

Leading Issues Journal November 2008

Global Issues

What will Obama bring to Poznan?

The United Nations Climate Change Conference in Poznań, 1-12 December 2008 provides the opportunity to draw together the advances made in 2008 and move from discussion to negotiation mode in 2009. Such an outcome at Poznań would build momentum towards an agreed outcome at Copenhagen.

The Climate Group's Michael Allegretti and Evan Juska predict the actions of Obama's new administration at December's UN climate summit in Poznan, Poland. Michael Allegretti is head of US government relations at the [Climate Group](http://www.theclimategroup.org/) (<http://www.theclimategroup.org/>)

The election of Barack Obama was truly a historic moment for the United States. It represented a marked shift in direction for US policy, as Obama won the election on a message of "change," with a defiantly progressive slogan of "yes we can." But as Obama acknowledged during his victory speech on Tuesday night, now is when the real work begins. Citing a "planet in peril," Obama reminded Americans that one of the most pressing challenges facing the country is how to address the threat of climate change.

Obama will bring a fundamental shift in the way the US approaches this issue, both at home and abroad. In Foreign Affairs he wrote, "As president, I intend to enact a cap-and-trade system that will dramatically reduce our carbon emissions... Getting our own house in order is only a first step... We need a global response to climate change that includes binding and enforceable commitments to reducing emissions, especially for those that emit the most: the United States, China, India, the European Union, and Russia." Obama has also emphasized the importance of "rebuilding partnerships" and "renewing America's leadership in the world." His convincing victory has given him a mandate to follow through on these promises.

We are likely to see the parallel presence of President Bush's and President-elect Obama's administrations at the international climate negotiations in Poznan next month. Since the Obama Administration will not be "in government" until January 20, 2009, the Bush Administration will remain responsible for sending delegates to Poznan, and officially, they will be empowered to speak on behalf of the US. Obama will also send his people to the COP, although we do not yet know who will be in his chosen team. Most international negotiators will want to talk with the Obama team, outside of the formal proceedings, to start a dialogue. While nothing can of course be agreed between Obama people and foreign representatives, conversations can nevertheless

transpire and start to set the stage for the future.

Thus, we can expect the Obama Administration to bring a more positive and constructive approach to Poznan and the following negotiations in Copenhagen in 2009. But we should not expect the kind of immediate turnaround witnessed when Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced that his country would ratify the Kyoto protocol shortly after his election.

Once Barack Obama is in power he will not be able to act alone.

He needs real support from the US Congress, which is the only branch of government with the power to pass domestic climate legislation and ratify an international climate treaty. Congress remains deeply divided along political and regional-economic lines, and although the increased Democratic majorities won in both the Senate and the House will help to weaken these divisions, they have by no means removed them. Congress has not yet reached agreement on fundamental issues, such as the level of US emission reductions and what should be expected from developing countries. Until Congress has reached agreement on these issues, Obama will not be in a position to commit to specific international targets.

In addition, the debate in Congress is lagging behind the debate in the international community, both in terms of the level of US commitment and the timing of that commitment. Most US proposals are relatively consistent with international expectations regarding long-term targets of 80 percent by 2050, although the baselines vary. But there is still divergence regarding interim targets. US proposals range from 6 to 20 percent by 2020, while international expectations are closer to 25 to 40 percent by 2020, from a lower baseline.

In addition, last June's Senate debate of the Lieberman-Warner cap-and-trade proposal did not help to resolve many of these outstanding issues. New cap-and-trade proposals will likely be introduced early-on in the next US Congress, but much of 2009 will be spent working through these proposals in relevant Congressional committees. Thus, Congressional discourse on legislation is likely, but passage of legislation remains uncertain. As this process unfolds, we will get a clearer understanding about what the US is willing to commit to internationally, but whether or not this will happen in time for Copenhagen is unclear.

Obama's election nevertheless represents a new start for the US in addressing climate change and reengaging with the international community. There is good reason to hope for progress and leadership from the US in the coming years, but it will not happen overnight. As Obama said in his victory speech, "The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep."

Source: ClimateChangeCorp.com

Election Day in the US

As in most parts of the world the news of Barack Obama's success as President -elect of USA was welcomed, the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law issued a statement evaluating the difficulties with the process of the election following an election day full of record turnout, long lines, machines problems and registration challenges, the voting rights and voting technology.

"Overall, the election ran smoothly in many places, with huge voter turnout. An unprecedented number of Americans voted, many for the first time, and that is great news," said Wendy Weiser, director of voting rights and elections at the Brennan Center for Justice. "But while a lot of people voted, a lot of people also had problems at the polls," she continued.

"The number one problem on Election Day was registered, eligible voters' names not appearing on the voter rolls. Second, the vast turnout put a major stress on the system, leading to long lines in many places because of machine failures and a lack of contingency plans.

