratic process unfolds. This interim report covers the first half of the project. A final report will be released after the referendum.

Download the Interim Report here:
<https://murdochroyalcommission.org.au/interim-report/>

COVERAGE SUMMARY

The dominant theme of News Corp's Voice coverage throughout the first six weeks is that the Voice referendum is going to fail, and that this failure is a political problem for Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

This statement by Sky News host Sharri Markson on 25 July, 2023 encapsulates this theme:



“The prime minister’s political standing and this referendum are inseparable....when Albanese fights, as he is tonight for the yes campaign he’s also fighting for his own political fortune. If this referendum fails, he personally has a lot to lose too”

As shown in subsequent sections of this report, ‘No’ arguments were used in seventy percent of content which contained an argument, and the ‘Yes’ campaign were consistently framed as ‘villains’ of the Voice referendum with the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese the key antagonist.

A large number of ‘No’ arguments were used to present the ‘Yes’ campaign in a negative light. Amongst these diverse ‘No’ arguments, dominant themes emerged each week across News Corp outlets, demonstrating consistency amongst outlets and voices within outlets.

The key themes amongst the ‘No’ arguments are depicted in Figure 2, which includes only those ‘No’ arguments by number of words, with the most used or the second most used ‘No’ argument across each week.

When news broke that Rupert Murdoch, at age 92, was stepping aside as chairman of Fox Corporation and News Corp, University of Melbourne journalism expert Andrew Dodd wasn't exactly surprised. "The company is clearly planning its succession and how it manages Rupert's decline. It has one eye on the market and one on ensuring the company maintains its direction," [argues](#) Dodd, a former media writer for *The Australian* and *Crikey*. But with the transition of power to eldest son Lachlan Murdoch looking secure, what's next for the company? Dodd says we shouldn't expect much change. Lachlan has helmed Fox News for a while now. Dodd says Lachlan has "had ample opportunity to guide the company in a different direction, but he didn't".

As for Rupert's legacy, the question that must be asked is: has this man done more harm or good in his life in the media? Dodd writes: "I am afraid I believe the good is outweighed by all the harm done on Rupert's watch. His news media empire is fundamentally antisocial in the way it operates. I believe it's caused so much harm to so many people along the way, and that cannot go unacknowledged. From the UK phone hacking scandal and beat ups to climate denial and the demonisation of minorities, News Corp can be counted on to dumb down complexity, make issues binary and turn one side against the other."

Murdoch's version of freedom

The 70-year career and impact of Rupert Murdoch are better understood if located within the parallel 100-year rise of the myth that freedom, free speech and democracy are inseparable from free enterprise ("Labor MPs wish Murdoch well, Turnbull unleashes again", September 22).

The news of his "retirement" has him and his acolytes wrapping themselves in the cloak of truth and freedom. It is, however, a very specific version of truth and freedom. It goes back to the so-called tripod of freedom invented by US business leaders from the 1930s to 1950, as a response to the crash of 1929, the threat of the New Deal, and the fear of reformism becoming socialism or even communism.

By 1950, an intellectually coherent, if historically and logically misleading, framework for market fundamentalism had been created. It had started with reframing private enterprise as free enterprise and competitive markets as free markets, and going on to claim that free enterprise and free markets were inseparable from free speech, free press and religion. Indeed, it was argued freedom and democracy required free markets, and that any deviation puts you on the slippery slope of inefficiency, bureaucracy, reformism, socialism and communism. For Friedrich Hayek, you were on the road to serfdom.



PHOTO: ILLUSTRATION: DAVID ROWE

This was the version of freedom and truth that Murdoch sought to consolidate and intensify as he built his media empire starting in the 1960s. Murdoch ran with the freedom myth to teach the world to loathe taxation, regulation and government, and to love the free market. We now have our world of global warming, intensifying inequality and embedded poverty.

We need a different truth, a better version of freedom and above all a different and better economic and social system.

Stewart Sweeney
Adelaide, SA

Succession saga

Rupert Murdoch's retirement and Lachlan's ascent have occupied many inches of print and many metres of web

spaces, but only Neil Chenoweth ("The Murdoch succession saga is far from over", September 23-24) nails it. This is just the opening shot of the Murdoch wars that will tear the family apart when Rupert dies and James and Lachlan duel for their dad's legacy. Until then the real intrigue is: whose side are Prudence and Elisabeth on?

Gabriel Dabscheck
Elsternwick, Vic

His editors' loss

With Rupert Murdoch stepping down (how can he go lower?), who will now do all of his editors' "thinking"?

Chris Roylance
Paddington, Qld

AI will have to do better

If the AI-generated photo of Lachlan Murdoch is the best it can do (AFR Weekend, September 23-24), I will not be using it until there are significant improvements.

Those mangled fingers will keep me awake for the next week.

Neale Meagher
New York



TRIBUTES

VICTOR (VIC) MILTON POTTICARY (1932-2023)

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Victor (Vic) Potticary at Flora McDonald Nursing Home on Sunday 2nd July, aged 91. Vic was born to a farming family in the depths of the Depression at Inkerman, Port Wakefield. Vic's father died in 1937 leaving his wife and 5 children. Vic left school and was apprenticed as a compositor with Cooperative Press. In 1935 Vic married Audrey Shorne. She was a respected activist who later became secretary of *Save Our Sons*. Their son Malcolm (dec) was born in 1955.

In 1946 Vic was employed at the *Tribune*, a communist newspaper printed in every state. In 1975 Vic joined the State Government Printing Office when the Dunstan government transferred all its printing to Netley. In 1986 he became senior Customer Service Officer State Publications. Vic was a member of the PSA, the PKIU and Superannuation Employees Association. He was an active member of the SA Labour History Society.

Vic had a life well lived and was proud of his socialist principles, preferring to address his friends as 'comrade'. He worked tirelessly to make society a better place. Many thanks to the staff at Flora McDonald for their loving care of our comrade Vic. Ursula and Sue treasure his memory.

David Faber, President LHSSA

Officials and Staff of the AMWU 1/7/23: *The AMWU is saddened at the passing of our Comrade Vic Potticary. We unite to thank Vic on his consistent campaigning to improve the life of the workers. Vic's tireless work for the printing industry and the AMWU will be felt forever.*



Vic Potticary at various union events with (1) Leonie Ebert



(2) Allison Murchie



(3) Rod Parham

A tribute note about Vic's wife Audrey:

Audrey POTTICARY Born 15th April 1924 Died 2nd April 2021 Much loved wife of Victor, married for 66 years, beloved mother of Malcolm (deceased), mother in law to Julie. Audrey you will be missed, may you rest in peace. Thank you to everyone at Flora MacDonald Calvary, Brenda Keary, and all other staff for looking after Audrey, so well. Privately buried at Enfield (Wirra Wonga) with her sister Hazel on her birthday, Thursday 15th April 2021.

