

ISSUE 2

THARUNKA

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Tharunka acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which the University now stands.

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/Editor's Letter

Hello dear reader,

Thank you for joining us for our soon-to-be-celebrated-as-canonical second issue. A lot has changed since we last met in our Editors' Letter, and yet, so much has stayed the same. The page size, for example. But in a shifting world that shifts so quickly it knocks you over, sweeping you away in an inexorable tide of uncertainty, one thing that will never change is Tharunka's commitment to high quality journalism. And we've plenty of that. I don't want to give away all the contents obviously, because after all, that's what the contents page is for, but the Editorial team personally guarantee that if you're not blown away by the thought-provoking, funny, lucid, sad and life-affirming materials of this physically printed news dispenser, we will give you your money back.

And, dear reader, your blissful Tharunka-themed excursion need not end with the euphoric release of reading the actual, completed, printed contents either. You can also write your own contribution to this bastion of the printed word. Send your journalistic, satirical and opinions to tharunka@arc.unsw.edu.au.

Until next we meet,
Brendan, Lauren and Ned

Dear Agony Ibis,
What are your thoughts on the
current Ukraine-Russia conflict?
Thanks, Politically Aware.

To Politically Aware:

Oh, dear reader, let me take you back to a different time. A freer, hazier day when this old, grey Ibis was but a milky white chick.

It was April, 1992 in Crimea and I wandered through the city in a cloud of love. David Lee Roth and I were summering in the small coastal town of Schatsvernika-karboniczka, where we had joined the local pottery club, befriended a couple other human-ibis couples, and spent our spare time either baking or on heroin.

After a long night of love making, I had been sent out to scrounge some milk from the local deli. I should have known that trouble was on its way; the sky was darkened by thick, billowing clouds. I noticed as I passed David's Chrysler that his concubine, Svetlana, had frozen to death where she was chained the previous night. I continued on my way, however, tugging my Dominique Aurientis mohair-blend coat tighter around my shoulders.

Finland in summer is beautiful, dear reader. The town was picturesque, surrounded by icy, crystalline fjords and some rather charming marshes. The odd feeling of trepidation remained, however, tugging at my stomach. When I reached the deli and found out that there was no milk to be had (as the guinea pigs had mutinied) I assumed that was all I had been worried about. Peace of mind returned.

I should have known better.

I returned back to the Høtél Mønsk much earlier than had been anticipated, just in time to see a fully-fledged orgy of hotel staff and other avian socialites, David- my sweet love, David Lee Roth, in the middle.

I stumbled out of the hotel, barely registering his yelled apologies or the quiet murmurs of apology from the hotel concierge. It wasn't until I was back out on the street, chain smoking to dull the pain, that the real questions hit me. Where would I go, I, a bird, in Finland? Who was I, without my 80's frontman love? Would I ever be able to look at back combed hair without incurring once again the soul-deep pangs of sadness that were flooding me right now? Had I read enough Proust to have ennui?

Four months later, I received a package in the mail. Fourteen krona, a lock of hair, and a picture of him in Ibiza, laughing with a toucan. A fucking toucan. So, dear reader, if you will allow me to answer your question with another question. How many black turtlenecks can one bird reasonably own?

Until next time,
Agony Ibis

****We are all Ibis in the flock of Life, winging gracefully to the Great Trashpile of Enlightenment.**

/Letters to the Editor

Dear Editors,

I was delighted to read Aadil Ansareen's piece "Good Muslim, Bad Muslim" after being reminded of Tharunka's existence in week one. The argument Ansareen presents is that the majority of people disregard the complex causal factors involved in terrorist acts by Muslims. It closes with the following: "The real surprise isn't that this atmosphere might lead to attacks on our soil but that there haven't been more. We have a lot to answer for." This is a pretty offensive statement. The implication that attitudes towards Islam should reasonably be expected to cause events such as those in Copenhagen, Paris, and Sydney is as hurtful as it is fallacious. "We" have explicitly nothing to answer for, because a violent act is never justified, regardless of how misleading the media may be or how disenfranchised or embattled the perpetrator feels. Moreover, I have never ordered a drone strike, or shelled a Palestinian, nor has anyone I know been involved in government-mandated torture or the daily operation of Guantanamo Bay, yet I may be the target of a terrorist attack: it's ridiculous to try to explain the murder of innocent people in the context of the cruelty of governments. This runs both ways: just as physical attacks by Muslims are completely unacceptable, attacks on Muslims by members of anti-Islam groups are also disgraceful. There is a difference between having an objection to an idea and harming an individual which is fairly apparent to any human who possesses a functioning brain. I, for example, will not pretend that I don't dislike Islam (triple negative!). The Quran and Hadith are full of terrible ideas that have hurt and killed an astonishing number of people during Islam's tenure as a world religion. But I make a clear distinction between disliking Islam in principle, and disliking Muslims as individuals. Many Muslims that I have regular contact with are among the most compassionate, caring, friendly and moral individuals whom I have had the pleasure of meeting. But that doesn't mean that the "crime" of apostasy isn't stupid, or that the absurd brutality of some responses to valid criticism of Islam is acceptable. We simply must look at all contributing factors and motivations for terrorist attacks. Yes, socioeconomic and environmental data are important, but when a person is beheaded in the street, it's not because the perpetrator feels downtrodden by the one percent. It's because of a sense of "the other" that religion, and acutely Islam, capitalises upon. Religion

is used, as it has always been, as a powerful tool of segregation. Just as we can divide individuals by race, gender, disability, or sexuality, we can use religion as a tool for causing friction between groups. There is a difference, though: religion is a belief. You cannot be born a Muslim any more than you can be born a Buddhist, or a Catholic, or an accountant. This is one of the reasons that you can produce a reasonable critique of, say, Christianity, but not of homosexuals (as some of our foolish contemporaries are so painfully wont to attempt). To minimise friction in a multicultural society, we must separate our innate properties from our acquired beliefs in order to emphasise our commonalities: one should identify oneself as a human first, then as a male Belarusian pansexual, then as an Orthodox Pastafarian. Refusal to accept that Islam is not morally flawless is equally to blame. The proper response to The Satanic Verses or the Jyllands-Posten cartoons or the arguments of the French anti-Islamic sentiment is not to murder people but to say "hey, maybe you have a point. We really need to work on that" or, alternatively, "no, that's not factually accurate because...". Any doctrine that can be reasonably interpreted as instruction to cause harm to others is inherently ethically flawed and should be amended or rejected by followers in favour of a relevant alternative. We should be allowed to criticise any religion as a collection of ideas without fearing that a rogue member will bomb our brethren in some kind of misguided, roundabout retaliation. After all, there's no reason to take sky-fairies, angels and djinns seriously in the modern day, no matter how sacred the text upon which the legend is based. In Australia, we can argue against a political or philosophical idea in relative safety, but if I burned a Quran in protest against its hatred of homosexuality I would have to spend the rest of my life in hiding, and that's the point that "Good Muslim, Bad Muslim" misses. Regardless of the environmental circumstances of the deranged people in distant lands as well as our own backyard, terrorist attacks should encourage open criticism of the beliefs and motivations of the attackers. We should never hurt or isolate individuals, but we should definitely not shy away from making valid criticisms of an ideology that drives people to kill.

/SRC President unveils new welfare initiative

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Annastasia Robertson

The Student Representative Council has teamed up with Arc to launch a new, comprehensive welfare service to the UNSW community in the coming weeks.

SRC President Billy Bruffey is in the final stages of preparation to launch this volunteer-based program.

It will see any student who requires help finding food, personal items or accommodation gain it with ease and anonymity through a variety of freely-provided assistance packs.

"We wanted to come up with a bold, frontline response to student welfare issues on campus," Bruffey said.

"A lot of people are kicked out of home and a lot of people are struggling to make ends meet on inadequate Centrelink welfare payments."

The initiative sprouted from the on-campus crisis accommodation secured by the previous SRC, but has been enhanced with the addition of an on-site food bank.

In liaison with the Alma Mater Society of the University of British Columbia, who also provide this service to their students, the SRC has created a UNSW food and goods bank which will include a variety of packs to meet a variety of student needs.

This will include a child pack for parents, a toiletry pack, a carbohydrate-based food pack, and a fruit and vegetable food pack.

"Anyone who needs help will get help and we'll never turn away anybody. It's on a trust basis, so if you come 10 times a semester we take it you are in need," Bruffey said.

The most important aspect of this program, which will run out of the Arc offices, is that it is not an immediate, quick fix for someone in need. Arc's caseworkers are on board, and anyone in need will be referred onto them.

There will also be a number of pamphlets in the packs which provide useful information about social housing, women's shelters and outreach centres.

Mr Bruffey says the range of options will promote dignity for the people who need it, as they will not involve any accompanying force or pressure upon those who pick up the packs.

Currently, the program will only be available to students, but the SRC hopes to expand this to the wider community as awareness is built.

"What we're trying to do is help people in need, but also address the underlying problems that put them there in the first place," Bruffey said.

A website will be launched once the program begins. If you would like to help, or volunteer for this program or any other welfare program at UNSW, please contact the SRC Welfare Collective.

/ARC EGM

An EGM called by Arc to pass a range of constitutional reforms ended in disarray last week as the failure of the controversial Motion 1, along with procedural delays, caused a walk-out among the club and college attendees.

The EGM was called to pass a range of changes to the Arc constitution, from mandating gender equality among Arc Board's student directors to the deletion of the SDC from Arc's constitution.

Any change to an organisation's constitution requires 75% of the vote to pass.

The bloc of reforms, widely promoted by Arc and the SRC, faced criticism from some corners for 'artificially' combining the popular measure to implement AA with the more contentious policy of removing the Student Development Committee from the constitution.