"Our democracy is strong, but the problems we saw before and on Election Day are proof that the process is way too complicated and that the registration system is too vulnerable to error and manipulation. Americans deserve confidence that they will get to vote and that their votes will be counted. We should take this opportunity to improve our voting system—especially the voter registration system—to make it work better for all Americans. We don't want to spend every election fighting over the rules of the game and who gets to vote and questioning whether the result will be legitimate," Weiser stated.

The estimated national turnout was 64%, according to Michael McDonald of George Mason University."

(Brennan Center Press Release, 5 Nov 08. The Brennan Center is a member of The Right to Vote Campaign, a national collaboration with the American Civil Liberties Union.)
Obama's Position on Issues affecting Women

Where Barack Obama stands in relation to issues affecting women are listed on his official [website](https://my.barackobama.com/page/content/womenissues) (<https://my.barackobama.com/page/content/womenissues>). For a detailed outline of his plans see: [The Impact of the Obama's Economic Plan for Women](http://obama.3cdn.net/51f774d367c050dd21_ram6bhdat.pdf) at http://obama.3cdn.net/51f774d367c050dd21_ram6bhdat.pdf

Corporate meltdown: Some insights

With the recent global financial meltdown, conversations amongst corporate giants have arisen in relation to corporate citizenship and financial sustainability. Featured below are some evaluative reflections.

Dr Bradley Googins, Executive Director of the Boston College Center for Corporate Citizenship:

"It is clear the failure of an unregulated financial system that almost brought the house down will no doubt be followed by aggressive legislation and regulation as an antidote to calm the fears. Already there have been discussions by congressional leaders and others about using this new window to mandate new measures to address climate change, implement safeguards for food, toys and prescription drugs from China, and expand health care insurance mandates.

This sudden jolt to our business and to our society and the destructive trail it is leaving can be seen as a damning indictment of business holding onto an excessive free market model and not listening to the growing voices of other stakeholders that have been getting stronger over the past few years. The rise of the green consumer, social investing and the incipient wave of new expectations from millennial employees have been largely ignored or not taken seriously. Even Bill Gates' call for a creative capitalism to address the cracks that are beginning to appear in the foundation was not widely embraced... Gates' call at Davos for a new form of capitalism in effect recognizes this bind, and serves as a clarion call for a new approach where the issues of all stakeholders can be factored into a more inclusive and transparent process. This new approach will also understand and address the flaws of the current model that not only overlooked but perhaps inadvertently exacerbated key issues of inequality, poverty and environmental degradation.

So where do we go from here?

At the very least it is time for a very active dialogue in the business community, and between the business community and those of government and civil society."

David Suzuki, Environmentalist, Suzuki Foundation

"Have you noticed that we describe the market and economy as if they were living entities? The market is showing signs of stress. The economy is healthy. The economy is on life support.

Sometimes, we act as if the economy is larger than life. In the past, people trembled in fear of dragons, demons, gods, and monsters, sacrificing anything – virgins, money, newborn babies – to appease them. We know now that those fears were superstitious imaginings, but we have replaced them with a new behemoth: the economy.

Even stranger, economists believe this behemoth can grow forever. Indeed, the measure of how well a government or corporation is doing is its record of economic growth. But our home – the biosphere, or zone of air, water, and land where all life exists – is finite and fixed. It can't grow. And nothing within such a world can grow indefinitely. In focusing on constant growth, we fail to ask the important questions. What is an economy for? Am I happier with all this stuff? How much is enough?

A timely new book by York University environmental economist Peter Victor, *Managing Without Growth: Slower by Design, Not Disaster*, addresses the absurdity of an economic system based on endless growth. Dr. Victor also shows that the concept of growth as an indispensable feature of economics is a recent phenomenon.

The economy is not a force of nature, some kind of immutable, infallible entity. We created it, and when cracks appear, it makes no sense to simply shovel on more money to keep it going. Because it's a human invention, an economy is something we should be able to fix – but if we can't, we should toss it out and replace it with something better.

This current economic crisis provides an opportunity to re-examine our priorities. For decades, scientists and environmentalists have been alarmed at global environmental degradation. Today, the oceans are depleted of fish while "dead zones", immense islands of plastic, and acidification from dissolving carbon dioxide are having untold effects. We have altered the chemistry of the atmosphere with our emissions, causing the planet to heat up, and have cleared land of forests, along with hundreds of thousands of species. Using air, water, and soil as dumps for our industrial wastes, we have poisoned ourselves.

For the first time in four billion years of life on Earth, one species has become so powerful and plentiful that it is altering the physical, chemical, and biological features of the planet on a geological scale. And so we have to ask, "What is the collective impact of everyone in the world?" We've never had to do that before, and it's difficult. Even when we do contemplate our global effects, we have no mechanism to respond as one species to the crises.

Driving much of this destructive activity is the economy itself. Years ago, during a heated debate about clear-cutting, a forest-company CEO yelled at me, "Listen, Suzuki: Are tree huggers like you willing to pay to protect those trees? Because if you're not, they don't have any value until someone cuts them down!" I was dumbstruck with the realization that in our economic system, he was correct.