MARK THOMAS MICHAEL McEWEN
29 September 1950 - 05 August 2023



Josie McEwen, Jay Weatherill and Mark McEwen during the 2014 Fisher by-election campaign, triggered by the death of independent MP Bob Such. (Labor's Nat Cook won the by-election by a handful of votes, the 7.3% swing away from the Liberals giving the ALP majority government.)

In Memory of Mark McEwen

Jim Phillips

Over the last ten years Mark McEwen became my best friend. Humble, easy-going and trustworthy by nature, he was also hardworking, committed, enthusiastic and supportive to all - always helping others. You could not have a better man on your side!

Born in Port Lincoln the second child of six, he became passionate about fishing, especially from Port Noarlunga jetty when his family moved to Adelaide's southern suburbs (as a boy, Mark purchased his own fishing rod and reel with his pocket money). A devoted family man, Mark loved his wife Josie, their two children Kate and Christopher and his granddaughters Amiria and Catalina - and when travelling overseas they explored family history in Malta and Ireland. Mark was a walking encyclopedia about anything to do with history, culture, politics and the union movement. In 1995 he was awarded a BA honours degree in Labour Studies at Adelaide University.

An ALP member since before 1980, Mark was a stalwart of the Labor Party. He was very proud of his mum Maureen* McEwen who was granted ALP SA Life Membership in 1997 for her service to ALP and the community. I first met Mark when we worked with others on the 2014 campaign for the ALP hopeful Jake Neville for Fisher - soon to be followed by the Fisher by-election campaign (following the death of incumbent member Bob Such) when Nat Cook became the sitting member for Fisher (now Hurtle Vale/Davenport) in the 2014 by-election. Cook won the by-election by a handful of votes with a 7.3 percent two-party swing, resulting in the Weatherill Labor Government changing from minority to majority government - a great achievement!

Mark assisted Nadia Clancy in the 2019 ALP Boothby campaign and later also in Elder in 2021. He was also a volunteer in all Kingston ALP Amanda Rishworth campaigns as well as the successful ALP 2022 Boothby for Louise Millar-Frost. But Mark was most active in the 2018 ALP Davenport campaign, and became an essential part of the reinvigoration of the Davenport electorate, taking the role of Vice President and becoming Delegate to ALP State Council for Davenport with Helen Chadwick. In 2022 he campaigned for Davenport candidate Erin Thompson resulting a fantastic win. All these campaigns found him 'corefluting', letterboxing, phone polling, doorknocking and polling booth volunteering, as well as being Booth Captain and Scrutineer.

Mark was an active campaigner on union issues for many years, leafleting at railway stations, bus stations and Adelaide Oval or 'wobble boarding' on these and other issues: the *2006 Your Rights at Work* Campaign, the *Campaign against WorkChoices*, the *Change the Rules* Campaign, the *Australia Deserves a Pay Rise* Campaign, the *No Tax on Medicare/Hands Off Medicare* Campaign, the *Save the ABC Vote Labor* Campaign. But when he wasn't on the picket line, Mark could be found throwing a line in the water or looking after his two beloved grandchildren!

After his apprenticeship in signwriting, Mark was employed by Adelaide City Council for 38 years. For over 50 years Mark was a member of the Painters & Decorators Union which later merged with CFMEU - where he served for 30 years as a branch committee member. He also painted many ALP campaign signs and banners over the years.

Mark and his good friend Michael Carter worked in Adelaide City Council together for 35 years. They were a team that got the best for the ACC workers they represented, with the creation of the Joint Union committee representing 5 different unions. Mark was in his element with EBAs - they achieved a 9-day fortnight (every 2nd Monday off) and 11% for Superannuation, when elsewhere it was 10%.

In 2018 Mark retired from his Adelaide City Council work and also from the CFMEU SA Construction & General Division Committee of Management after decades of service, but his dedication to the union movement did not end. Mark had been a founding member of Retired Unionists of South Australia and in 2020 was instrumental in revitalizing the Retired Unionists of South Australia together with his mates Jim Phillips and Gordon Penhall. Their network of retired comrades has met monthly ever since and added their support to numerous campaigns and rallies, but especially the campaign for the Voice - constitutional recognition and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Vale Mark McEwen

For a streaming of Mark McEwen's funeral service [click here](#)

South Australia Unions the United Trades and Labor Council of SA

8 August 2023

SA Unions and the Retired Unionists of South Australia send our deepest condolences to the family of our Comrade Mark McEwen, who left us suddenly. For over 50 years Mark was a member of the CFMEU, and served for 30 years as a branch committee member.

Motion on the passing of Comrade Mark McEwen:

"That the SA Unions Executive acknowledges the contribution that Mark McEwen gave to the South Australian union movement. We extend our deepest sympathies to his partner Josie and the family of our late comrade during this sad time."

Moved: Comrade John Adley

Seconded: Comrade Marcus Pare

The following is a tribute by Ron Slee to Mark's mother Maureen McEwen when she died in 2021

On 28 October 2021 the inaugural life member of the ALP SA Branch, Maureen McEwen, died. She was 91. She joined the Party in 1952 and at the 1997 State Convention was the first of three party stalwarts awarded life membership by Parliamentary Labor Party leader, Mike Rann. She served many years as Sub Branch Secretary in the state electorates of Hayward and Mitchell as well as Secretary in the Federal Electorate of Kingston. During her 20 years on the ALP Credentials Committee, including 17 as its Chair, she and her Labor colleague, Colleen Bennett (who was awarded life membership in 2002) stamped out 'proxy delegate rotting', taking pride in being known as "those bloody dragons"!

Maureen had a tough life, including living for 12 years from the age of three in the Goodwood Orphanage (after her mother contracted TB). She neither forgot nor forgave the cruel treatment she and her sister and many other children endured in that Orphanage. However, in spite of this experience and later raising 6 children largely as a single parent, many will remember her heart of gold, the sparkle in her eye, her sunny disposition. She called a spade a bloody shovel but her kindness and voluntary work for charities over three decades was legendary (supporting the homeless in Adelaide and raising funds for orphanages in Cambodia).

In her Death Notice, family and friends described her as "a generous, forceful, vibrant, warrior woman" and as a reminder that she never lost her sense of humour, they included her final message to us all – the final lines of a famous poem whose author remains unknown: "Don't mourn for me now, don't mourn for me never - I'm going to do nothing forever and ever."

Rest in Peace, Maureen Anne McEwen.



TRIBUTE

Dr June Hearn, the first woman appointed as Deputy Chancellor at Monash, used to joke that she was educated at Cambridge. She meant, however, the primary school that served the 'hoi pollol' of Collingwood, rather than the hallowed halls of England.