As the bloc motion was defeated and then Quorum was lost, neither the changes to the SDC or affirmative action will now go ahead.

Former SDC member Sam Diamant spoke in favour of the motion, explaining that the SDC was no longer equipped to deal with the scale of student life at UNSW, was creating a bureaucratic hurdle, and needed to be replaced with a professionalised system.

Those opposed to the vote justified their position by saying that a bloc motion prevented proper discussion of the individual measures in the proposition, and that the SDC allowed an important clubs voice at Board level.

Other concerns raised included the inclusion of a 'sunset clause' – a measure that would remove affirmative action if the diversity requirements were met without the need for a diversity intervention over four consecutive years.

When the vote failed, after repeated recounts due to the closeness of the vote, many students walked out and quorum was rapidly lost.

As this is the second time the bloc of reforms has faced an EGM, it will be some time before it appears again.

The Tharunka editorial team faced accusations of bias for writing a comment on our Facebook page that expressed dismay that Motion 1 failed. Although we suspect some of it was politically motivated as well as unfairly and personally targeted, we acknowledge this concern.

We do not back down from our status. We maintain the belief that this was a wasted opportunity to achieve progressive reform, and we will continue to fight for gender equality and better club bureaucracy on campus.

We on the Tharunka team believe that some things are worth receiving flak for.



/Shortlist

While this news page was written before the State Election, it can be safely assumed that the Baird Liberal Government won re-election. Tharunka commiserates on behalf of electricity workers, TAFE students, and the general public at large. On that note, the government has announced a time table for the construction of the City South East Light Rail Project. Construction will begin to disrupt traffic on Anzac Parade in second semester this year and continue until early 2019.

As Census date is now passed, Chancellery's changes to withdrawal procedures are now in full effect. If you suffer a disability, mental illness, or other disruptive life event between now and the end of semester and you have to pull out, it will be permanently recorded on your academic transcript.

Nick Gerovasilis

"In many ways I am ashamed of the party." Respected former Labor minister, Martin Ferguson, delivered his party this blunt rebuke in the lead-up to the March 28 election. It spoke to a deeper truth; the NSW Labor Party, decimated by their corruption-riddled sweep from government in 2011, had turned to desperately peddling misinformation. It was an attempt to sneak back into power, rather than genuinely engaging in a contest of ideas.

As former Premier Morris Iemma has said, "you're never going to get a poll that says privatisation is popular." However, as Iemma highlights, the real question is whether the reforms have a social and economic benefit – and he concludes they do. With support from such substantial figures across the party divide, you'd be forgiven for thinking that such important reforms might be depoliticised and passed for the good of the state. Of course not.

This election campaign has been pervaded by a dishonest debate driven by the unions, and shamelessly echoed by the Labor opposition. Experts at entrenching their privileged market position, the unions' opposition to privatisation has been delivered through a highly effective advertising campaign. Their message is a tired recycling of the typical arguments against privatisation: significant job losses will occur; greedy private corporations will gouge consumers and prices will rise.

Unfortunately for Labor and the unions, and the electorate if this campaign succeeds, none of these criticisms have any basis in reality.

It is first important to note what will be the most significant impact on pricing as a result of the Baird government's plan. The Coalition is proposing a 49 per cent lease of the state's electricity network assets, also known as the 'poles and wires'. This shift is correlated with network costs, which make up 35 to 55 per cent of a household bill. In the first instance, these prices are set by an independent regulator, rather than the operating companies themselves, so any claim of gouging is simply incorrect.

Furthermore, in Victoria and South Australia, where the network is privately owned, network charges have reduced by 18 and 17 per cent. Over the same period, prices in NSW and Queensland, where public ownership has remained, prices have risen 122 and 140 per cent.

This difference is stark. A report by the Grattan Institute in 2012 found that this effect was heavily influenced by substantial over-investment by government-owned companies compared to privately owned companies. This does not mean, however, that the networks in SA and Victoria are under-serviced. In fact, they are required to meet the same quality standards as in NSW and Victoria. Instead, former Labor treasurer Michael Costa blames significant union pressure for the 'gold-plating' of publicly-owned networks, which in turn encouraged higher prices.

Having similarly been a product of the union movement before entering parliament, it is telling that Costa now slams Labor for allowing the unions to dishonestly ensure that their privileged position prevails over the general good. Other former Labor leaders Bob Carr and Paul Keating have been similarly critical of the present Party position, and its leader, Luke Foley, for their 'obscurantist' obsequiousness to the union line.

This discord shines a spotlight on a critical existential conflict that lies at the heart of modern Labor. As a party born amongst the unions, its sensitivity to influence from this increasingly unrepresentative part of society is now at a crossroads with its economically rationalist wing.

If Labor is to remain electable, it must resolve this contradiction. To truly represent the public interest and offer a strong centre-left vision, it must heed the advice of Carr, Latham and Keating, and not the electricity unions. Moreover, it is fundamentally in their interest to do so. Eventually, Labor will return to the treasury benches. At that time, they will be better served in having supported a policy that frees up critical funds for essential infrastructure. Such a visionary state-building program is befitting of the Labor Party at its best. The alternative, which Foley now countenances, is to raise taxes – a surely unsavoury option, and one which would only further the cascading sentiment of Labor being incompetent economic managers.

There will be legitimate differences in policy at the March 28 election. The privatisation of the electricity network will not be one. Like in Queensland, Labor will find itself on the wrong side of history for having opposed such sensible policy. There are matters for ideology. Then there are matters of pure pragmatism. This issue clearly falls into the latter category.

/On the Election

Politics can be muddled sometimes. Barely a government in history has made it through a term without offending one of their key supporters or betraying a core principle for the greater good. And I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing – you get elected by your supporters, but you govern for everyone. Like Howard's deal on the guns and Hawke's bargain with the unions, sometimes going against the ideological grain is for the best interest of the nation as a whole.

But there are some moments in politics that demonstrate to you unambiguously where everybody really stands; where the central principles of each party are on palpable display. 2015 is that election in our time. This is my Labor Party at its best, and the Liberal Party at their worst.

The Labor Party is standing at this election on a platform of values, like better health, affordable education, and on building the infrastructure that will take New South Wales forward. The Liberal Party is standing at this election on a narrower platform. It's got only one value: the value of public assets on auction.

One might look at Mike Baird and think he's good enough an excuse to vote Liberal – but again, you've only got to look at his track record. His were the twinkling blue eyes that overlooked \$1 billion in accounting errors in the 2012 budget. And there was a real consequence to that – his were the straight white teeth ripped a hole in health and TAFE funding, cutting nurse and teacher positions – all to fill a budget deficit that only existed because there was a billion dollars he forgot he had.

And then there's the power privatisation debate – the most ideological nonsense put forward by a state government in years. Let me put my neck out there – I don't mind some privatisations. Airlines? Whatever. Lotto? Why not. The difference with power lines is that they are a natural monopoly and an unavoidable public service. We can't avoid them, we can't compete with them, they belong to us, and we don't want them sold. Even more concerning is the threat of what's to come – if they'd sell the electricity networks, what stops them from privatising TAFEs? Or the bus network? Or hospitals? Exactly how far will our electoral 'mandate' stretch once the Liberals take charge?

Central to any discussion of the NSW Labor Party in 2015 is the Labor Party of 2011. I put it to you that that party of the past is dead. The worst offenders of its corruption and self-service are working on their model train sets and bingo nights in retirement, and the best of a young new generation is taking over in their place. Get ready to hear a lot of things from names like Jodi McKay, Chris Minns, Greg Warren, and Prue Car. Because win or lose, the next standard-bearers of stable, progressive Labor government will be elected on March 28 – candidates elected by supporters like me, who will one day soon be governing for everybody. I'm glad to be involved in such an exciting time in the history of the Labor Party, and I hope you'll see us fit to get your vote on Saturday the 28th.

/Capital Punishment

Ned Hirst

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The Australian people are not so philosophically opposed to capital punishment as politicians' rhetoric surrounding the impending executions of Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran might have you believe. A 2009 Roy Morgan poll found only 29% of Australians supported the death penalty, but in 2005 another poll, also conducted by Roy Morgan, found that 77% of us favoured the death penalty for the Bali bombers. This year's now notorious triple j poll (Roy Morgan again) found that 52% of Australians thought the death penalty should be carried out on Australians convicted of drug offences overseas. Australians may be humanists, but only in the abstract.

It's little wonder that this should be the case, given that there is not even a consensus about what the criminal justice system is supposed to achieve. Those of us most staunchly opposed to the death penalty cite the argument that criminal justice should be rehabilitative, but our prison system systemically fails to rehabilitate offenders. The Australian Institute of Criminology reports the rate of recidivism nationwide is 60%. It's a wonder it isn't higher. Is there any sense to taking disturbed, violent and often disadvantaged people, locking them together in a brutalising environment rife with physical and sexual violence and then releasing

them at the end of their sentence expecting them to be model citizens? I once observed a judge telling a young offender "some people come out scarred not because they come out as convicted criminals but because of what happened on the inside." We know this, so why do we send them there?

Of course any state politician knows that being soft on crime is an election-loser. It's a vicious cycle and will take bipartisanship or superhuman political courage to crack it. But if we were to focus more on rehabilitation, who knows what we might achieve? The hopeless, tragic irony is that Chan and Sukumaran have, in spite of the odds, rehabilitated. Opposing the death penalty, the prisoner governor said Chan "organises courses in prison, leads the English-language church service and is a mentor to many." Sukumaran teaches English and computer courses to prisoners. We could feel happy about their return to society, but it seems now they will, senselessly, never be given that chance. If anything is learnt from this, it should be to oppose capital punishment everywhere, and take the hard steps to reform our own justice system.