You see, as long as that forest is intact, the plants photosynthesize and remove carbon dioxide from the air while putting oxygen back – not a bad service for animals like us that depend on clean air. But economists dismiss this as an "externality". What they mean is that photosynthesis is not relevant to the economic system they've created!

Those tree roots cling to the soil, so when it rains the soil doesn't erode into the river and clog the salmon-spawning gravels, another externality to economists. The trees pump hundreds of thousands of litres of water out of the soil, transpiring it into the air and modulating weather and climate – an externality. The forest provides habitat to countless species of bacteria, fungi, insects, mammals, amphibians, and birds – externality. So all the things an intact ecosystem does to keep the planet vibrant and healthy for animals like us are simply ignored in our economy. No wonder futurist Hazel Henderson describes conventional economics as "a form of brain damage".

Nature's services keep the planet habitable for animals like us and must become an integral component of a new economic structure. We must get off this suicidal focus on endless, mindless growth."

ACTU President Sharon Burrow

"The economic downturn provides an opportunity to invest in the creation of new green jobs while making significant inroads to reducing carbon emissions as part of an overall stimulus package," said ACTU President Sharon Burrow.

G20 Meeting in Sao Paulo, Brazil 9 Nov 08:

Finance ministers and central bank governors from the Group of 20 (G20) major industrial and emerging economies closed their annual meeting vowing to jointly tackle the global financial crisis.

The G20 has "a critical role to play in ensuring global financial and economic stability," said a joint statement released at the end of the two-day meeting.

Brazilian Finance Minister Guido Mantega, who chaired the meeting, said the participants agreed that "joint and coordinated action," "greater regulation of financial markets" and "total agreement" on policies are required to regain financial stability. Other actions agreed upon at the meeting include fiscal incentives to enterprises, and more international cooperation to identify and rapidly respond to signs of national and international crisis.

The officials agreed that tax cuts and increased government spending are necessary to avoid a recession. They also pledged increased communication and coordination in the face of the crisis.

Sex and Power report reveals fewer women in positions of power and influence

"A snail could crawl the entire length of the Great Wall of China in 212 years, just slightly longer than than the 200 years it will take for women to be equally represented in Parliament."

Sex and Power, the Equality and Human Rights Commission's annual report looking at women in top positions of power and influence across the public and private sectors, suggests a worrying trend of reversal or stalled progress - with only a few significant increases.

Now in its fifth year, the index this year indicates fewer women hold top posts in 12 of the 25 categories (almost half). In another 5 categories, the number of women remains unchanged since 2007's index. Women's representation has increased in just 8 areas. There are fewer women MPs in Westminster, where they make up just 19.3 percent of all MPs. Women's representation among FTSE 100 directors has improved slightly from 10.4 to 11.0 percent.

The Commission has likened women's progress to a snail's pace. A snail could crawl:

- nine times round the M25 in the 55 years it will take women to achieve equality in the senior judiciary.
- from Land's End to John O'Groats and halfway back again in the 73 years it will take for equal numbers of women to become directors of FTSE 100 companies.
- the entire length of the Great Wall of China in 212 years, only slightly longer than the 200 years it will take for women to be equally represented in Parliament.

This year's report, which traditionally estimates the number of years at the present rate of progress it will take for women to achieve equality in key areas, indicates that compared to previous year's predictions it will now take 15 years longer (a total of 55 years) for women to achieve equal status at senior levels in the judiciary, and women directors in FTSE 100 companies could be waiting in the wings a further 8 years (a total of 73 years).

If women were to achieve equal representation among Britain's 31,000 top positions of power, the Commission estimates nearly 5,700 'missing' women would rise through the ranks.

This year's Sex and Power report is part of the Commission's ongoing 'Working Better' project. Launched in July of this year, the campaign is seeking to identify innovative ways of working which can help meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Nicola Brewer, the Chief Executive of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, said: 'Young women's aspiration is in danger of giving way to frustration. Many of them are now excelling at school and are achieving great things in higher education. And they are keen to balance a family with a rewarding career. But workplaces forged in an era of 'stay at home mums' and 'breadwinner dads' are putting too many barriers in the way -

resulting in an avoidable loss of talent at the top.'

'We always speak of a glass ceiling. These figures reveal that in some cases it appears to be made of reinforced concrete. We need radical change to support those who are doing great work and help those who want to work better and release talent.'

'The Commission's report argues that today's findings are not just a 'women's issue' but are a powerful symptom of a wider failure. The report asks in what other ways are old-fashioned, inflexible ways of working preventing Britain from tapping into talent - whether that of women or other under-represented groups such as disabled people, ethnic minorities or those with caring responsibilities. Britain cannot afford to go on marginalising or rejecting talented people who fail to fit into traditional work patterns.'

You can download a copy of the report here: [Sex and Power, who runs Britain 2008 \(PDF 2.6Mb\)](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/page-not-found/index.html?url=/Documents/EHRC/SexandPower/Sex_and_Power_2008.pdf) at http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/page-not-found/index.html?url=/Documents/EHRC/SexandPower/Sex_and_Power_2008.pdf

Global climate change presents a serious national security threat for the US.