Dr Hearn, who has died aged 92, was a trailblazer who broke the glass ceiling using good manners and common sense rather than ruthless ambition. She was the academic who refused to apply for a tenured job because she felt her colleague was more entitled to it, yet ended up in positions of power throughout Victoria.

As well as her role as Deputy Chancellor (2001-2006), she was the Foundation Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Hawthorn Institute of Education (1987-1998), becoming the first woman in such a position in tertiary education in Victoria. Prior to that she worked at Victoria College (now Deakin University) where for a time she was Foundation Dean of the Faculty of Arts; at the time, the only woman dean in the college.

Although Monash was just 23 kilometres from where she grew up, it was light years away from the world she knew as a child. Raised in Melbourne's working-class heartland, Dr Hearn was the first in her family to attend high school, winning scholarships to University High School and the University of Melbourne, where she told the interview panel she aspired to become a secretary. "I had never heard of professions much at all," she recounted, so she picked a word she thought sounded good.

Other pioneering achievements saw her as the first woman to be appointed as senior lecturer in the Graduate School of Business Administration at the University of Melbourne (1978-1982) and the first woman to be elected President of its Staff Association (1978-81). And yet she was something of an accidental feminist, never really conscious of her pioneering role until it was pointed out. She followed a "disorganised" trajectory rather than a deliberate path, learning to say yes when opportunities came her way.

As a student she studied Arts, majoring in political science and history, and became a passionate Labor party activist. Afterwards she successfully applied to do a DipEd, but was refused on the grounds that she had recently got married. On graduating, however, she was permitted to work as an untrained teacher due to shortages, and taught at Preston Girls (later, Preston Girls' High School). In the early 1960s, following the birth of her two sons Bruce and Ian, she went to work for the Australia-USSR Society before returning to further study. In 1974 She wrote her PhD on the pioneering study of migrant experiences in trade unions and described achieving it as her biggest intellectual thrill." As a child she had been imbued with a missionary zeal to "save the world," and she felt that non-English speaking migrants were often neglected by established institutions.

Following an appointment as lecturer in politics at Swinburne Institute of Technology, Dr Hearn moved to the University of Melbourne as a research assistant and tutor in political science. She became a lecturer in industrial relations within the economics department at Melbourne University (where she refused to compete with a male colleague for a tenured position as she felt he was more entitled to it) before her ground-breaking appointment as senior lecturer. After being approached to run for the Dean of the Commerce Faculty, she instead successfully applied for the position as Foundation Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Head of Toorak Campus at Victoria College, cutting short a sabbatical to Oxford University in 1982 to take up the post. As a single parent of two teenage boys following a divorce, she swiftly

told those who raised an eyebrow at her decision that she couldn't afford to be snobbish. It proved memorable. As Professor/Director of the Hawthorn Institute of Education, she described pulling off the affiliation of the college with the University of Melbourne as her "greatest achievement".

Dr Hearn came to Monash in 1985 as a Member of Council, a position she held until 2006, making her the longest-serving member at the time. Her appointment came nine years after her son Bruce Hearn Mackinnon was part of a group of student radicals who "kidnapped" then prime minister Malcolm Fraser during a demonstration outside the campus's Krongold Centre. (Bruce, incidentally, went on to front the *ska* band Strange Tenants and gain a doctorate in employer de-unionisation strategies). As well as the first woman to serve as the University's Deputy Chancellor, Dr Hearn was a Member of the Board for Mount Eliza Business School (1995-2000).

June Margaret Hearn was born on July 5th, 1931, the second daughter of Dorothy (née Collis) and William Mackinnon, who were both factory workers in the boot trade, small business operators, and active in the Communist Party. Despite - or because of - their circumstances, her mother went "overboard" in providing extra-curricular activities; the young June learnt ballet, tap dancing, gymnastics and elocution. Meanwhile her father, a keen reader, treated her and her sister, Thelma, as if they were sons, affectionately calling them both 'Mick'.

As a scholarship recipient at high school, she often felt the odd one out and forged friendships amongst the children of Jewish migrants. At university, she encountered large numbers of people from private schools and was struck by the disparities in appearance and mannerisms. It reinforced her sense of alienation that no amount of performing ever overcame (she supported her studies by singing and appearing in revues, which she hated, as well as working in retail).

Throughout her life she was galvanised by a deep awareness of injustice and inequity and a desire to even the playing field. Over the course of her career she authored numerous research publications on the changing nature of the Australian workforce and the impact of post-war immigration, the structure and behaviour of the Australian unions, multiculturalism, women in management and education management. She also consulted widely on industrial relations and management issues across government, industry and union sectors. She was President of the Victorian Migrant Workers Trade Union Committee (1975-78), a Member of the Academic Board of the University of Melbourne (1991-1996), a Professorial Associate of the University (1991-1998) and undertook numerous broadcasts for the ABC on public affairs. In the wider community, Dr Hearn served as a Member of the New York Academy of Science, as a Board Member of the Victorian branch of Alzheimer's Australia and as the President of the Court Network Victoria, a service for all those who come into contact with the law.

She was a recipient of the King Mongkut University of Technology (Thailand) Award for Distinguished Contribution to Education and Training and in 2003 was awarded Membership of the Australian National Pioneer Women's Hall of Fame. That same year she was also awarded a Centenary Medal for service to industrial relations research and scholarship. In 2009, Monash University awarded her an Honorary Doctor of Laws.

Throughout her life June remained a staunch supporter of Collingwood Football Club, an outward expression of loyalty to her working-class roots, even though today's Collingwood is a world away from the one in which she grew up. She was a Foundation Board Member of the Collingwood Industrial Magpies; an outreach organisation focusing on Indigenous Australians in remote communities.

She died peacefully, just a few hours after her beloved Pies took their seventh premiership in her lifetime. She is survived by her sons Bruce and Ian, grandsons Alex and William, and step-granddaughters Nik and Plyathida.

Dr Hearn never felt bitter about her tough start in life, instead crediting it for teaching her compassion. As she put it: "it's much easier to understand deprivation if you've been through it".

<https://www.monash.edu/vale/home/articles/vale-dr-june-margaret-hearn>

The Voice: walking with the Australian people for a better future, Henry Reynolds, *Pearls & Irritations* Aug 25 2023

“For me, indigenous recognition won’t be changing our constitution so much as completing it.” – Tony Abbott, 2015.