/Superannuation

Adrian Rook

Earlier this month Treasurer Joe Hockey raised the idea of allowing first home buyers to access their superannuation savings in order to enter the housing market.

It was a moment typical of the speak-first-think-later policymaking we've all grown used to since Abbott and Hockey took the reins 18 months ago. The reaction from policy experts was swift and contemptuous, with the architect of compulsory superannuation in Australia former Prime Minister Paul Keating stating "This idea is certainly not an innovation and is not responsible enough even to be considered a thought bubble."

But I suspect there is a segment of young people who are anxious enough about the housing market and underinformed enough about superannuation that they may have been encouraged by the idea of being able to own a house sooner.

Unfortunately the actual outcome of allowing young people to dip into their super for a home would be to do nothing for housing affordability. Houses are sold at auctions – if everyone there has retirement savings to dip into, then everyone will deploy those savings when bidding for the house. Bidding power might go up, but prices will go up by the exact same amount.

But young people should also be aware of the way superannuation works, and why dipping in to superannuation would be a bad idea even if retirement seems too far away to warrant thinking about.

The purpose of super was to lift the standard of living for retirees and reduce the cost of the aged pension. Paul Keating describes that "The key to wealth accumulation in retirement savings is compound earnings. It is the earnings on the earnings plus new weekly capital commitments that allow superannuation accumulations to roughly double every seven to eight years". This pool of savings has grown to around the \$1.5 trillion mark. And with an ageing population, this piggy bank is going to be vital. It's the only way the youth of today can avoid funding the Baby Boom's retirement through taxation and the pension.

Despite compulsory super's importance, it's become an area ripe for reform. On Q and A recently, Grattan Institute CEO John Daley said that "superannuation has essentially become not what it was originally designed for, which was to support the incomes of that middle 60%, but instead it's become something which is essentially a tax shelter for the top 20%".

This is because super contributions are taxed at the flat rate of 15% once you earn over \$37,000, whilst the top tax rate for individuals in Australia is set at 45%. Storing money in super has the benefit of minimising tax for the wealthiest Australians. At the same time, many middle and low income earners will not have enough super to self-fund their retirement. They will have to rely on our future earnings and the pension in order to fund their retirements.

One policy implemented by the previous Labor government took a modest step in solving this problem. The low-income super contribution was a scheme where the government would match, dollar-for-dollar, the contributions made by low income earners towards their superannuation. If a low income earner decided to add \$500 to his or her super, the government would add \$500 too, meaning the total contribution would be \$1000. It was a modest scheme addressing a much larger problem – which only amplified the betrayal when it, alongside many other social justice programs, was cut by our current government.

The move was not only unfair, but extremely short sighted. Every dollar contributed to the retirement funds of low income earners is two or three dollars that don't need to be spent in the future, when those workers retire. But despite this short sightedness, it's the task of both sides of politics to reform super in the near future. An aging population is forcing spending up, and mining revenues are dropping fast. Taxation arrangements for super will most likely be tinkered with. The challenge for policy makers is to make the scheme more fair and equitable while still encouraging all Australians to save for retirement.

/The Employment Terminator

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Brendan Byron

I bet I'd surprise no one if I told you that jobs are harder to find these days. Every "entry level" position wants 3-5 years of industry experience, and even a postgraduate degree is no guarantee of stable employment.

What might surprise you, though, is this: there's good reason to believe this lack of jobs is about to get much, much worse over the next twenty years. And I'm not blaming immigrants or austerity or recessions, either.

By far the biggest challenge to your employment prospects is the rise of the robots.

It sounds bizarre, but if you think about it, this really shouldn't come as a shock – tellers in banks were replaced by ATMs a decade ago. In the last five years, supermarket checkouts that used to involve a dozen workers in a dozen aisles have been rapidly replaced by one worker supervising a dozen checkout machines. In the last six months, ticket windows at train stations have all but closed, with thousands of workers laid off.

Which, don't get me wrong here, is great news. It's creative destruction – technological innovation kills old jobs like abacus makers and all the people who would have made abacuses turn to improving

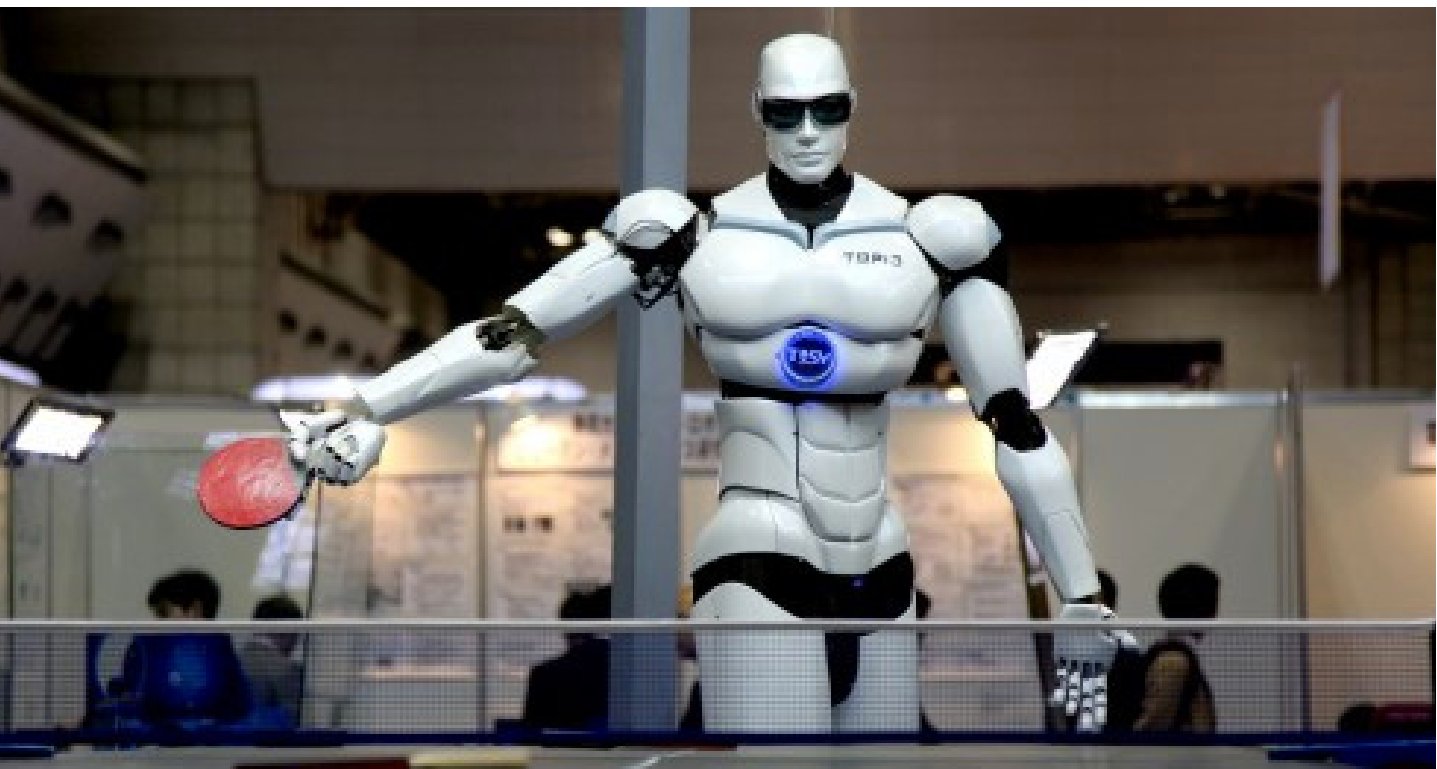
computers instead. All the taxi drivers and truckies put out of work by driverless Google cars will find new jobs in the next great endeavours – jobs that haven't even been invented yet.

Or will they?

Last week I sat down with UNSW Senior Economics Lecturer Stanley Cho. He's an expert in 'capital-skill complementarity' – the tendency of skilled individuals to earn more and be in more demand as capital, or machines, become more widely-used. And while he stuck to the standard script most of the time – that new jobs will always be invented – he did say there was evidence to the contrary.

I asked him: if Google's driverless cars put a million people out of work (a not-unreasonable assumption), will a million jobs be created in turn? He said "Maybe not." Dr Cho referenced America during the Global Financial Crisis: the economy grew for years before the job market began to recover as well. Dr Cho theorised that to cut costs, companies replaced people with cheaper capital. "All of these unskilled workers were replaced with cheap machines, secured with low interest rates and cheap loans," he said.

You might think you're safe with your readily



applicable, highly prized Comm/Law degree. You aren't. Going into finance? Computers trading stocks with computers already comprise over 99% of financial transactions – sometimes with devastating consequences.

On May 6, 2010, at 2:42pm, the Dow Jones plummeted out of the blue. Trading algorithms got caught in a loop, buying and selling the same stocks over and over. Within ten minutes of the malfunction, a trillion dollars disappeared from the global economy – 9% of the Dow Jones index's total value. Twenty minutes later, at 3:07, the marketbots had self-corrected. Not only are humans being outmatched by machines, when it comes to things like high-frequency trading, we're not even playing the same game anymore.

And here's where we get down to the crux of it: the reason this time's different – and why I doubt today's taxi drivers and financiers won't find new, better-paying jobs when their old ones get mechanised – is because there's something fundamentally different in how this generation of technology plays out. We're not building machines with better strength or better speed than humans -- we're building machines with better minds than

humans. And some time in the future – probably not in the next 20 years, but not “never” either – we're quite likely to crack the code and build artificial intelligence that can think creatively better than a person can.