A new study released by a blue-ribbon panel of retired admirals and generals from all branches of the armed services entitled, "National Security and the Threat of Climate Change," explores ways projected climate change is a threat multiplier in already fragile regions, exacerbating conditions that lead to failed states — the breeding grounds for extremism and terrorism.

The CNA Corporation brought together [eleven retired three-star and four-star admirals and generals](#) to provide advice, expertise and perspective on the impact of climate change. CNAC writers and researchers compiled the report under the board's direction and review.

The report includes several formal findings:

Projected climate change poses a serious threat to America's national security. Climate change acts as a threat multiplier for instability in some of the most volatile regions of the world.

Projected climate change will add to tensions even in stable regions of the world. Climate change, national security and energy dependence are a related set of global challenges.

The report also made several specific recommendations:

The national security consequences of climate change should be fully integrated into national security and national defense strategies.

The U.S. should commit to a stronger national and international role to help stabilize

climate changes at levels that will avoid significant disruption to global security and stability.

The U.S. should commit to global partnerships that help less developed nations build the capacity and resiliency to better manage climate impacts.

The Department of Defense should enhance its operational capability by accelerating the adoption of improved business processes and innovative technologies that result in improved U.S. combat power through energy efficiency.

DoD should conduct an assessment of the impact on US military installations worldwide of rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and other possible climate change impacts over the next thirty to forty years.

The report is at:

<http://securityandclimate.cna.org/report/National%20Security%20and%20the%20Threat%20of%20Climate%20Change.pdf>

Afghanistan: The slim possibility of peace and the probability of a longer, wider, more dangerous war

Richard Tanter / Nautilus Institute

Richard Tanter of the Nautilus institute writes that “by virtually every dimension, the war in Afghanistan is getting much worse for both the western coalition and for the Afghani civilian population.” “The strategic benefits are minimal to non-existent... and the risks of a widening war alarming, and the moral and humanitarian consequences appalling”. Tanter argues that “strategic confusion, institutional inertia and self-interest provide most of the answer” as to why the US remains in Afghanistan. “Australia’s commitment shares the same strategic confusion, mixed with a diffuse paternalistic enthusiasm not too far distant from a nineteenth century imperialist ideal of civilising the natives.” Tanter concludes that “the US, and its allies, will leave, without any definable or honourable victory. The Afghans will stay.” If the current logic of expansion of the war engulfs Pakistan, “withdrawal and defeat will take place eventually, but later, and after an infinitely more catastrophic and dangerous war.”

Read the entire report at:

<http://www.globalcollab.org/Nautilus/australia/apsnet/policy-forum/2008/tanter-afghanistan-longwar/>

(Richard Tanter, Austral Policy Forum 08-12A, 27 October 2008)

National Issues

Gender equality: What matters to Australian women and men



In November 2007, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick began a nation-wide 'Listening Tour' to ask the Australian public two questions: How far have we come in our journey towards gender equality? And where should we focus our efforts into the future?

What the Commissioner found is detailed in a [Report](#) (<file:///C:/Users/Diann/Documents/womengen/secure/images/Broderick.jpg>) which includes a plan of action towards gender equality.

2008 EOWA AUSTRALIAN CENSUS OF WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

Women's glacial progress melts away

The EOWA 2008 Australian Census of Women in Leadership released today reveals that the number of women on boards and in executive management positions has declined since 2006, and in some cases reverted to pre-2004 levels. Australia now trails the USA, UK, South Africa and New Zealand.

Conducted by Macquarie University, the EOWA Census shows the number of women executive managers in the ASX200 has declined to 10.7% from 12% in 2006 and 11.4% in 2004. The number of companies with no women executive managers has risen sharply to 45.5% from 39.5% in 2006.

54.5% of ASX200 companies have at least one woman in an executive management position, which is lower than the USA (85.2%), Canada (65.6%), UK (60%) and South Africa (59.3%). In only 16.5% of ASX200 companies, women comprise 25% or more of the executive management team, down from 18% in 2006.

Women who do make it to executive roles are overwhelmingly clustered in support roles that don't provide access to the profit-and-loss or direct client services that are widely considered essential for rising to the top. The encouraging increase of women in line management roles observed from 2003 to 2006 (4.7% compared to 7.4%) has reversed and declined to pre-2004 levels (5.9%). This trend was also reported in the 2007 US Census.

At the time of the Census, women held only four CEO positions (2%). Harvey Norman Holdings Limited, Macarthur Coal Limited, Macquarie Airports and Singapore Telecommunications Limited were the only ASX200 companies led by women.

At board director level there were more than 10 men to every one woman and at CEO level there were 49 male CEOs for every female CEO in the ASX200.