When on the 7th of February 1788 the British claimed the eastern half of Australia they left us with two abiding problems. They assumed that the First Nations were not in actual possession of their own homelands and that they had neither laws nor customs which could be given formal recognition. As a result they departed from what had been customary practice in North America of respecting what was called Indian title to traditional property and determining that the indigenous tribes held a form of internal sovereignty. They were ‘domestic dependent nations’ with whom many treaties were negotiated. The anomalous situation in New South Wales was noted by Jeremy Bentham, the leading political philosopher of the time. He wrote in 1792 that there had been no negotiations with the Aborigines and no treaties had been drafted and signed. He predicted that this would create enduring problems. ‘The flaw’, he wrote, ‘is an incurable one.’

It took Australia over two hundred years to begin to remedy this situation. In 1992 the High Court’s decision in *Mabo v Queensland, no. 2* recognised native title and overturned one aspect of *terra-nullius*. But the twin problem of the political and legal status of the First Nations remains where it was in 1788. Not that it seemed to matter. For so long Australians assumed that the Aborigines, like other indigenous and tribal people, would either be assimilated or would ‘die out’ as people were still saying as recently as the 1940’s and 1950’s. But change came rapidly in the next generation driven as much by global as by local developments.

To seek the source of the twin pillars of the Uluru Statement—a voice to parliament and a Makarrata or treaty we need to go back to the Referendum of 1967 and the assumption of federal powers over indigenous policy development. The Holt government decided that it needed a permanent body to advise it in an area where it had little experience and established the Council for Aboriginal Affairs which operated from 1967 to 1976. In parliament, Holt explained that the government wished ‘to have continually available to it the best advice on Aboriginal affairs it can get on a national level.’ The Council he added would advise the government on the formulation of national policies and ‘consult with Commonwealth departments and authorities whose activities have a bearing on Aboriginal welfare’. It was also to act as the Commonwealth agency for ensuring co-operation between Commonwealth and State authorities at the official level.

The Voice to Parliament which now meets with both ignorance and misunderstanding has been with us for over fifty years although the bodies in question varied in name, structure and longevity. There was the National Aboriginal Consultative Committee, 1977-1985 (NAC), the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, 1989-2005 (ATSIC), the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples, 2009-2019, the Prime Minister’s Indigenous Advisory Council, 2013- 2019. And then a year after the Uluru Statement 14 Indigenous organisations met with Prime Minister Morrison in December 2018 leading to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap which brought together the Coalition of Peak (Indigenous) Organisations, the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments and the Australian Local Government Association. It gives the indigenous organisations unprecedented influence enabling it to ‘strengthen and establish partnerships and shared decision-making.’

The call of the delegates at Uluru for a Voice to parliament was, then, modest, unsurprising and with precedents that dated back over fifty years. The only difference was the desire for entrenchment in the constitution. And while that would guarantee continuity it would not necessarily amplify the voice. It would simply add the chosen delegates to the large corpus of professional lobbyists who have always thronged the corridors of parliament. The Official Lobbyists Register last year recorded 884 lobbyists from 279 firms who lobbied on behalf of 3691 clients. Many of them were ex-politicians or staffers, were members of old boy’s networks and would likely be far better funded than First Nation’s representatives.

The authors of the Uluru statement declared that a Makarrata or treaty was the ‘culmination of our agenda’ a proposal likely to be far more controversial than the Voice to parliament. But it too is an idea that has been seriously considered for over forty years. The Aboriginal Treaty Committee was founded in April 1979 and led by a group of prominent figures including Dr. H.C. Coombs, Judith Wright and Charles Rowley. It carried out a vigorous campaign

of advocacy all over the country until 1983. It was launched by Coombs in an address broadcast on ABC radio in June 1979 in which he called for compensation for the loss of traditional land and disruption of traditional ways of life and the right of Aborigines to 'control their own affairs and to establish their own associations for this purpose.' At much the same time the NAC called on the government to begin the process of negotiating a treaty, adopting for the first time the Yolngu term Makarrata, at a meeting in November 1979. The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Senator F. Chaney engaged in serious negotiations with the NAC and in September 1981 the Senate Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs began an examination of the feasibility of securing a compact or Makarrata between the Commonwealth and Aboriginal Australians. After two years of thorough investigations the final report was released and published in booklet form entitled *Two Hundred Years Later*. Now forty years old it is highly relevant to the current contentious debate leading up to the referendum. The key recommendation was that the Government should give consideration as to the preferred method of legal implementation of a compact with the Aboriginal people to be inserted within the constitution. The Committee concluded that there were several advantages to be had by proceeding with a referendum. The first 'and by no means insignificant' was the symbolic value of the process whereby the non-Aboriginal community would be given 'the opportunity to recognise the failings of the past 200 years and to acknowledge their commitment to a new beginning in relations between themselves and the descendants on the nation's original inhabitants.'

By the time *Two Hundred Years Later* was published the Hawke government had come to power. In 1987 Hawke indicated that he wished to take action on the matter of a treaty during the bi-centenary year 1988. His chance came when he attended the Barunga Festival in Arnhem Land where he was presented with two paintings and text which called for the Commonwealth Parliament to negotiate a treaty 'recognising our prior ownership, continued occupation and sovereignty and affirming our human rights and freedom.' It was a more radical declaration than the Uluru Statement of nearly thirty years later. In response Hawke declared that he would have a treaty created between Aboriginal people and the Australian government by 1990. It never eventuated. In its place the government established the Reconciliation Council which was charged with establishing a decade long process of community engagement and education to conclude with the drafting of a treaty. But by 2001 the Howard government was firmly entrenched and the whole purpose of reconciliation had been subverted. Legal and political rights which had already been under active consideration for over twenty years were replaced by what Howard called 'practical reconciliation.'

Which brings us to the provenance of the Uluru Statement. We can pin it down to both time and place. The process was initiated in July 2015 by Tony Abbott who at the time was both Prime Minister and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. He invited a select group of 40 First Nations' leaders to a meeting at Kirribilli House to discuss ways in which their communities could be recognised in the constitution. The Leader of the Opposition also attended. Abbott told his select audience that:

This is a very important national crusade, it's very important to me, It's very important to the indigenous people of our country and it should be very important to all of us who want to see our country whole. And for me, indigenous recognition won't be changing our constitution so much as completing it.