That's a big deal. At that stage, you're not just worried about the employment prospects of people when computers can do any job better. Because the next job to go might be computer programmers. Why couldn't an AI learn to improve its own cognitive ability? If it improves its own cognitive ability, what stops it from getting even better? Where is the roof? Elon Musk, the genius behind PayPal, Tesla Motors, and SpaceX, goes even further. He wrote on twitter in August last year: “Hope we're not just the biological boot loader for digital superintelligence. Unfortunately, that is increasingly probable”.

These are a lot of big ideas. I don't ask you to follow me all the way from mechanised cars to digital superintelligences – you can call me crazy at some point along the chain, and you probably should. It's not clear that any of these potentialities might happen. What is clear, though, is that some tiny, miniscule fraction of it will.

And we better be prepared for when it does.

/Oh Captain My Captain

Sam Moran

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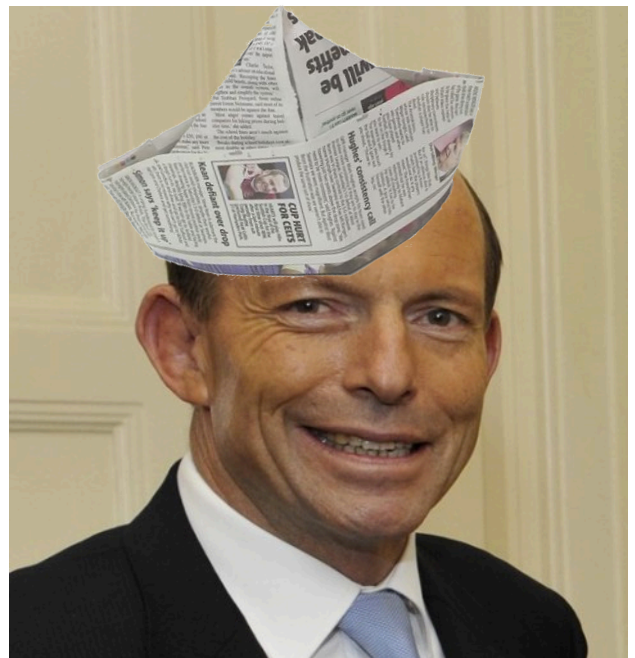
On Robbin Williams, Tony Abbott and the character of our nation...

Walt Whitman's poem, made famous by the unforgettable scenes of "A Dead Poet's Society", reverberates through our hearts and minds as Robin Williams' students express their gratitude and support for him, his humility and his compassion, in direct contrast to the authoritative teacher demanding they "sit down". The movie the power of an individual the importance of leadership – but more accurately, the kind of leaders we should demand to have.

There are innumerable forms of leadership, from the strong, powerful leader willing to sacrifice anything and everything to the kind, gentle and inspiring leaders who can inspire the timid, nurture the shy and truly help the potential for greatness blossom in everyone. These seem like nice principles that will remain simply theoretical goals. Perhaps that is true. Perhaps the perfect leader, teacher and mentor do not exist. Perhaps that is not what we want in a politician – we would prefer the strength, fortitude and moral certainty of the Winston Churchills of the world.

But just once in a while I have to stop and question whether that is the best thing for us. Last week our leader, Tony Abbott, stood up and told the rest of the world that our aid – a recognition of our common humanity – was conditional on positive diplomatic

outcomes for Australia. Tony Abbott stood before the world and, blusteringly, channelled the persona of the Churchills of the past. Dominant. Ruthless. Uncompromising.



I don't have a problem with this as a position for a leader during a time of war or even for a leader to take sometimes. But this is too often the default of leadership. Recently, Greg Sheridan argued that he felt there was a cultural problem within Australia that indicated an inability to be governed. Perhaps that is an oversimplification, but it has a ring of truth

to it. How often now do political leaders stand up before us and genuinely explain why a policy will be helpful. Perhaps worse, when was the last time a politician actually asked what we needed rather than presuming that they knew what was best for us?

Of course there are policy groups; government departments that exist to perform research and investigate areas in which policy can be created or improved. But not only do these groups not necessarily represent the interest of the broader community, often representing more specific (financial) interest groups, they also have been unable to produce popular public policy. The failure of Mr Abbott's paid parental leave scheme, his budget plans and even the now dropped Medicare co-payment schemes are indications of this.

The last month has been particularly symptomatic of this failed culture of leadership. The most recently despicable example of leadership by Mr Abbott, and indeed his party, has been the slanderous attacks on Professor Gillian Triggs as a result of publishing the "Forgotten Children" report on the conditions of children in detention.

In a report that outlines the horrendous treatment of children in detention, with stories circulating of numerous attempts at self-harm and suicide, to familial separation, malnutrition and many more, the government has the nerve to advocate that the author of the report should resign. Without beating around the issue: this is a despicable show of cowardice from a government terrified by the legacy of its own policy. The response given by Tony Abbott and many senior members of government was two-fold; firstly, it was Labor's fault that so many children are in detention, second, that the author of the report was biased. Abbott's response

to the recent UN findings, that Australia is "sick of being lectured about torture", illustrates a further failing of leadership. Indeed, one commentator accurately noted that when you get sick of being lectured about torture, you are probably torturing too much.

Clearly the Labor party did contribute to the problem given that close to 2000 children lived in detention under their tenure. Irrespective of Labor's guilt, I have a particular problem with the simplistic claims by the current government that it was someone else's problem, exacerbated by a biased reporter and that they are currently doing everything there is to do.

No, Mr Abbott, you aren't. We do not have children in adult prisons for a reason. Every day that they remain there you become increasingly culpable and the heart of the matter is that Greg Sheridan's crisis of leadership becomes more apparent every day.

There needs to be a change. A change of leadership and the culture of governance associated.

As Robin Williams says self-reflectively in *Dead Poet's Society*, "just when you think you know something you must look at it in another way..."

We must demand that our leaders challenge our perspective of the world, but similarly we must also ensure that our leaders are not allowed to hide behind rhetoric or to obfuscate political issues and redirect our moral outrage. When a politician makes a mistake they should be held to account. This is the backbone of our democratic society and the responsibility of every citizen within it.

/Follow Up: NTEU Strike

15

Alicia D'Arcy

After the staff strike on Wednesday 11th March, the UNSW branch of the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) has been engaged in ongoing and more intensive discussions with university management over the terms of the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement. Such an agreement determines staff working conditions, with the most recent EBAs being agreed upon for professional and academic staff in 2010 and 2011 respectively.

Sarah Gregson, UNSW Branch NTEU President, said in an email, "The strike was very successful and we are close to reaching agreement with management." She said that the union had two bargaining sessions with management over the past week, and that more are scheduled for early April.

Ben Golder, an NTEU member who struck last week, said, "I think the strike was successful in that a very strong message was sent to management on the day and leading up to it."

Chancellory were not able to provide further comment on the bargaining progress apart from the statement they issued last week, which was that they remained "committed to finalising new agreements for academic and professional staff." (See full statement here <http://tharunka.arc.unsw.edu.au/staff-students-demonstrate-working-conditions/>).

A week on from the strike, the information that Tharunka can access indicates that it succeeded in achieving productive consultation and some progress in the terms of bargaining between university management and the staff.

The strike has been the only disruptive industrial action that UNSW students have experienced so far, despite the preceding 18 months of otherwise unsuccessful discussion after the expiry of the last EBA.

This is in stark contrast to the consultation process between the union and Fred Hilmer in 2010, where older students will remember a series of strikes and bans on the release of student results.

This February, Professor Ian Jacobs replaced Fred Hilmer as President and Vice-Chancellor of UNSW. Many hope that this change of leadership will signify a change in attitude towards staff engagement.

In a media statement from June last year, Jacobs said, "I look forward to working with the leadership team, staff and students at UNSW to deliver an ambitious agenda."

In his welcome video released early February this year (see here <http://149.171.29.33/newsroom/news/general/welcome-message-new-vice-chancellor-professor-ian-jacobs>), he said, "I will be embarking on a period of engagement and information gathering that will be followed by a consultation process to hear about your ideas and your aspirations."

Much of the Jacobs' rhetoric has been focused around themes of collaboration, consultation and engagement, notably with staff. At the strike however, there were strong sentiments that Jacobs hadn't followed through with this stated approach.

Sarah Gregson said at the strike, "Fred Hilmer may have left the building but his ghost lives on."



Evidence since the strike suggests otherwise. A strike of only approximately 100 staff achieved the desired consultation. UNSW Human Resources said that there are more than 6000 staff at UNSW. Chancellery said that that 15% of UNSW staff were NTEU members; Gregson said that she couldn't disclose specific numbers, but that membership has been "growing well in the past few months".

This means that functionally the strike did not disrupt many classes and that it does not represent all staff. However, it importantly sent a strong message about the NTEU's intentions and raised awareness among students.

It is too early to say, but maybe Professor Ian Jacobs will live up to his proclaimed change of approach.

A key issue that concerns the NTEU is the increasing rate of casualisation coupled with job security clauses. Despite the flexibility of such an arrangement, this can come at the cost of income security.

UNSW Human Resources said that out of the approximate 6000 staff at UNSW, there are "just a lot" of casual staff, and that this varies depending on sessions.

Sarah Gregson said via email, "the most common figure talked about is that approximately 60 per cent of all classes are taught by casuals and, of course, that figure is higher in some schools than others."

Note that Gregson is not referring to all staff, but to class tutors, who are often Masters or PhD students. The problem is that it can be difficult for such casual staff to convert into more stable positions in academia.

The NTEU's bargaining claims regarding pay was contingent upon this casualisation issue.

Chancellery was offering a 3% salary increase per annum for staff, where inflation in Sydney is 2.8% p.a.. This represents a real wage increase, albeit smaller than in the previous agreement, which was 4% per annum. The NTEU website says that the tertiary sector median is 3.2% salary increase per annum.

