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In search of the light on the hill

JCPML Anniversary Lecture presented by Hazel Hawke on 5 July 1999.

First, I must say how very much I appreciate having been invited to present the John Curtin Lecture at this University named for him.

Curtin has been called Australia's greatest Prime Minister. I am not going to venture a judgment on that one way or the other today — it could be dangerous ground in more ways than one.

I am here to honour one Labor Prime Minister; I am in the presence of another; and I have had a long and close association with a third. A fourth, Paul Keating, who was yet to achieve the highest office at the time, in his famous — or should I say infamous — 'Placido Domingo' speech, did once seek to judge and compare his predecessors. This became the spark that ignited the long simmering tensions between him and Bob.

I believe the men I have mentioned have each in different ways and very different styles been good leaders and have done great things for their country.

For my theme though, I have turned to a phrase that derives from yet another Labor Prime Minister, the engine driver who succeeded Curtin after serving in his War Cabinet, Ben Chifley.

In what turned out to be the losing election campaign of 1949 Chifley said, "It is the duty and the responsibility of the community, and particularly those more fortunately placed, to see that our less fortunate fellow citizens are protected from those shafts of fate which leave them helpless and without hope ... That is the

objective for which we are striving. It is ... the beacon, the light on the hill, to which our eyes are always turned and to which our efforts are always directed.”

Did Chifley, or his speechwriter, suspect as they penned these words, that they would enter the Australian consciousness so deeply? probably not; the chemistry that makes a moment, a speech or a phrase live on beyond its time defies prediction.

These words of Chifley’s have echoed through the decades because they express so elegantly and aptly the Labor Party at its best, and because “the light on the hill” has become a symbol that represents the beacon of hope, idealism and equity that inspires the Labour movement.

I will return to what I think Chifley’s words mean, or should mean to Australia as we approach the new millennium, but first let me take a detour back to John Curtin.

Through one of those peculiar chains of personal association, I have come to identify the phrase “the light on the hill” with Curtin in my own mind, as much as with Chifley.

When John Curtin was the Prime Minister he chose not to sleep in the main bedroom of the Lodge, but in a smaller one from which he could see the beacon of the light tower on top of the surrounding hills. It is the same room in which my two infant grandsons slept when we first lived in the Lodge.

Some nights I used to sit in this room with the boys, and look out at the light. I would think of it as the light on the hill; and I would think of Curtin — alone in that room at night, carrying the burdens and responsibilities of a wartime leader that weighed so heavily on him — and I would imagine that perhaps he was thinking of his wife Elsie, and his children, in far away Perth.

I too was in Perth in those war days, and I remember them only too well. At Mount Hawthorn State School we dug trenches in the schoolyard and practiced running to them and putting rubber plugs in our mouths — apparently so we wouldn’t bite our tongues when the bombs fell. All house windows were blacked out and pasted with

paper so they wouldn't shatter in air raids. We kids thought it was all a bit of fun, but indeed our country was under very real threat.

When I was a teenager we served meals and were dancing partners for sailors and sub-mariners in port from serving in the threatening war-zone of the Indian Ocean and the Burma Coast. We were more aware, but it still seemed like fun — until the measure of fear and threat was brought home to us when a young English submariner went on a tour of duty with black hair and returned six weeks later with white hair! The fear and shock of warfare is beyond the apprehension of those who do not experience it.

Leadership of a nation is never simple. I shudder to think of just how onerous it must become in such times, when issues of policy, and judgments over the relative benefits of a decision, instead become matters of life and death, and possibly the survival of the nation.

It is well documented that Curtin was not a man in the Churchillian mold who was drawn to notions of statesmanship, and the grand canvas of war. His background was as an ardent pacifist. And he was a man of the people who agonised, with a very personal sense of responsibility, over the lives of the men and women affected by his decisions.