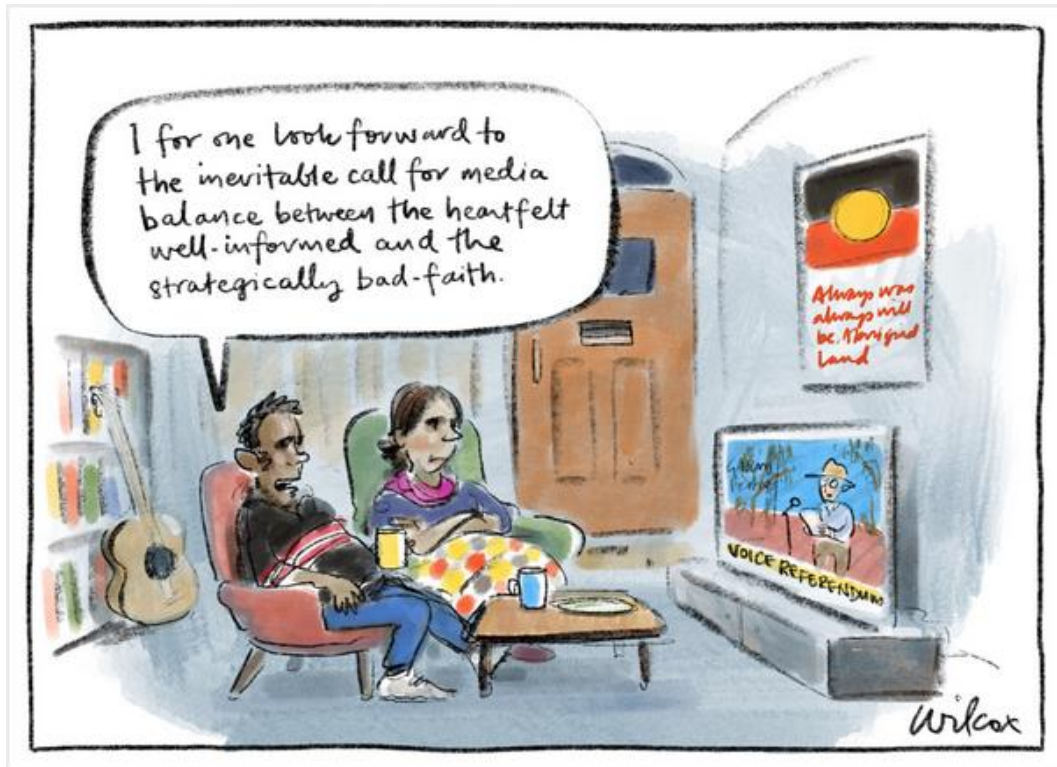
Much of the discussion was about a declaration recognising the First Nation in the constitution but there was also reference to what turned out to be the more controversial matter, 'a proposed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory body.'

Following the Kirribilli meeting the new Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and Bill Shorten jointly appointed a Referendum Council in December 2015 to initiate a campaign to solicit the views of the First Nations communities all over the country which would culminate in a final meeting at Uluru in May 2017. The extensive survey of opinion all over the continent is by now well known. The leaders of the process observed that it was 'unprecedented in our nation's history and is the first time a constitutional convention has been convened with and for First Peoples.' What was more it was the 'most proportionately significant consultation process that has ever been undertaken with First Peoples.'

The 250 delegates finalised the Uluru Statement in May 2017 with a strong sense of achievement. It was the culmination of an extraordinary venture. They had accepted a bi-partisan commission from Australia's political leadership to travel to 'all points of the southern sky' and sound out the political aspirations of the First Nations. They were able to bring all that information together and synthesise it in a few short paragraphs. Their ambitions were modest and embodied nothing that hadn't been talked and thought about for the preceding forty years. The final paragraph of the *Statement from the Heart* was as eloquent as the rest of the document:

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

The Uluru delegates had thought they could depend on the integrity of our political leaders and the good will of the Australian people. If, as seems likely, the referendum is defeated it will be a shattering blow to a whole generation of leaders. They have been treated with profound disrespect. Like children they have been told that they don't know what is good for them. As Noel Pearson said, they offered their hand to the Australian people, and if it is refused it will be a collective insult both devastating and unforgettable.



UPDATE – COMMENTARIES ON THE REFERENDUM RESULT

A VIEW FROM THE BOOTH(BY)

Doug Melvin

So the great event is over and whoever would have thought it would leave us all shattered and completely unimpressed (with apologies to L Cohen*).

Having worked extensively on the Boothby for YES campaign, along with a coalition of ALP, Blackwood Reconciliation Group, the Greens and unaligned volunteers, the result was disappointing but not unexpected. Pre-polling was the killer, although those of us that worked on the three very busy Pre-polling booths in the electorate thought things were running about 50/50. But when the pre-polls were counted it put the NO vote just in front.

The areas that let the YES vote down were some of the less advantaged ones - common with many of the electorates through Australia. In the middle class educated area the YES vote was very high, for instance in the State seat of Waite only one booth voted NO, again this in line with the general trend in Australia - for instance, seats held by Teals voted YES.

Latest AEC results for Labor-held seats in SA (recording only YES votes): Adelaide 48.8%, Boothby 47.6%, Hindmarsh 39.4%, Kingston 34.9%, Makin 30.7%, Spence 27.1

** Leonard Cohen: "So the great affair is over but whoever would have guessed, It would leave us all so vacant and so deeply unimpressed, It's like our visit to the moon or to that other star, I guess you go for nothing if you really want to go that far."*

Australia says No!

The voice referendum is lost.
Is this bad? Is this good? Is it just
more of the same? And why are you
surprised, are you new here?

Enough! Don't listen to anyone else
(why start now) design your own hot take!

Simply choose the
answers you like*
and then return to
your elitist bubble /
suburban enclave /
rural hideaway.



What happened to the voice?

It was a good idea run very badly ☐

It was a bad idea run very badly ☐

White Australia is simply not ready to
share power and doesn't appreciate
even being asked thank you ☐

Too many people who didn't know
simultaneously didn't care either ☐



Whose fault is it?

Peter Dutton ☐

Albo ☐

Voters (again!) ☐

Smug marketing people in Canberra
who asked a question they should
have already known the answer to ☐

Indigenous people for putting their
trust in non-Indigenous people ☐

Who are the winners?

Progressive Nos ☐

Regressive Nos ☐

People who hate referendums ☐

Anyone who wanted scientific
proof that Australia is racist ☐

Peter Dutton and
all of his friends ☐

Fossil fuelists ☐

What should happen now?

Treaty ☐

Truth-telling ☐

Legislate the
voice anyway ☐

Nothing - White people had a go
and it didn't work out so what
more do you want from us? ☐

Don't put your Yes t-shirt away
there is a lot of work to do. ☐

Who will have to deal with all the fallout
from Australia bugging this up?