How does this compare to other G8 universities? The University of Sydney agreement states an increase of 2.9% per annum; The University of Melbourne's states 3%; Monash University's states 3% per annum.

I posed this set of information to Sarah Gregson, surely you are asking for a lot here?

"It's about the package," she said, "UNSW has the worst job security clauses."

In UNSW's previous EBA, there are no clauses relating to job security of casual staff. In comparison, the University of Sydney has clauses relating to employment conditions of casual employees with the express purpose of providing "increased certainty and security as to their employment". The University of Melbourne's EBA includes a whole entire part that is partially labelled, 'Reducing Casual Employment'.

From anecdotal experience, most students were nonplussed about the strikes or faintly excited at the prospect of having a day off uni (many were disappointed in this regard: most staff continued teaching). Disruption to students was limited in length and in size.

Some students wholeheartedly advocated for the aims of the strike. Cara Egan, SRC Education Officer, said,

"The Education Collective is proud of the student engagement that we saw on the day and I think the strike also made students more aware of what will be in danger if our higher education system continues to value profit over knowledge."

However, not all students supported the NTEU strike. Nick Gerovasilis, Vice President of the UNSW Liberal Society, was one such student.

"It is disappointing that the NTEU would rather engage in such reckless tactics, than opt for less extreme forms of negotiation. The pay offer of 3 per cent is above inflation, an absolute rarity in these difficult economic circumstances. Their action is a stark reminder that these organisations will always privilege selfish grandstanding over mainstream students' best interests."

Of course, it is always a balancing act between achieving the aims of a collective who deserve certain working conditions and fulfilling the responsibility enabling students' learning. In deciding what these working conditions are, the only real arsenal that a union possesses is the ability to disrupt the university.

For now, disruption to students has been limited and the bargaining process seems promising. But it is early days yet, and it remains to be seen whether Jacobs can follow through with his new vision for the university.

/A Photo Series by:

Nathan Mifsud











/Children's Attachment to Abusive Mothers

23

Srestha Mazumder

When children are abused, it seems only logical to us that they would become detached from their abuser. In most cases, the abuser is a parent. However, in this article we will be focusing specifically on the mother and the infant. Abuse can refer to physical, emotional or mental torture inflicted upon the infant. Any abuse, whether physical or psychological has detrimental effects on a child and their life as they grow older. Physical abuse is easily to identify. Bruises, cuts and black eyes scream to us that this child is victim to violent episodes at home. But psychological effects are impossible to be visually detected. They are so delicately imprinted into brains of infants that a skilled therapist is required to undress this abuse with the use of specific diagnostic tools and skills. The Strange Situation Test is one of the many methods that can be used to seek out any definite signs of abuse. This test aims to uncover any signs of "disorganised attachment". Disorganised attachment is when a child shows the need for a caregiver whilst simultaneously expressing signs of fear.

But what is it exactly that causes this attachment? After all, it's an instinct to avoid any form of aversive stimuli. So why is it that we get attached rather than detached from abusive parents when logically, we should be doing the exact opposite.

The bond between a child and a caregiver is vital for survival. This significant biological imperative is so strong that once formed it is tough to break, even with an abusive caregiver.

Animals, including us, are hardwired to form attachments with our mothers. Although the attachment process begins before the child is born, the intensity of the attachment quickly accelerates after birth. Infants are programmed to have a preference of high frequency sounds of

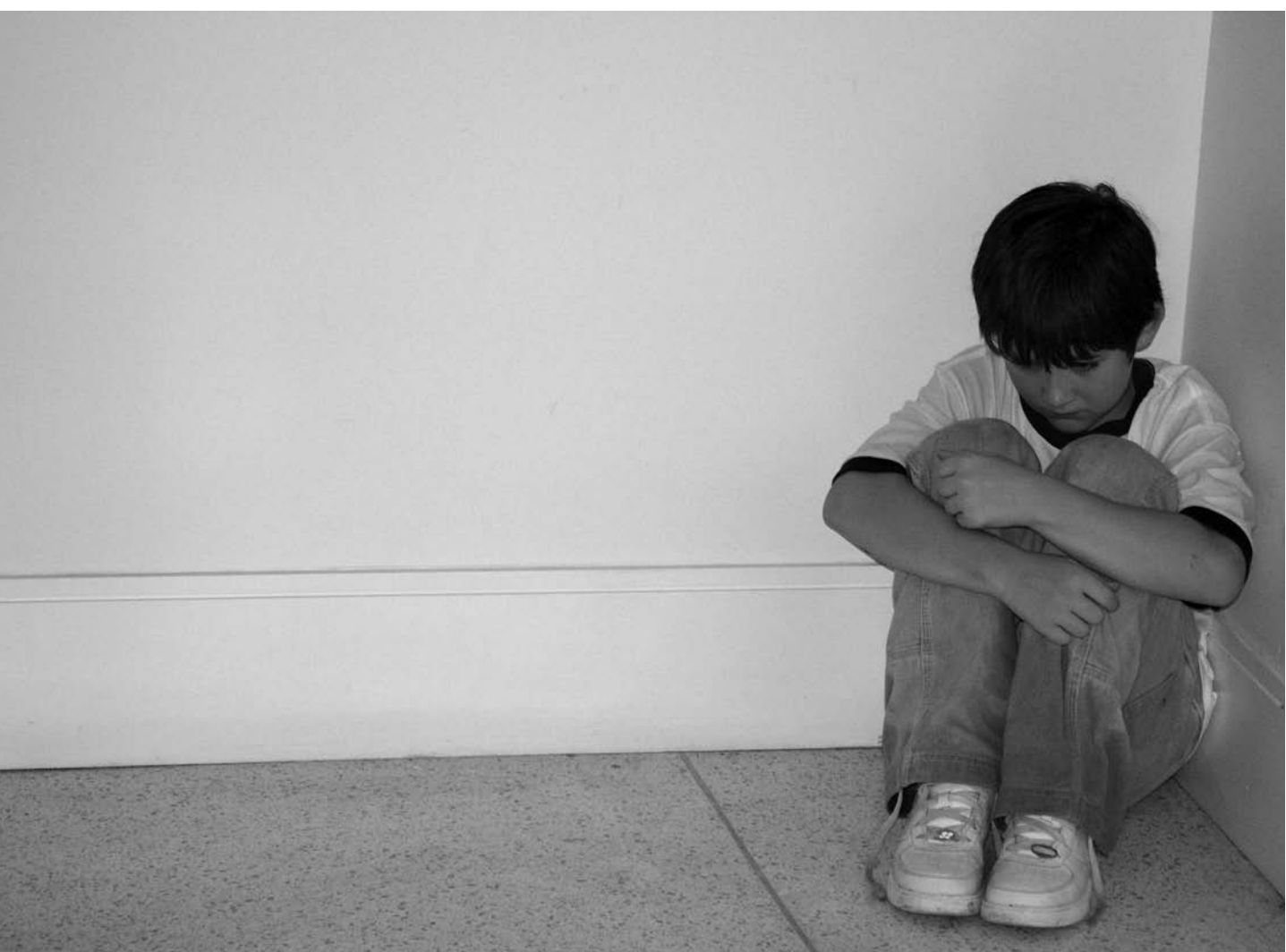
the human voice. The baby then familiarises itself with their mother's voice and odours and hence constructs a concrete psychological bond. The concept of a child having a persistent bond with an abusive caregiver is mind boggling in itself. However, finding the explanation for such 'absurd' behaviour requires us to look into human behaviour/psychology.

The behaviourist model suggests that an animal will continue to carry out behaviours that provide them with a reward. Naturally, therefore, animals will tend to avoid behaviours that result then in receiving a punishment. Thus, logically one would think that a baby would avoid an abusive caregiver.

Experiments conducted on newborn rats have shown that they show a preference for odors that are an accessory to negative stimuli such as shocks or tail pinches. Although they don't like the negative stimuli, they like the odor and hence they form a good memory of a bad experience.

This provides us with an insight into why infants are attached to an abusive caregiver. Once the infant learns a preference, it remains a preference, no matter how bad it may be. Children are only able to form this link at an infant age and therefore when they are abused they learn an attachment between the stimulus and the bad events. Rather than learning an aversion a preference is learned.

One might question how such a disastrous preference is acquired. Some theories suggest that young animals are predisposed to learn maternal attachment, regardless of positive or negative experiences. This is because as children we are prepared to associate all situations and learnt associations as positive, with the mother. Inherently, we are predisposed to learn positive associations between stimuli and outcome.





Adrian Pedic

Hi Adrian!
G'day Bushy.

What do you want to be when you grow up, and what are you studying?
I'd love to still be writing as a musical journalist. When I got to university I thought I'd best be doing something I love.

So I signed up for a Bachelor of Media and Communications, majoring in journalism. Why not stick to it post-university?

So we can expect musically oriented write-ups from you in Tharunka?
Yes. In this issue I am writing about the correlation between ego and success within the music industry. With Kanye as a central example, I want to show that egotism isn't necessarily a bad thing. People should be aware of their talents and make them known.

That sounds brill. So what are your plans for mid-sem my friend?
I'll be studying. Get the head down, and get stuck in.

You've got to do what you've got to do. Do you prefer:
Disney or Pixar? Hmmmm?
Pixar or Disney? What?
Sorry I digressed; I thought this was an issue of 'The Blitz.'
Stones or Beatles? Stones.
Pen or Keyboard? Pen. I can't play keyboard.
Muscles or Mussels? The shellfish one.
Kanye or Jay-Z? Mr. West.
Whitehouse or Roundhouse? Roundhouse. That's a no brainer.
Mullets or mullets? The haircut is my preference – not as a personal fashion choice, but simply due to the fact that I could laugh at those who have them all day.