Yet he emerged, at the time, and in the hearts and minds of Australians since, as a great wartime leader who rose to the needs of the hour. Not only was he able to unite and galvanise the country. He had the courage and the wisdom to defy Churchill, and the empire loyalists at home, to insist that Australian troops and resources be focused on the Pacific theatre and the defence of Australia.

Gough is quoted in Geoffrey Serle's book 'For Australia and Labour', published by the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, as saying "Australian nationalism was born, not with the Anzac landing, but with the response of the Curtin Labor government to the external threat to our security".

Yet for all the gravity of the situation, my fancy of him in his bedroom at night thinking of Elsie was borne out when I read in Diane Langmore's 'Prime Minister's

Wives', an extract from one of his letters to her at this time. He wrote of his troubles, "The war goes badly and I have a cable fight with Churchill almost every day", but concluded, " ... But enough, I love you, and that is all there is to say."

As a young woman, I knew Elsie just a little. She had been interested in politics and active in the Labour movement before she ever met Curtin. She remained so throughout his career: she acted as his electoral secretary, and in her own right was a prominent figure in the Labor Women's Organisation. She maintained this involvement after his death, and in fact became the State President.

Bob and I as youngsters just beginning our lifelong involvement in the party would attend parliamentary debates here in Perth from time to time, and would see her there. It was clear that she was held in great respect and affection by Labor party members and colleagues.

I appreciate that this is not a Labor Party gathering, but let me finish my tour of Labor leaders with a personal observation that is both parochial, and unashamedly partisan.

Western Australia has been represented in the Federal Parliament over the years by some eminent members, Curtin being foremost amongst them. He was a Victorian by birth who came to the West. Bob was born in South Australia and grew up in Perth, but went east en route to The Lodge.

Another Western Australian, Ian Viner, has been ahead of the field in respecting the culture and the rights of West Australia's Aborigines.

In the years when I was pressing suits and ironing shirts it was my habit to do it while listening to Parliament on the radio. My favourite was Kim Beazley senior as he spoke so eloquently, as the Minister for Education. Now Kim junior is the one to watch, and any of us who saw him speak on the last Federal election night would recognise the son of the father ... the fine mind, the wisdom and the kind heart.

And more recently his Budget reply. His content and his delivery gave cause for us to be glad he is leading the Parliamentary opposition. I hope he shall lead it to the

government benches in the not too distant future, and become the first born and bred Sandgroper to become Prime Minister while representing a Western Australian seat.

Let me return to the main theme of this talk: “In search of the light on the hill — What kind of country do we want Australia to be?”

The inclusion of Chifley’s famous phrase, and the context I have given for it will no doubt give you an indication of what my concerns are. We must look forward, we must seek, we must hope; but we must do this in a spirit of compassion, and with a sense of inclusion. It must be a journey not only for the bold and the brave, the healthy and the strong. The whole of this nation, in all its diversity, must be on board.

Perhaps it is relevant first to take a brief look at the road already travelled, and where we are at this point in time, with reference to this concept of an inclusive society.

The notable exception historically to an inclusive, embracing attitude has of course been our treatment of the nation’s original inhabitants, the Aboriginal people. The founding policy of terra nullius denied their very humanity. We did not embrace them as equal citizens until 1967. And we are still coming to terms with this history of shame.

Henry Reynolds writes so well of this early history, and does not resile from calling it war. His book ‘The Last Frontier’ is the most helpful book I have found in understanding this history.

But leaving this substantial exception aside, I think it is fair to say that in most respects Australia has a record as good as any country in the world. I am using the broad brush here, but the image we have always held of ourselves as a tolerant and egalitarian society is essentially correct, especially by comparison with other countries around the globe.

In the early years of this century Australia led the world in many areas of social policy, from women's suffrage, to social security and welfare provisions. In the second half of the century we have undertaken and successfully managed a massive immigration program. A free enterprise culture has been balanced by a strong, but not excessively ideological union movement. In many respects, we can claim to have got the mix right.