Women chaired just four boards (2%) and held 8.3% of board director positions, a decline from 8.7% in 2006 and just 0.1 percentage point higher than in 2004. This is lower than other comparable countries and the EC average (10.3%). Just over half of all ASX200 boards have no women board directors. In 6% of ASX200 companies, 25% or more of the board directors are women, a decrease from 12% in 2006 and 7.1% in 2004. There are just a handful of companies among the ASX200 where women make up 50% or more of the senior management team - Austar United Communications Limited, Babcock & Brown Capital Limited, Bunnings Warehouse Property Trust, Consolidated Media Holdings, Hastings Diversified Utilities Fund, Macquarie Airports, Macquarie DDR Trust, Macquarie Office Trust and Spark Infrastructure Group. Only one company, Just Group Limited has a 50% female board and 57.1% of its executive managers are female. Australia: ASX200 (2008)

	Women Board directors	Companies without women Board directors	Women executive managers	Companies with at least one woman executive
2004	8.2%	49.7%	11.4%	
2008	8.3%	51%	10.7%	54%

Source: EOWA

Stillbirth: It won't happen to me...
What every woman should know about stillbirth

In Australia 2,000 babies or one in every 140 babies are stillborn – a rate that has not decreased in almost 20 years. A high portion of these, about 300 every year, are born at

term with no known cause for death. Unexplained stillbirth occurs over 10 times more frequently than infant deaths from SIDS.

It is vital that pregnant women, or women considering pregnancy, receive the information and support they need to make informed decisions and choose to modify their behaviour to reduce risks to both their and their unborn child's health.

New research finds one third of stillbirths are preventable. The Stillbirth Foundation has cofunded new research from the Australian and New Zealand Stillbirth Alliance (ANZSA) which indicates that at least one third of all stillbirths are primarily due to factors which are potentially avoidable.

The three most important avoidable factors that were identified by the research team include:

- mothers carrying excess weight;
- those who are over 35 years of age;
- smoking during pregnancy.

Some other potentially modifiable factors that have been identified include severe stress, advanced paternal age, inadequate antenatal care, previous caesarean section, excess caffeine intake and alcohol and substance abuse. First pregnancy and prolonged pregnancy are another two potential factors. However, all these factors require further research.

These factors are in addition to the known medical risk factors that doctors and obstetricians will oversee during pregnancy such as hyper tension, diabetes and infection.

Professor Ellwood, of ANZSA, said, "With up to 30% of stillbirths remaining unexplained, it is important to consider modifiable risk factors in order to reduce the number of these deaths".

"While there are obviously still many unexplained stillbirths this research is particularly heartening because it gives a clear indication of things women can do to reduce the risk."

The Stillbirth Foundation will be running its Our Little Feet Taking Big Steps Ball, their major fundraising event in May 2009. They need some fabulous prizes to help them reach their goal of raising \$100,000 and are looking for people to assist us in sourcing prizes, such as trips, accommodation, appliances, vouchers, accessories and sporting memorabilia. If you would like to help or are able to donate a prize, please contact them at info@stillbirthfoundation.org.au

Talking about stillbirth: A male perspective

University of Newcastle (NSW) honours student researcher, Shari Bonnette, has recognized there is little research available that explores men's perspectives of stillbirth. To address this she is currently undertaking social research on men's experience of stillbirth, with a focus specifically on grief, identity and support networks.

To participate in this research project you must be male, aged over 18 years and whose female partner has experienced stillbirth between 6 months and 3 years ago.

Involvement means attending a one-hour interview, which can be held throughout the Hunter Valley, Central Coast and Sydney. If you live outside this area and are keen to participate, please contact Shari to discuss alternative arrangements.

For further information, including a research information statement and ethics approval information from the University of Newcastle, visit Shari's website at www.stillbirth.nc.com.au. Shari can be contacted by email at stillbirth@nc.com.au or by phone on 0437 609 561.

Source: The Stillbirth Foundation

COAG - A new era in federal financial relations

COAG is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia, comprising the Prime Minister, State Premiers, Territory Chief Ministers and the President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) held its 24th meeting today in Canberra. The meeting was held against the backdrop of great uncertainty concerning the global economy and continuing turbulence in financial markets. Leaders and Treasurers resolved to meet the challenges of the global financial crisis head on.

COAG agreed to press forward with reforms necessary for Australia to weather the impact of the current international economic and financial difficulties, and to meet the longer term imperative for the nation of boosting productivity and workforce participation, and improving the delivery of services to the community. Many of the reforms that Leaders and Treasurers agreed upon today are about improving health and education and training outcomes. Significant additional resources have been allocated to these areas.

As well, a new era in federal financial relations was inaugurated with major reforms to specific purpose payments arrangements in particular. The Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) and other documents giving effect to these new arrangements are to be finalised by COAG Senior Officials no later than 12 December 2008.

Read the [Communiqué from COAG](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/docs/communique_20081129.pdf) at http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/docs/communique_20081129.pdf

National Curriculum

The National Curriculum Board has released English, mathematics, science and history framing papers for public consultation.

http://www.ncb.org.au/our_work/preparing_for_2009.html

Please visit the website to choose how you can participate in providing feedback to the Board.