How would you describe the colour yellow to somebody who's blind?
I'd probably tell them it's unappealing. I'd tell them to imagine what the back of their throat feels like after they vomited. That's what yellow is like. It's either sickly, or dangerous like bees and wasps.



Carla Zuniga

Hi Carla!
Hey Zac!

What do you want to be when you grow up?
When I grow up, I wanna be doing something that I love.

And, contrastingly or no, what are you studying?
I'm studying Media Communications combined with Design.

That's a funky combo. Could you please describe what sort of write-ups we can expect from you this year?
Cultural/Arts/Reviews/Feminist Rants.

Bonza stuff. Looking forward to reading some. What will you do with your mid-semester break?
I shall be catching up on all the sleep I've been missing. I'll also catch up on all the films I've been missing. Oh, and I'll "study."

What's your coffee?
I'm one of those lactose intolerant people, so anything with soy.

Oh - me too! Let's tuck into a bit of word association.
Jam. That's my.
Clock. Snooze.
Pyne. Tree (Let's Not). Yup, yup, yup fair. That tree deregulation though.
Spring. Cleaning.
Tharunka. Writing.
Onions. Layers. Shrek, for the win.

Here's a classic question collection for thou. If you could have brunch with anyone that has existed, alive or no – who would it be and why?
Come on Zac. That's easy. Marina Abramovic, Roxanne Gay, Junot Diaz, Taylor Swift, Biggie Smalls & Hannibal Buress.

That's a crowd and a half. Imagine the chinwags that would happen over the soy lattes and avo rolls. Where would you take them?
At the moment I'm obsessed with this dessert I ate in a little place in Copenhagen over the holidays (#humblebrag), so - even though it's brunch time - I would say there.

/Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Sanitary Products

Aym Randy

In the beginning, things were ok. They weren't great but what even is great? A lot of people try to explain what great is but they're wrong. What's that spiderman quote? Some are born great, some become great and some have greatness thrust upon them. Sorry sir, but no one has ever had greatness thrust upon them. Doing anything that results in having cum anywhere on your person is like the adult version of being a child walking around with jam on your fingers. It's not great but it's just the way things are I guess.

Anyway, in the time after the beginning, someone realised that once a woman had left the nebulous genderless phase of child and become woman, that she bled once a month from her vagina. They realised that this was a very functional use of the body, completely logical and designed to assist the entire species in the pursuit of continued existence. Subsequently, this person began taking great measures to hide this totally normal act and turn the honest life of living inside a woman's body into a societally mandated series of deceptions to give the illusion that you are not human at all.

Few have bothered to ask the question why? Probably because asking questions is reserved for job interviews or when your arsehole is locked and loaded but you don't know where the shitters are, or when you're an unpaid columnist trying to think of an article. I am all of those things.

So here's the deal: penises are like these dangling pieces of nothing that can be turned off and on by repetitive mechanical actions. They either look like promises or threats, depending on the circumstance. Vaginas are mysterious, seemingly

sentient black holes that beguile us all even when cleverly hidden under skirts and given buzz cuts and made docile by "the man". Jesus turned water into wine... vaginas turn discharge into life. You decide.

Where men have very obvious genitalia, women have horizonless abysses between their legs. In the words of Nietzsche, "gaze too long into the abyss and the abyss will gaze back at you". This is evidence alone that Germans aren't always wrong. We've lost so many good men out there, my only advice is that we remain perpetually in damage control, trying to use spin and BS PR tactics to direct attention away from the Monica Lewinsky-level scandal that is the existence of vaginas.

Adrian Pedic

Kanye West and Kevin Parker of Tame Impala are two of the most creative and well-respected figures in music, with new releases that set the music press and the public collectively frothing. However, while you could comfortably argue they are two complete opposites, they both share something so important, that it lies at the centre of all their work.

Kanye West declares that he is God - on radio and in song. Kevin Parker is an admitted introvert who writes songs like Solitude Is Bliss and Why Won't They Talk To Me?. They seem to have a very different understanding of themselves.

Obviously it's a matter of ego. Kanye's ego has its own ego that will inevitably detach and metamorphose into a human form that also puts out revolutionary music. While Kevin Parker plays it low key, you can't deny that to produce the sort of music he does would require strong conviction of his own genius. So obviously Kevin Parker is nursing an ego that at the very least informs his ability to keep on putting out music. Tame Impala dropped a new song this week, and it was what nobody expected. An 8-minute long funk jam? If

Kanye did that, he would make sure you knew how ballsy it was.

Even someone like Kendrick Lamar must have the kind of ego that allows people like Kanye and Kevin Parker to make such transgressive leaps in music. Kendrick's To Pimp A Butterfly just leaked, and after hearing it, I feel like it is a historic event in music. It's that good.

My point: ambition is directly tied to ego. Just by having the sort of ambition that these musicians do, elevates their work. It's almost self-fulfilling; having such high ambition is already ambitious in itself.

Now, I can understand that not everybody is a fan of these artists - Kanye West in particular. You could say that he's divisive; there's the Next Great Musician camp, and there's the Megalomaniac Asshole camp. I guess it depends on your appreciation of the music, but we're all familiar with the "I like his music but I hate the person" sentiment. So the ego is to blame for Kanye's divisive public image?

I can understand his sometimes abrasive behaviour - being married to Kim Kardashian certainly doesn't

do him any favours - but is his (possibly justified) belief in his greatness so off-putting? Or is it just how public he makes it? After all, we've had Billy Corgan, and while he was abrasive, he doesn't generate such a strong reaction.

I think it's a matter of shame. An ego is something that you keep private; something to keep to yourself. We're not taught to be ashamed of it, but we're taught not to flaunt it. The tension arises when people are expected to hide their ego even if they have the talent to back it up. We all know that cocky guy who's so sure of himself, yet never really displays any sign of true skill. That's different. I'm not defending pride as a means of belittling others. I'm defending the right for someone to know their own value, and to not hide it from others.

That's why Kanye's antics don't bother me - because if we try to take away his right to be in love with his own talent, we also lose his talent. Ego is the foundation that his achievements are all laid on. He is only as good as he is because he knows he can be. The same goes for Kevin

Parker and Kendrick Lamar, and these are only two examples. All throughout history there have been brilliant men who have displayed vanity. The two go hand in hand for a reason: one begets the other.

I guess we can blame it on social media. Everybody with a keyboard and half-baked opinion gets a voice. Or maybe we can blame ourselves: Kanye makes an easy target of himself because it's easy to hate him for genuinely not caring about what we say. That's why I'm not talking about Kevin Parker now.

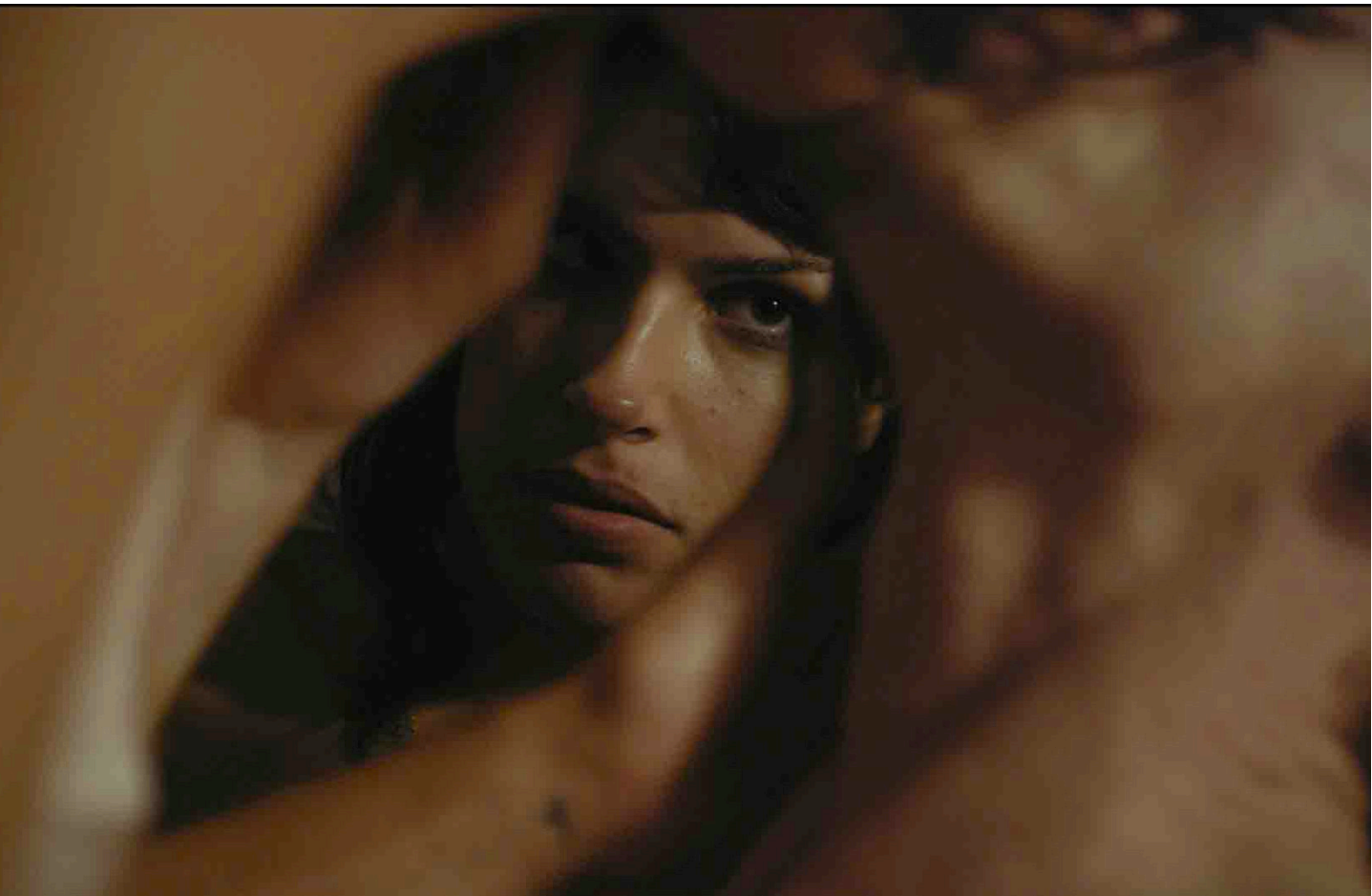
Either way, next time you want to criticise a musician or artist just for their ego, think about it again. Noel Gallagher is an egotistical monster, but nobody cares because he was in Oasis. Some of the greatest achievements in not only the arts, but human history, have been the result of men driven by their own belief in themselves. Anybody with self-worth shouldn't have to hide it. Achieving in spite of others shouldn't be a reason for success.