One way of judging this is to try to imagine ourselves as others see us. An anecdote that I have used before provides an external perspective that is both telling, and relevant. At the time of the wharf dispute last year there was a piece in the Weekend Australian by Richard Yallop examining the dispute. He referred to the expatriate Australian journalist Phillip Knightly in this way:

Knightly believes the waterfront dispute reflects a change in Australian society, causing him to recall a conversation with the Polish writer Ryszard Kapuscinski, author of *Imperium*, which describes the fall of communism in eastern Europe.

"While he was writing the book he kept coming across people who would say, 'It's great that communism has gone but, my God, this capitalism's tough. Isn't there anywhere in the world where market forces rule, but they look after the young and the old, the sick and the poor, and the workers get a fair go?'

"Kapuscinski [who had been to Australia several times, and was very impressed with it] would always reply, 'Yes, there is - Australia'."

To me, this is an ideal worth striving for, Australia as a beacon of fairness and a model to emulate for those struggling to come to terms with a changing world. If Kapuscinski's image of Australia is taken to be accurate, then we can say that fifty years on, we have largely succeeded in implementing the vision of Chifley's "Light on the Hill" speech.

However, Knightly related this story in the context of changing times and attitudes, as a warning that we are in danger of losing something intangible, yet valuable.

My interests and my concerns lie in the areas of social rather than economic policy. The two cannot be separated though, and the entwining of one with the other seems to grow ever greater. So although it is not my field, some general reflections on economic issues – or more precisely, on what seem to be some of their underlying assumptions – are necessary to set the scene.

In this era of globalisation — economic rationalisation the dominant rhetoric is about competition in the market and individual choice. It seems however that in practice, the theory of competition often translates into freedom for the large and powerful to extend their reach at the expense of the small and local — hence the slow death of the suburban shopping centre in favour of the mall; the deli, and the corner grocery in favour of the supermarket.

And in relation to provision of choices at the individual level, it seems to be about the provision of ever wider options to those already in a position to choose, whereas for the poor, the powerless and the disenfranchised, the options and the opportunities are in fact being narrowed down, sometimes in a very mean spirited fashion.

My concerns in relation to this are twofold. Firstly there is the issue of equity, and whether these sorts of changes are indeed just. But it also seems to me that in terms of national self interest – whether one is a believer in economic rationalism or not – there are consequences in these trends that should cause us all, from concerned citizens to policy and decision makers, to pause and think.

Kim Beazley spoke of these matters recently. His grammar was dubious, but his meaning was crystal clear, when he spoke of a “fundamental disconnect” between the wealthy who advocate, and benefit from, globalisation and the rising number of people being left behind. “I have never seen a greater gulf of understanding between those who benefit from economic change and those who do not”, he said.

In an article in *The Australian* last April, under the headline “Farewell the ‘fair go’ society”, Deborah Hope covered some similar ground. She examined the fragmentation at the top and bottom ends of society: the gated residential estates at one extreme, and at the other, the growing acceptance amongst sociologists of the

word ghetto as an accurate rather than an emotive description of “enclaves of severe disadvantage and violent crime developing in parts of Sydney and Melbourne”.

The promoter of an elaborate new gated in Sydney, where the highly priced house and land packages will be protected by panic buzzers, security guards and perimeter fencing, described it as “the way of the future. It’s all about choice”.

Choice for whom? In the same article an analysis suggested that “with about one in three jobs now part-time or casual, some researchers say workers restructured out of full time jobs are being increasingly relegated to the low-paid, junk end of the labour market.” Not many choices are available for these workers, or for their kids it seems.

No less an authority than the Director-General of School Education in New South Wales was moved to say “Australia’s public schools are now under threat ... The prospect is looming that schools will no longer be inclusive, or embrace a cross-section of society ... Instead, public schools risk declining into a network of residual schooling for the disadvantaged and the unambitious — the education equivalent of public housing.”