First Nations people ☐

First Nations people ☐

First Nations people ☐

First Nations people ☐

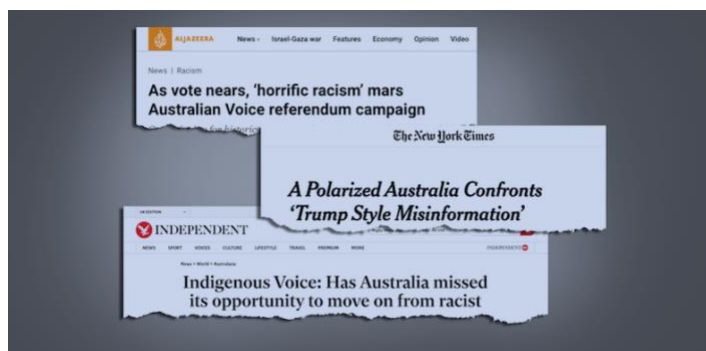
*Place ticks, crosses, words or pictures in
any box you like - take that the AEC!

First dog on the moon
1969

'Lies fuel racism': how global media covered Australia's *Voice to Parliament* referendum

Rebecca Strating & Andrea Carson, *The Conversation*: October 15, 2023

In recent days, news organisations around the world have sought to explain to global audiences both the Voice to Parliament referendum campaign and the result. The picture they have painted of Australia is not exactly flattering. The BBC, for example, described the win for the "no" side coming after a ["fraught and often acrid campaign"](#).



Headlines from *The Independent*, *Al Jazeera* & *NY Times*.



Headlines from the *BBC* & *NY Times*

The Washington Post declared it a ["crushing blow"](#) for Australia's First Nations people who *"saw the referendum as an opportunity for Australia to turn the page on its colonial and racist past"*. Even the play-it-straight Associated Press declared the rejection of the Voice as a ["major setback to the country's efforts for reconciliation"](#) with its First Peoples". Similarly, Reuters reported on fears the result *"could set back reconciliation efforts by years"*. Australia's own media warned a "no" vote could be seen as evidence that Australia was a ["racial rogue nation"](#). A crucial question, then, is whether this result will affect the way the world views Australia and potentially have an impact on Australia's international relations.

Much of the world's attention over the past week has been focused on the Israel-Hamas conflict. Yet, the data we've been analysing from Meltwater, a global media monitoring company, showed a 30% increase in mentions of the Voice to Parliament in the mainstream news and social media in the week leading up to the vote. There were 297,000 mentions this past week, compared with 228,000 mentions the preceding week.

Much of this content was generated within Australia, but just before the referendum, there was an uptick in the number of "explainers" produced by global news organisations. The BBC, for instance, [reported](#) the historic vote had exposed uncomfortable fault lines, and raised questions over Australia's ability to reckon with its past. The [New York Times](#) wrote the referendum had surfaced uncomfortable, unsettled questions about Australia's past, present and future. A number of pieces compared Australia unfavourably with other settler-colonial nations in terms of the legal recognition of First Nations people, including New Zealand and Canada. Japan-based [Nikkei Asia](#) reported: *"Australia is the only developed nation with a colonial history that doesn't recognise the existence of its Indigenous people in the constitution."* [An explainer](#) by Reuters similarly pointed out: *"First Nations people in other former British colonies continue to face marginalisation, but some countries have done better in ensuring their rights."* And in an interview with Reuters, the UN's special rapporteur on the right to development, Surya Deva, said the Voice debate had *"exposed the hidden discriminatory attitude"* in Australia towards Indigenous peoples.

Misinformation grabs headlines

Some international media also pointed to the large amount of misinformation that had surfaced during the campaign. The New York Times, which had extensive coverage of the campaign, reported the country had become ["ensnared in a bitter culture war"](#) based on ["Trump-style misinformation"](#) and "election conspiracy theories". One blunt BBC headline explicitly linked misinformation to racism: "Voice referendum: [Lies fuel racism](#) ahead of Australia's Indigenous vote". A Reuters explainer similarly reported on concerns that ["racist and false narratives"](#) had sparked fears the Voice would be a "third chamber of parliament". Many outlets had compared the Voice to Parliament referendum to the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump in the United States and the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom. This referendum result, however, was less surprising and generally reflected the [polls](#).

How will this affect Australia's relations?

In a previous [analysis piece](#), we wrote that most mentions of the Voice in the international mainstream media and social media had been generated by the United States, followed by the United Kingdom. In the last week of the campaign, there was a 30% increase in number of media mentions of the Voice (9,100) from US traditional news and social media accounts, compared to the preceding week (7,000). Yet, despite the negative tone of the coverage, it seems unlikely the result will substantially affect Australia's relations with either country. Concerns about the shifting geopolitics of the Asia-Pacific region have brought the three countries much closer in recent years. This was cemented further by the AUKUS pact.

In the Asia-Pacific region, however, leaders have no doubt been watching the referendum, even if they will not immediately comment on the result. China's representatives might be quiet now, but there is little doubt the "no" vote will contribute to the strategic narratives that Beijing uses to blunt Australia's criticisms of its human rights abuses on the international stage. A measured interview with Indigenous academic and poet Jeanine Leane in China's Global Times newspaper, for example, carried the headline "[Colonialism, white supremacy](#) loom over Australia's aboriginal referendum". This is, however, not entirely out of step with some of the other coverage emerging from Australia's allies and partners. Indian security expert Ambika Vishwanath [argued](#) in a piece for the Lowy Institute:

It seems extraordinary that a country such as Australia, one that largely aligns itself with 'Western' norms and values of freedom and democracy and a liberal outlook on life, has yet to recognise the people that originally inhabited the continent for close to 60,000 years.

New Delhi now has another avenue for pushback if Australia raises concerns about India's domestic politics. For some in the Pacific, the result will not come as a surprise. It may entrench views of Australia as a settler-colonial state unwilling to grapple with its past, including [colonialism in the Pacific](#).

As the referendum is a domestic issue, it is unsurprising other governments' leaders have not immediately commented publicly on the result. But this does not mean they're not watching. The Australian government must now explain to the international community the "[substantive policy steps](#)" it is taking to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage - a tough ask.

The brutal truth of the referendum result was that Yes campaign couldn't cut through to a hesitant electorate, [Laura Tingle](#), ABC News, Sunday October 15

For Indigenous Australians who supported an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, the comprehensive loss of the 2023 referendum — its defeat in every state as well as nationally — is so much more than just a political loss. As the Uluru Statement from the Heart said, it was an invitation to the rest of us for a better future: a coherent articulation by First Nations people, one which had been embraced and considered by more of them than anything said previously, of a view to the future which swallowed everything that had happened in the past, and asked for very little. And we rejected it. The reckoning of why that happened will go on for a long time. Politics will move quickly to shape and blame the reckoning: largely a brawl between white people. But pause briefly before that happens to consider the pain of that rejection.

It took very little time before not only the idea of the Voice was being consigned to history but the people behind it were being diminished by opponents. The former prime minister Tony Abbott was one of the first to say this was not a vote against Aboriginal people but against "activists" — a line taken up repeatedly by Opposition Leader Peter Dutton and his Indigenous Affairs spokeswoman Jacinta Nampijinpa Price.