Papers are open for consultation until 28 February 2009.

See links below for the national curriculum framing papers for English, mathematics, science and history which propose broad directions for what teachers should teach and young people should learn in the national curriculum from Kindergarten to Year 12 (K–12).

[National English Curriculum - Framing Paper](#)

[National Mathematics Curriculum - Framing Paper](#)

[National Science Curriculum - Framing Paper](#)

[National History Curriculum - Framing Paper](#)

Source: ACER

A National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care

In December 2007, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a partnership between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments to pursue substantial reform in the areas of education, skills and early childhood development, to deliver significant improvements in human capital outcomes for all Australians.

This [discussion paper](http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/docs/communique_20081129.pdf) (http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2008-11-29/docs/communique_20081129.pdf) provided the basis for the initial round of consultations on the development of a new national quality framework for early childhood education and care to progress these reforms. The consultations were based on the key questions outlined in the paper and were held around the country in August and September 2008.

A national quality framework will provide parents, communities and operators of early childhood education and care services with a nationally consistent, streamlined and integrated licensing and accreditation system which ensures quality standards are implemented and maintained across all services. The new quality system will be aspirational and it may take some time to implement the full suite of standards to the highest quality level. This is an opportunity to identify key areas of quality that improve

outcomes for children.

It will also include an Early Years Learning Framework linked to national quality standards which will underpin early childhood education and care including universal access to 15 hours a week of affordable quality early learning for 40 weeks a year in the year before formal schooling. The framework will guide early childhood educators in developing quality early childhood programs. For the first time Australia will have a National Early Learning Framework which recognises that children learn from birth and that learning in school builds on these foundations.

In the 2008-09 Budget, the Commonwealth Government set out a comprehensive plan to make the early years a national priority. This plan involves reforms to early childhood education and care and a greater focus on healthy childhood development. The key elements of this plan are set out below:

The Commonwealth Government's plan for early childhood includes:

- improving access to quality early childhood education and care through:
 - universal access to preschool for all children in the year before formal schooling, 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year, delivered by a university-qualified early childhood teacher
 - the establishment of 260 early learning and care centres, including six specialist autism centres
- improving quality of early childhood education and care through:
 - strong National Quality Standards
 - A-E quality rating system
 - support for education and training of the early childhood workforce
 - the development of an Early Years Learning Framework
 - improving the affordability of child care by increasing the child care rebate
 - a new Healthy Kids Check for four year olds
 - national rollout of the Australian Early Development Index
 - a Home Interaction program to help parents prepare their children for school
 - the introduction of Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for use in early childhood settings
 - enhanced early years services for Indigenous children.

The 2006 OECD report Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care is a review of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in 20 OECD countries. It describes the social, economic, conceptual and research factors that influence early childhood policy. The report identifies seven aspects of quality and regulation that are important for evaluating early childhood systems:

- Orientation to quality: the level of attention that government brings to early childhood policy through national legislation, regulation and policy initiatives

- Structural quality: program standards or the overarching structures needed to ensure quality in early childhood programs
- Educational concept and practice: the education approach is generally guided by a national curriculum framework
- Interaction between process and quality: the quality of interaction between early childhood staff and children
- Operational quality: management that focuses on responsiveness to local need
- Child-outcome quality or performance standards: early childhood services not only facilitate labour market or other aims but improve the present and future wellbeing for children
- Standards pertaining to parent/community outreach and involvement: where early childhood education staff work in partnership with families and the community to provide appropriate quality services.

(Excerpt from A national quality framework for early childhood education and care A discussion paper August 2008)

2008 Status report on diversity and flexibility

This research by the Equal Employment Opportunity Network of Australia consolidates the hands on experiences of diversity practitioners in best practice organisations in Australia and New Zealand.

In 2003, 2005 and now 2008 the Equal Employment Opportunity Network of Australia (EEONA) has filled that gap by conducting the Australasian Diversity and Equality Survey (ADES). The ADES tracks the implementation of diversity through the eyes of diversity practitioners in Australia and New Zealand. Key questions concern (i) why are organisations interested in diversity? (ii) how do organisations implement a diversity agenda? (iii) what are the challenges to diversity implementation?; and (iv) how are issues/responses changing over time?

In addition to these general questions, each ADES includes a special section on a topical diversity related issue. In 2008 the ADES reported on workplace flexibility as well as diversity. In summary, the ADES found that managers hold the key to bridging the gap between flexibility policy and practice. In particular to enable the effective implementation of flexibility, organisations need to help build managerial capability and enable managers (as well as employees) to access flexibility. The report provides specific findings on the nature of that assistance. In essence the report concludes that building managerial capability to implement flexibility, and enabling managers to access flexibility, are the two key strategies to bridging the flexibility policy/practice gap.