My name is Adrian Pedic, and I'm an egoist. Deal with it.

/Appropriate Behaviour

29

Carla Zuniga



This year's Mardi Gras may not have been plagued by the rain, but it did face criticism for underrepresentation of certain facets of the LGBTIQA community – particularly transgender, non-binary genders and bisexuals – a clear indicator that all aspects of society face issues with identity. So, let's talk about it.

To say that writer/director Desiree Akhavan “gets me” would be to put it extremely mildly. I'm not in the habit of making wild clichéd statements about films or how they revolutionize how we think or feel about a particular group of people, but I do believe that films can impact how you feel about yourself. *Appropriate Behavior* is that kind of film.

Moving beyond the fact that this film is simultaneously beautiful and hilarious, let's get to the real reason why it's worth spending an hour and a half of your life viewing it, which all has to do with how we think about identity, and how we represent our own identities.

This is the kind of film that is not interested with making you feel comfortable. It is not here to guide you through societies often stereotyped and simplistic ideas about sexuality, identity and womanhood. This film is not presenting any excuses for its characters and their behaviour, and like its protagonist, it is simply trying to express itself in a genuine and true way, not in an appropriate or digestible cliché.

Shirin (Akhavan, who also stars) is just trying to find a niche in the world that remains true to the multiple identities she inhabits: as a woman of colour and as a bisexual woman within her own ideals of herself as lover, daughter and friend. This is what makes it not only a good film, but also an impactful one. Shirin is trapped in the same cliché that many of us seem to helplessly fall into – fulfilling a role that has been created for us, simply because it's much simpler than accepting that we are complex and often flawed individuals, and that we sometimes act in less than acceptable ways.

What makes this film important is not that it presents a new voice for queer people, for female identifying people or for people of colour. What is important about this film is that it successfully presents that there can be more than the one voice or one perspective which has been presented to use by the society in which we live. That we are all nuanced individuals who inhabit multiple spaces and identities, and all of these are not only equally valid but equally require representation within the society in which we live, and within the communities we form.

A film cannot change the way in which queer people are viewed within our society, just as much as no matter how important it is that Mardi Gras exists, it cannot change the issues that the LGBTIQA community continue to face and just as much as this article is a quick thought on a difficult topic – but an 86 minute film which makes you feel something more about sexuality and identity than just what is presented to you, is one which deserves our attention.

Adrian Pedic

/Breakfast in Fur – Flyaway Garden – 8/10



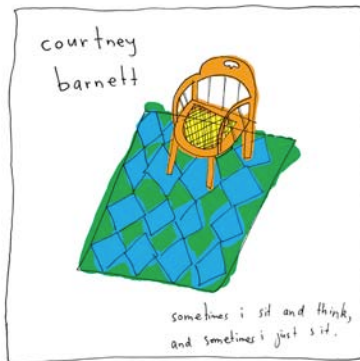
This album from New York band Breakfast in Fur is an enigma. A highly instrumental, melodic enigma. As an album, it has tremendous momentum that makes it fly by; as a series of songs, there are some weak links that threaten to derail this- a threat, however, that never comes fully true due to the album's overall consistency. The outstanding track Lifter comes in halfway through, and sets the stellar last half of the album in motion; the following tracks transition into each other and help close the album in a thoroughly ambitious and fitting method. However, it is nevertheless the weak tracks (Portrait, Ghum) that cause an incongruence throughout the work. Not that they are bad- they are in fact typical songs that sound like a colour-by-numbers for the band. Despite this, Flyaway Garden is a promising start to 2015, featuring some truly great songs, and more importantly, a consistent final product.

/Swervedriver – I Wasn't Born to Lose You – 9/10



Swervedriver's first album in 17 years sounds straight out of the 90s, except the production makes it sound like the best album from the 90s, and the songwriting pulls together some of the best elements from the era. With the guitars right in front of the mix, I Wasn't Born to Lose You sounds like a combination of Screaming Trees, Teenage Fanclub and Soundgarden. The shoegaze is kept minimal, with the force of each song's melody keeping the audience attentive throughout. Standout track A Day Like Tomorrow matches it's powerful lead riff with impeccable arrangement and the perfect mix to accompany the song. Melancholy never sounded so uplifting. However, while it presents some stadium-ready material, the album truly shines in its more contemplative moments- 17 years is a long time to mull things over. Regardless, I Wasn't Born to Lose You sounds like 2015's first truly great album—ironic, considering it's essentially a reunion album.wz

/Courtney Barnett – Sometimes I Sit and Think and Sometimes I Just Sit – 8/10



It's both misleading and hilarious that Courtney Barnett's first single from her debut album is called Pedestrian at Best. In one way, it's the best representation of her humour and much of the album's style. In another way, "Put me on a pedestal/ And I'll only disappoint you" seems so untrue. Barnett has crafted a wonderfully limber release, featuring some of her now trademark jangly riffing, as well as some quieter moments. It's her humour though that drives the album and gives it much of its humanity; another single Depreston is a good example of this.

The album is certainly the opposite of pedestrian. It has a great pace, and works well as its own package. However, while it all comes together with style to spare, the songs do begin to have uniformity towards the end, and it starts to feel repetitive. Regardless, this is one of the best debut albums I've heard in a long time.

Billy Bruffey **SRC President**

Hey UNSW, while you've been frantically sourcing used textbooks and kick-starting your frail brains, the SRC has been planning fee deregulation protests (19 March 12pm Library Lawn), dishing out free breakfasts, and also unveiling our new landmark welfare initiative: the UNSW Food Bank. We're gearing up for Arc's EGM on the 24th, and have taken a stance in favour of affirmative action for women on the Arc Board. Come along to the EGM and vote for gender equality on the 24th! We're getting gender-neutral bathrooms and more water bubblers too. Get involved in change today. Email srcpresident@arc.unsw.edu.au.

Sophie Johnson **General Secretary**

It's been a huge start to semester and the SRC have been working tirelessly to make unsw a place for students to thrive. The Welfare department has kickstarted it's free breaky initiative, available Monday, Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Check out the UNSW Student Representative Council Facebook page for more details or even better, sign up to the src collectives! You might've noticed our 'Yes' campaign. For years, arc has been run predominantly by men, despite women making up more than 50% of its membership. The 'yes' campaign is our chance to change that. The changes will be voted on March 24 at arcs agm and, if successful, will guarantee that at least 4 women MUST be on Board. This is a long overdue change to Arcs constitution and you have the opportunity to be part of that change. Check out the women's collective Facebook page for more info about how to get involved! The src is one of the best ways you can be involved in shaping your university experience. Sign up or email me at srcgeneralsecretary@arc.unsw.edu.au if you have any questions!

Cara Egan **Education Officer**

Well that was a relief! We won... again! It just shows that if together we stand up for what is right we will always win. Deregulation has been voted down in the senate for the second time within three months with Labor, Greens and cross-bench senators Lambie, Wang, Lazarus, Muir and Xenophon all rejecting the legislation thanks to student activists all around Australia informing the people and making the opposition to deregulation heard. If you are a first year student you might want to think about sending them a thank you! But we must remember that Pyne has said he is not going to stop. They will bring the policy to the next election so we have to be ready. Students will once again be under attack in the next budget so we have to show that we are here and we are demanding a better future. So come along to those education meetings and that National Day of Action this Wednesday the 25th!

Bea Sherwood

Environment Officer

What a wonderful start to the year it's been for the Environmentalists of UNSW, with a few picnics, a lot of discussion and a bundle of great ideas we've thrown ourselves head first into our campaigns with huge success!

We kicked off our divestment campaign with food, flyers and orange squares on the main walkway, we're working on new locations for more water bubblers on campus, we're getting started with our renewables campaign, putting together a film or two and much more!

It's not too late to get involved! Look us up on Facebook as the UNSW Enviro Collective, and come along to our meetings Wednesday 11-12 and Thursdays 2-3 in the Arc spaces. We also have a separate meeting Wednesday 12-1 specifically for our fossil free campaign which everyone is welcome to come along to. Email us at enviro@arc.unsw.edu.au if you have any questions at all. we'd love to hear from you.

Brittany Jane, Joseph Dee, Jen Chen

Queer Officers

So Queer Christmas came and went, Happy Mardi Gras everyone! UNSW had a volunteer contingent of over 30 students on the night and were ~solely~ responsible for the entire thing running smoothly #UNSWag. In other news, our new Vice Chancellor Ian Jacobs held a ceremony on the first day of semester, raising the rainbow flag in honour of the event; with a packed out attendance feat. The Hon. Michael Kirby. The start of semester also marked the implementation of gender neutral bathrooms throughout campus, a campaign the collective lobbied for and won in 2014. Besides that... the collective is still riding on dat O-week high, with attendance at an all-time peak; the collective now has "Pizza Mondays" which is exactly what it sounds like. Free. Pizza. On. Mondays.