It is a term designed to not just delegitimise the people — and particularly Indigenous leaders — who advocated for the Voice but to somehow suggest they were outsiders from the start with no clear mandate. In fact, those people now being dismissed as "activists" — and the work they produced at Uluru — were part of a process that had been set up by the then prime minister and opposition leader in 2015 to "advise the government on steps towards a referendum". While the Uluru Statement had a rough path from the start, it produced a new generation of Indigenous leaders who have advocated its cause with dignity and grace, in the face of increasing appalling abuse and racism.

Dutton and Price on Saturday night told people who had voted Yes that the Coalition had their "*best interests at heart*", and were protecting the country from a prime minister who was deliberately misleading them and "*academics and activists from the inner city*". Indigenous people, Price said, have to "*step away from grievance*". In

the space of a few short sentences, Dutton morphed the discussion about where we go from here from one that was his version of what might be done about improving Indigenous disadvantage to one about white grievance: from promising a royal commission into allegations of Indigenous child sexual abuse and an audit of indigenous funding to the cost of living, helping people buy their own homes, "the mess of energy policy", supporting — not opposing — small business and national security.

There was notably no talk of having a second referendum purely about Indigenous recognition if the Coalition won government. Dutton's Indigenous agenda was law and order and child sex abuse, and the suggestion that things might be fixed by an audit of funding a system that his government designed and watched over for a decade and which the Productivity Commission recently found had failed to meet even its own goals.

There is much weirdness in the relationship between this referendum and politics. Despite the comprehensive loss of the referendum, voters were repeatedly telling focus groups that they mark Peter Dutton down for the way he has conducted himself. More significantly, the very clear trends in voting do not bode well for the Coalition at the next election. It has to win back the seats it lost to Independents at last year's election, yet they recorded the strongest votes in the country in support of the referendum — often in the 60 and 70 per cent range. Such levels of support suggest the voters in those seats will not forget the events of the last few months.

Labor saw much of its heartland in the outer suburbs vote against the Voice. Yet it is not at all clear that that will count against it at the next election in the same way. The prime minister and the government have lost standing because of the Voice. But more because voters think their concerns about other issues have been ignored. If Anthony Albanese can now regroup to be seen to address those issues — most notably the cost of living — they will be appeased. But his party will note his incapacity to be a powerful advocate for a referendum to which he was deeply committed.

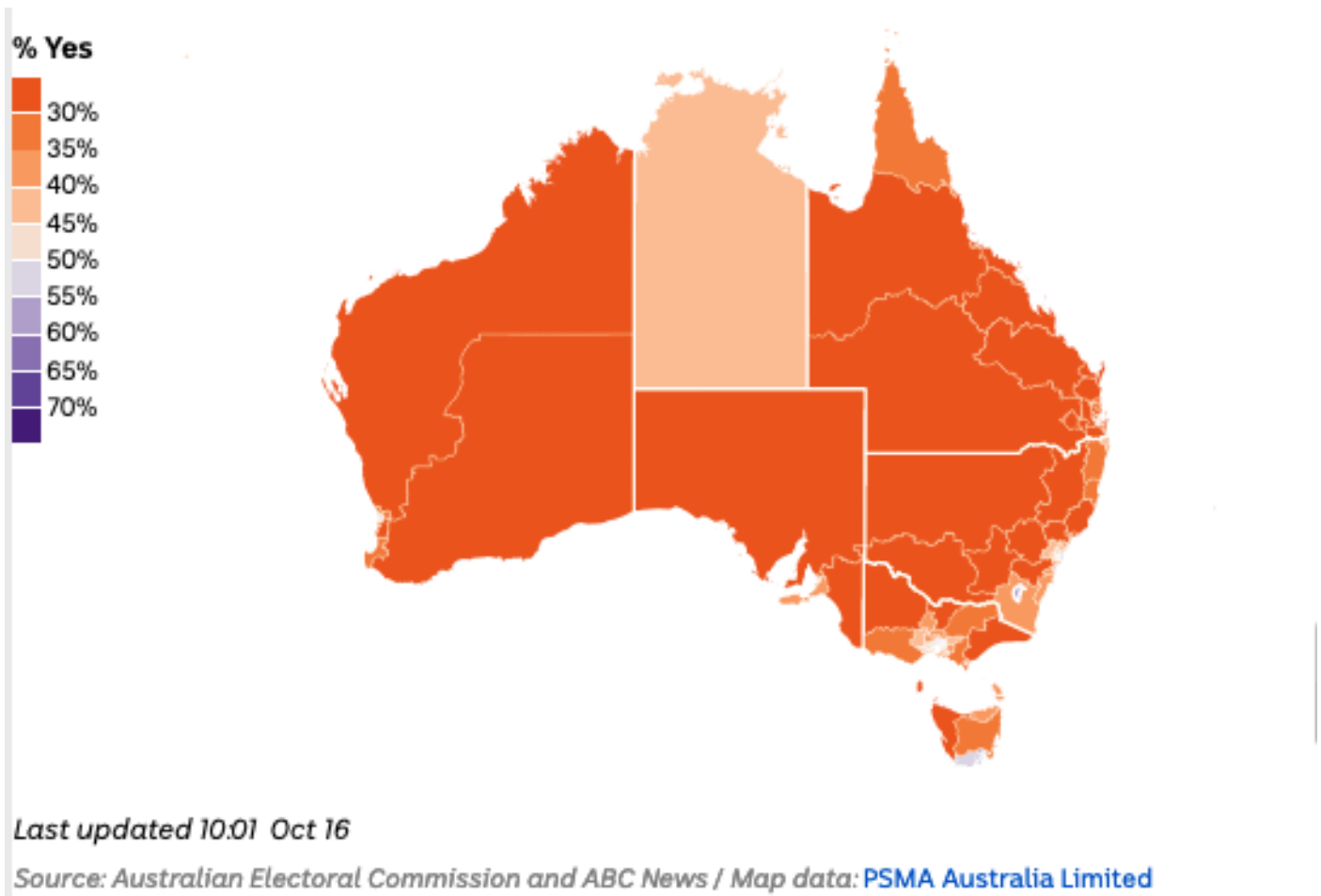
The brutal truth of the referendum campaign is that the Yes case could not cut through, could not articulate simply enough why something which was said to be just an advisory committee was so important that it should be put in the constitution. There was no simple take home message from the Yes side, no clear figure-head.