[The complete ADES Report](http://www.eeona.org/ADES_2008_Report_25_July_2008.pdf) at

http://www.eeona.org/ADES_2008_Report_25_July_2008.pdf

The role of NGOs

Non-government organisations (NGOs) contribute to the Australian community in many ways. This paper focuses on their advocacy work. Through advocacy work NGOs help produce an active and vibrant democracy as they provide representation to marginalised members of the community. NGO advocacy also informs debate, rendering it more substantive and less likely to be captured by business or more powerful members of the community. During the years of the Howard Government, however, the contributions of NGOs were not always valued. Indeed, some commentators suggest that not only did the Australian Government reject NGO input, it actually employed mechanisms to silence dissenting, critical voices.

These mechanisms included:

the public denigration of NGOs

the inclusion of gag-clauses in government contracts

the de-funding of organisations critical of the government

This 'silencing of dissent' is one of the reasons many advocacy NGOs welcomed the election of the Rudd Labor Government in November 2007. Many NGOs believe that the election of the new government will provide an opportunity to rebuild a relationship that has become difficult and, for some, unworkable.

Compacts are non-binding agreements between governments and NGOs, taking different forms depending upon where and why they have been created. Broadly speaking, however, compacts have focused on defining the relationship between government and the NGO sector. Within a compact, governments will typically acknowledge the independence of NGOs, agree to consult with them and ensure funding arrangements are adequate and long-term. In return, NGOs will agree to be accountable, transparent and adopt good practice principles in their use of government funds.

This paper examines what advocacy NGOs stand to gain from entering into a compact, as well as what they may lose. It further considers the conditions necessary for a compact to be effective. Conclusions are reached through an assessment of the existing compacts in England and NSW, an extensive examination of relevant literature and an analysis of interviews with selected Australian advocacy NGOs. On balance, the conclusion is that while compacts may offer certain benefits, they are unable to guarantee lasting legitimacy for NGO advocacy. Nor can they be relied upon to ensure an effective and respectful long-term relationship between government and NGOs.

The full report *Agreeing to disagree: Maintaining dissent in the NGO sector* is available through the Australia Institute.

My Favourite Australian

ABC TV in a collaboration with the National Portrait Gallery in Canberra have taken a bold new approach to the successful ongoing ABC TV "My Favourite" series by commissioning 30 video portraits from leading video artists and filmmakers across Australia for a groundbreaking multi-platform exhibition of My Favourite Australian. Earlier this year, the ABC called upon the Australian public to vote for both their 'Favourite Australian' public figure as well as nominating their favourite 'Unsung Australian Hero'.

After an overwhelming response, the votes are in and the list contained a few surprises...

In the Most Popular Australian category it was statesmen instead of sporting heroes that garnered the most votes.

The Top ten voted as the Most Popular Australians are:

1. Olivia Newton John
2. Peter Cundall
3. John Farnham
4. Bob Brown
5. John Howard
6. Fred Hollows
7. Gough Whitlam
8. Sir William Deane
9. Johnny Warren
10. Tim Costello

The twenty selected as Most Inspiring Unsung Heroes contained a great mix of individuals who work tirelessly to help the lives of others. They are:

Pam Ahern, Kristy Carter, Anna Crotty, Stasia Dabrowski, Venera De Domenico, Sue Eddy, Steele Fitchett, Kevin Fong, Rosa Guglielmino, Terry Hicks, Kon Karapanagiotidis, Ruth Lewis, Mar Khin Mar Mar Kyi, David Bungal Mowaljarlai, Therese Sayers, Tom Slattery, David Turner, Aaron Wood, Dian Wellfare and PJ Williams.

An exhibition of the video portraits opens at the launch of the National Portrait Gallery's new building in Canberra on Wednesday 3rd December at 6pm. To coincide with the opening the ABC will launch the My Favourite Australian website

<<http://abc.net.au/myfavouriteaustralian>>

Bicycle Ambulances Saving Lives

Bicycle usage has taken a great leap forward in many African countries. Not only have donated recycled bicycles been distributed to local community health care workers but

the implementation of 'bicycle ambulances' has enabled the workers to be more efficient in the delivery of services and support for patients. For more information on BikeTown Africa 2008 see: <http://www.bicycling.com/biketown/africa.html>
Goodwill Bicycles Abroad is one example of an Australian group that collect, send and distribute Australian bicycles to communities in need throughout Australia and abroad. The indigenous Australian population living in remote areas is the main focus in Australia while more than 7000 bikes were sent to East Timor between 2000 and 2002. For further information see: www.goodwillbicycles.com

Homeless World Cup



Eight homeless and marginalised people from across the country have been selected to represent Australia at Melbourne 2008 the Homeless World Cup.

The Australian team, known as the Street Socceros, will enjoy the support of a home crowd when the Homeless World Cup, hosted by The Big Issue Australia, heads Down Under for the first time.

Announcing the team line-up today, Street Socceros Coach George Halkias praised the passion and commitment of players: "The Street Socceros are a great example of what homeless and marginalised people can achieve when given the opportunity and support," Mr Halkias said.