So if you aren't Queer yet, signing up is easy... And we don't want you to be missing out...

Eloise McCrea-Steele

Women's Officer

The women's collective has very been busy these first few weeks planning some fantastic events and campaigns for the year! Come along to one of our biweekly meetings to get the scoop on the upcoming plans. Over the next few weeks we will be organising a feminist discussion group, hosting a movie night, and providing an info session on eco friendly ways to menstruate in collaborative with the enviro collective, plus loads more! Also, the annual Women's Tharunka is coming out next month. So if you are woman identifying and are passionate about women's issues I would urge you to contribute! For more info send me an email at women@arc.unsw.edu.au or visit facebook.com/UNSW.WomensCollective

/Nopinion

Zac Bush

As Robbie Williams once said, 'let me entertain you.' It's a bold introduction, I'll admit, but you'll just have to Take That. Yeah, I did. I'm out...I'm retiring. That's all folks.

I'm back. Physically anyway.

The purpose of the following set of snippety fables is ambiguous and obfuscated - if you find satire and drollness confusing. Like a loveable weevil I intend to wriggle into your hearts and minds upon excreting tales of garbled apathy.

Topics will range from the apolitical to the political; from the personal to the impersonal; from synonym to antonym. The definitive linkage 'tween them all will simply be the fact that I don't really care about what's happened in any of the following events enough to have a plumpish perspective. I just find them kind of chuckle worthy.

Like you, I care about sleep, and coffee and travelling and friends and family and House of Cards. That's about it at the moment. I'm a student and I'm in a developmental as anything phase. Anyway, let me talk about stuff on which I have nopinion.

Prime Ministers Have Layers

I don't really like onions that much. They're fairly bland, nondescript and only semi crunchy. Much like your first love, they're falsely transparent and give you nothing but tears when you try and break it up.** Much to my dismay, not one, but two bulbous alliums made international headlines after being devoured by my homeboy – Abbott P.M. And I thought him a man of both taste and eloquence.



The team at 'Onions Australia' have been quick to initiate the #PMonionchallenge – a pro-parsnip social awareness campaign that looks set to outperform ice buckets and moustache growth in virulence. Rumors are widespread that the association might even put forward a candidate for the next Federal Senate election.

The consumption of these onions has left Abbott in somewhat of a pickle, with several other vegetable unions advocating for equal treatment. 'Potatoes Australia,' are boiling and they've demanded that the Prime Minister take a bite of a spud. However he refused to do so until next St. Patrick's Day – after he's had "a Guinness or two or maybe even three."

Let Me Take A Selfie

Everyone should have the right to take a selfie. It's one of the central tenets of libertarian policy. So too, according to Senator David Leyonhjelm, is the right to domesticate and own native animals in order to ensure they lead quollity lives. Leyonhjelm's proposal appears certain to pass into law due to immense support from the Greens - who also devalue the efforts of national park services and the benefits of well-maintained natural habitats.

How doeth selfies and pet kangaroos intersect? Well, apparently quokkas – native wallaby-esque creatures - constantly appear to be smiling. Resultantly a new 'quokka selfie craze' is emergent, in which people attain images of them and look like (quoll unquoll) “the cutest lil’ things eva!” In anticipation of the new law, citizens everywhere are snapping then kidnapping.

I would like to announce that I shall be purchasing a stolen quokka and naming it Morrissey.



Spongebob kills Zorro

I never thought this day would come. In what may well be the biggest decline in my investments since the 2008 GFC, Antonio Banderas, Spongebob and Patrick have combined to defecate on the hours of filmic viewing I gave unto them all.

On April 2nd Banderas will emerge unto Australian screens in his much-anticipated turn as the live-action character Burger Beard in Spongebob: Sponge Out of Water. The former star of the award-winning flicks: Spy Kids 3D and Shrek 4 has been the unfortunate victim of a cruel career homicide. The evidence of illicit activity is irrefutable with the once loveable sponge and his fishy friends criminally converting from cartoon into computer animation.

Upon seeing the trailer on my television last week, I looked to the ceiling and said to myself, “There’s nothing to be done.”

That’s the end of the ‘Titanic’ edition of ‘Nopinon.’ Tune in next week, to read another article from another contributor.

** Onions are actually higher in lipoprotein cholesterol than Matthew McConaughey was in ‘Surfer Dude.’

Michelle Ives

"I want to leave a legacy behind when I die and that legacy is to ensure capable and diverse voices are heard."

Michelle Ives sits down with Dai Le to discuss exactly how university students can change the leadership landscape...

For many Australian Asian women, pursuing positions of political leadership is a challenging endeavour. Achieving it as a Vietnam-born refugee would be considered an added deterrent. Pushing through despite a breast cancer diagnosis would be seen as near impossible.

But for ex-MP for Cabramatta and current Fairfield councillor, Dai Le, it is her life's work.

And now, as she's just finished her last bout of chemotherapy, Dai has her sights set on empowering university students to aim just as high.

"Diverse young men and women need to really choose a different profession other than what they normally would," she says. "I know that UNSW has a lot of Australasian students studying – and I can guarantee this – law, medicine and pharmacy. The number of Asian Australians studying politics or science or communications is very small.

"This is something that their parents have influenced. And for me, being a child of refugee background, when we first came here we were also told 'you have to study hard and become a lawyer or doctor, because that's the only way that you can progress in this world.'

"But we need diversity of perspectives and diversity of opinions in politics."

Dai enjoyed a long career in broadcast journalism before moving on to politics as a south-west Sydney councillor, and she says the discrepancy was rife.

Australian politics is largely made up of politicians because to legislate you have to know how to do it. But according to Dai, "bureaucrats are the ones who draft legislation for us and they are behind the

scenes. So that's why we need a diverse range of people, to help do that."

Having gender and cultural diversity in parliament, like "doctors, lawyers, communicators, and people like myself with a background that came from nothing" are so the voices of the community can be represented.

And when you break it down, this seems pretty obvious: "that's what parliament's supposed to do, right? It is supposed to represent the people. A quarter of our population are of non-English speaking background."

And it's not easy, says Dai. "It's confronting. Just like Cheryl Sandberg says: 'you have to just keep calling it out.' It's a matter of maintaining belief and commitment to ensure that that conversation keeps happening."

But to help the process along, Dai has been working closely through her illness to champion the rights of women and Asian Australians through her mentoring endeavour, Diverse Australasian Women's Network (or DAWN).

Dai says that she has been passionate about creating a platform for women, particularly Asian Australian women, to grow for a long time.

"Story-telling allows for cultural and communication barriers to break down.

"[I've realised] that I want to leave a legacy behind when I die and that legacy is to ensure capable diverse voices and faces are heard..."

"...I'm not doing this for the sake of it, I think we have talented people that can lead and represent organisations, parliament and media and my legacy is that I want to pave the way for them to step into those roles."

If you would like to learn more about DAWN, visit dawn.org.au/

/Risky Business

Annastasia Robertson

The Science Theatre was buzzing on Thursday evening when some of the country's most prominent names sat down in front of an audience to discuss risk management in life, politics, business, climate change and medicine.

It was also buzzing with police and security because, risk management.

The question and answer seminar was a panel of five including, The Hon. Malcolm Turnbull, new UNSW Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Jacobs, President of the Australian Council for International Development Ms Sam Mostyn, Professor Herbert Huppert of Geophysics at UNSW and Cambridge, and science journalist and ABC radio presenter Robyn Williams who acted as more of a mediator.

The first half of the session was an opportunity for each panellist to outline their ideas in relation to risk, mostly in their own areas of expertise.

Robyn Williams opened the discussion, saying that risk is a human reaction and choice and that "what you do affects others". Professor Huppert, however, focused more on the probability of risk in relation to small risks versus large risks, quantitative evaluations and relativity.

Sam Mostyn, after acknowledging the Indigenous owners of the land, raised the idea of resilience in risk, and that "we live in a community where fear drives our risk".

The evening's discussion covered topics from risk in mathematics, medicine, investments, technology, terrorism and politics. However, the topic that caused the most spice was climate change.

There was a theme of fear in risk as Malcolm Turnbull, Minister for Communications, communicated that to manage risk, we must embrace its volatile nature rather than be threatened by it. He also took the opportunity

to announce some new decisions fresh out of Canberra that will see changes to legislation for the Employee Share Schemes. Second to this, start-up companies will have the chance to sit in parliament to pitch their innovative ideas to the government. Our Vice-Chancellor welcomed this saying that he looks forward to increased investment into research in universities.

Conversation heated up between Turnbull and Mostyn when the topic of 'boat people' was raised briefly and dropped just as quickly as the two spoke over one-another.

As Williams turned the towards the question-answer portion of the evening, so began the open dialogue. Questions from the audience began and ended with talks of climate change, and UNSW's position on fossil fuel versus renewable energy. The Vice-Chancellor welcomed open discussion on climate change, but said that it is not the place of a university to have a political position, or a campaign.

Between this, were discussions around impact investments, share values and bonds as well as the use of metadata to combat terrorism.

Undoubtedly the most exciting, outrageous and controversial part of the evening came from the final, very passionate questioner, who asked the panel to address the topic of UNSW divesting investment in fossil fuel companies, and government responses and policy on the matter.

A "lively, robust discussion" that the Vice Chancellor endorsed adding that UNSW is committed to conversations about issues surrounding climate change.

Though, what is a panellist forum without a political message, and Malcolm Turnbull delivered by bringing up this Saturday's state election.

"If you want to minimise risk, vote for [Mike] Baird on Saturday".