The prime minister prevaricated and deferred taking the lead, believing that it should be the community and Indigenous leaders who ran the argument — believing that his presence would make the debate a brutal political one. But it was always going to be a brutal political contest. And he guaranteed that by making the referendum his first commitment the night he became prime minister. That ensured that, regardless of arguments about the Voice itself, it became a target for political opponents who know a crucial step in the path back to government is denying a prime minister his agenda and his apparent effectiveness. Albanese's position put an absolutely unfair pressure on his Indigenous Affairs Minister Linda Burney to lead the debate from a relatively junior position in the government, and helped scatter the sense of who was leading the debate at a time when there were already diverse groups and spokespeople arguing a range of propositions in support of the case.

The result was a disaster. The No case had at most a couple of simple messages and a clear spokeswoman and, where he did appear, deadly messages from Peter Dutton. The Voice proposition was up against an electorate that is notoriously historically conservative about any change in the constitution, which has little knowledge of Indigenous people and, as [Noel Pearson said last year](#), little empathy with them. Add a vicious disinformation campaign making wild assertions about the Voice threatening people's houses, higher taxes, a UN takeover, and most other conspiracy theories you can name, and we have seen a Dante-esque descent into the political inferno in the last year, much of it driven with the undeniable poisonous fuel of racism.

Indigenous leaders were vowing to stay strong on Saturday night; to acknowledge the considerable support they had got from the rest of the country during the referendum; the 80,000 volunteers they say were supporting them, the 200,000 people who marched across the country. Many called for a Week of Silence to grieve the outcome, saying now was not the time to dissect the reasons for the outcome. White politics, however, will be making no such pause. With federal parliament returning this week, the race to shape the story of what has happened will quickly bury all the passion that its advocates put into the Voice.

HOW AUSTRALIA VOTED



[How your electorate voted in the referendum](#)

[Scratch the surface of the Voice results, and a more complicated picture emerges](#)

Voice referendum results point to shifting faultlines in Australian politics

Paul Strangio, *The Conversation*, October 15, 2023

It was Martin Luther King Jr, prophet and martyr of the civil rights movement in the United States, who famously remarked, “the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice”. Yet there are times when justice seems to become more distant rather than closer. Saturday was such an occasion in Australia. The nation failed to grasp an opportunity to help redress the most grievous injustice in its history, the dispossession and exclusion of First Peoples. As Prime Minister Anthony Albanese repeatedly said during the referendum campaign, the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart was a generous and gracious outstretched hand from Indigenous Australians. That hand was spurned by Saturday’s [“no” vote](#).

The bleakness of the referendum result is not just confined to how much of a blow it is to the reconciliation project in this country. The voting pattern points to unsettling trends in Australian politics, of a possible realigning of fault lines in the contest for power. As the May 2022 federal election vividly demonstrated, the voter bases of the major parties are crumbling. Labor’s victory in that election, on a primary vote of just 32%, was effectively the product of a progressive alliance. That alliance comprised not only Labor voters, but supporters of the Greens and independents (the Teals), the latter breaking through by seizing leafy inner urban electorates from the Liberal Party. At that time, that result was heralded as the rise of “a new politics”, of a national consensus in favour of progressive policies, including climate action, integrity in politics (an anti-corruption commission) and reconciliation with First Peoples.

Yet the 2022 election result also potentially portended something else. In the outer suburbs – and this was particularly noticeable in Victoria – there was a turning away from Labor as numbers of its traditional voters opted instead to support a melange of minor parties (several of them right-wing populist outfits) and independents. This suggested a possible fragility to the alliance that had brought Labor to office. Polling on the Voice referendum identified divisions that [seemed to indicate similar chinks](#) in the country's progressive constituency. According to those polls, support for the Voice was strongest among the highly educated and the young – those mainly clustered in inner urban areas. On the other hand, opponents of the Voice were more likely to live in the outer suburbs and regional and rural areas. They had lower education attainment, and were older. The results of Saturday's referendum [were consistent](#) with these findings.

In some ways, this pattern merely replicates voting behaviour at the [1999 republic referendum](#). Then the “yes” vote was concentrated in inner metropolitan areas, particularly in Sydney and Melbourne, while support for the republic fell steeply away in the outer suburbs and regional and rural electorates. At the time, there was talk of Australia being divided into two nations, one cosmopolitan, confident and progressive, the other provincial, apprehensive and conservative.

A quarter of a century on, this divide has not healed: arguably, it has become more pronounced. As evidenced by his preparedness to further alienate the Teal held seats by opposing the Voice referendum, by his obduracy over climate change and his waging of war against what he derides as “woke” politics, Liberal leader Peter Dutton appears to be banking on a fundamental and enduring realignment of the voting public.

In other words, Dutton's strategy seems to be aimed not at winning back affluent inner-city, formerly blue-ribbon, Liberal electorates. Rather, he is focused on cleaving away working-class outer suburbs from Labor. His calculation is that by taking ground in the outer suburbs, combined with holding seats in regional and rural areas, he will be able to forge a winning majority, a conservative coalition of support whose defining features are economic and cultural insecurity. The parallels with constituencies that supported Brexit and Trumpism overseas are self-evident. Dutton's strategy is a gamble but, as the results of the referendum show, it is not without rationale.

The Voice referendum campaign suggested something else about the current competing forces in national politics. Albanese spoke a language of optimism and generosity during the campaign. I was especially struck by his conscious use of the word “kindness” in his final appeals to the Australian public on the eve of the referendum. He declared that voting “yes” would be an act of kindness towards First Peoples, a generous act of the heart. The prime minister was also not afraid to display emotion during the campaign, shedding tears at a moving ceremony by Indigenous women at Uluru. All of this evoked the style of leadership that we saw across the Tasman Sea when Jacinda Ardern was New Zealand's prime minister, a leadership in which empathy and compassion were signature notes.

Dutton offers something radically different. His is a hard-man leadership, devoid of nuance. In his world, vulnerability is weakness, and fear is a prime driver. He unambiguously taps a sense of grievance and, as often demonstrated during the referendum campaign, is unafraid to be an agent of misinformation (which is then amplified through the noxious channels of social media). Dutton is, in short, the local incarnation of a right-wing strongman populist.

It is often said of Australia that the centre holds better in this country than it does in other parts of the world, such as the United States. That a phlegmatic national temper and institutional buffers such as compulsory voting keep at bay the kind of bitter and destructive polarisation that afflicts other societies. Yet the rancorous debate we have just endured over the Voice suggests we ought not to be complacent about this. It also indicates the confident proclamations of the dawning of a “new politics” after the last election were overly optimistic. The project of progressive politics in Australia, in fact, remains brittle.

SEE ALSO:

[If there is to be any healing after the Voice referendum, it will be a long journey](#)

Frank Bongiorno, *The Conversation*, Oct 15, 2023

[Whatever the outcome, reconciliation is dead](#)

Marcia Langton: *The Saturday Paper*, 14 October, 2023