"Our Australian players have seized the opportunity to make positive changes in their lives, and will be able to stand proud on the world stage."

"Players have been selected not just on their soccer skills alone, but on their dedication and commitment to a regular soccer training program, which encourages team work, discipline, and the commitment to making positive changes in their lives."

Players have been selected from hundreds of homeless and marginalised people across the country involved in a weekly street soccer program coordinated by The Big Issue. The program uses sport as a catalyst to transform lives, by reconnecting homeless and marginalised people with the community and working to rebuild players' confidence and self-esteem.

Captain of the Australian team, Sydney-based Alex Marshall, said he was honoured to be chosen to represent his country at an international sporting event, and was looking

forward to competing on home turf.



“It’s an honour and a privilege to represent Australia”, Mr Marshall said.

“I still can’t believe it’s real. I’m really looking forward to meeting other players from around the world, and showing everyone what we can do. “

The Australian Street Socceros are:

Alex Marshall (Captain, NSW)
Stephen Maloney (Vice-captain, VIC);
Lorenzo Neghad (VIC);
Hamid Arabi (SA);
Kevin Knight (QLD);
Coen Slaughter (NSW);
Toni Whelan (SA);
Eddy Halid (VIC).

Australia is expected to face some stiff competition against some of the more established football nations, but Coach George Halkias said that no matter where teams finished in the rankings, the players would experience huge benefits.

“The Homeless World Cup is a reward for players who have made the commitment to turn their lives around. No matter where we finish in the rankings, each player will go home a winner, “Mr Halkias said.

Photo by Michael Brown / Photoworx

Source: <http://www.homelessworldcup.org>

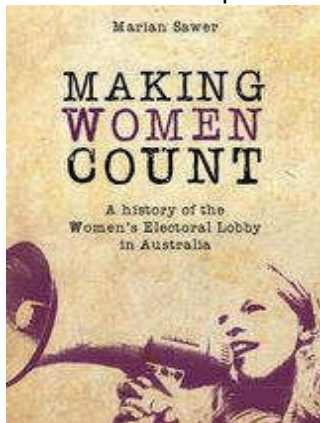
Book talk

Whistleblowing under the microscope

Edited by A. J. Brown, *Whistleblowing in the Australian Public Sector*, published by ANU E Press, draws on one of the world's most comprehensive research projects on the phenomenon. Evidence from over 8,000 public servants in over 100 federal, state and local government agencies shows that whistleblowers can and do survive, and that often their role is highly valued.

"Public interest whistleblowing is widely acknowledged as being positive for organisations and for society at large. However, the conflicts and reprisal risks often associated with whistleblowing also support a widespread belief that every whistleblower is destined to suffer, and nothing can be done to protect them from reprisals. Even if they did it once, sensible employees are often seen as unlikely to ever blow the whistle a second time around. The extensive research in this book reveals a more complex and, fortunately, more positive picture...This book is compulsory reading for all public sector managers who wish to turn this negative trend around, and for anyone interested in public accountability generally" (ANU, 2008).

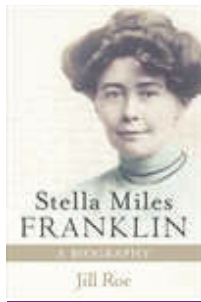
The book can be purchased http://epress.anu.edu.au/whistleblowing_citation.html



WEL history published

Making Women Count: A History of the Women's Electoral Lobby, by the Audit's Marian Sawer with Gail Radford, was published in September 2008 by UNSW Press. Drawing extensively on archives, surveys and media coverage, this is the first full-scale history of WEL.

- *Making Women Count* is available at <http://www.unswpress.com.au/code13/u9436>



Stella Miles Franklin: A Biography

By Jill Roe

Published by Harper Collins, 2008

Stella Miles Franklin was born in the Australian bush and, at the age of twenty-one, became an international publishing sensation with *My Brilliant Career*. The book struck a chord with women and girls all over the country, and more than a century later is still regarded as an Australian classic.

Miles' early success gave her entrée to literary and socialist circles in Sydney and Melbourne. There she met Banjo Paterson, the Goldstein sisters, and Joseph Furphy, among others. But by 1906 she had decided to make the bold move to travel overseas, and went to work for the women's labour movement in Chicago. In 1915 she relocated to London and quickly found herself travelling to the Balkans to help nurse wounded Allied soldiers. Returning to London she worked for various feminist and progressive causes, all the while continuing to write. A prolific author of plays as well as novels and archetypal bush stories, she often submitted work under pseudonyms which she guarded fiercely all her life. In the 1930s she returned to Australia and determined to take up the cause of Australian writers.

Novelist, journalist, nationalist, feminist and larrikin -- Miles Franklin's was a life of enormous range. And her endowment of the Miles Franklin literary award not only surprised all who knew her, but founded an Australian literary institution which remains our most prestigious literary award.

Jill Roe, AO, is the Emeritus Professor of History at Macquarie University, Sydney. She is the author of numerous papers on Miles Franklin and her work.