In a disturbing cycle, this widening of the wealth gap and disparity in choice both contributes to and feeds off cultural fragmentation. Just as the emerging ghettos are ethnically distinct, the suburban fortresses are culturally, and usually racially homogenous.

To combat cultural fragmentation it is necessary to ensure that people — and especially minority groups — have a sense of security that they can hold onto their distinctive identity whilst still being a part of and welcome in the mainstream. History has shown that most people will not abandon what is special and distinctive to them in order to join the mainstream.

If people are not allowed this space and freedom, they will fragment into enclaves, and look suspiciously over their barricades at each other.

I am not talking here only about racial and ethnic divisions. Tom Wolfe’s book of the 1980s in New York, *Bonfire of the Vanities* — which I bought at the airport in New York

and read on the way home – captured the feeling of total separation and alienation between the social classes. The main imperative of the elites was to insulate themselves at all costs from any form of uncontrolled contact with ordinary people, and especially the poor. The book was essentially about what happened to one man when this broke down.

I am not suggesting that we are anywhere near New York style living yet in Australia. But there are indisputable signs that the gaps are widening here. And the gaps are of the mind, as well as in measurable statistics. As the winners become further removed and more insulated from the losers, it becomes easier to think of them as “the other”, rather than a part of the same community.

Notions such as acceptable levels of unemployment, of the undeserving poor, of zero tolerance, creep into public debate, and into the mindsets of some of those who are confident that they will not be on the receiving end of such nostrums.

I spoke earlier of the Australian values of tolerance and egalitarianism. I suppose what I am suggesting is that there is evidence that these values have been eroded in recent years. The effects of globalisation, of economic restructuring, of shifts in public policy, have created fault lines that can be seen as a slow rending of the social fabric that Australia has woven over the century of federation.

I would not presume to prescribe remedies here. Nor am I advocating a return to some notional golden era of protectionism, and guaranteed security for all. Australia and the world have moved beyond that.

During the golden age of economic rationalism over the last twenty years the power of the market has indeed been dominant; but it has won more minds than it has hearts, because there is a coldness at the core of it; a lack of human values. It is almost as if there has been a reversal of the notion that the economy must be managed to serve the needs of the people, to the concept that the people must be managed to serve the economy.

Lest I be misunderstood, let me say that I believe the Hawke government can claim to have been a world leader in embracing market and economic reform while still having

regard for the values of “the light on the hill”. Through initiatives such as the accord and its targeted welfare policies, it was in some ways ahead of the game that we are now seeing in Tony Blair’s “third way”, that seems to be trying to balance the needs of the community with the needs of the market.

But I would suggest that there is a sense out there in the community of a gathering momentum towards reassessing some of the assumptions that have dominated public debate and policy making. Kim Beazley’s notion of a “fundamental disconnect” has struck something of a chord.

Indeed, his speech was made at a major conference organised by The Australian newspaper which was organised around the theme of “Nation Building: The Social Imperative”. This conference took place while I was musing over the ideas and developing the themes for this talk.

It seemed to me to be quite a remarkable event, for it placed at centre stage in a very high powered forum the very issues that I am speaking about here. The perspectives and the proposed solutions of the speakers varied enormously, as one would expect. But there was a clear acknowledgment from all quarters not only of the indisputable facts that there have been substantial losers in the economic restructuring of the nation, but also that this is creating an unsustainable pressure on the body politic.

Under the headline of “A Fair and Decent Place”, the lead article summarising the conference concluded that “policy-makers, thinkers, politicians, corporations and governments are grappling with unfamiliar responsibilities and imperatives ... What has emerged in the most recent debate about globalisation and the divides that come with it ... is that the untrammelled reform ‘of the runaway train’ is neither a good thing for society nor a viable option. Open slather on reform entrenches inequities on both individual and national levels. It is those inequities that can ultimately bring the reform process to a halt or change its methods and directions”.

Amidst the plethora of interesting ideas and quotable quotes that emerged from coverage of the conference speakers grappling with these issues, I must confess I was most intrigued and attracted to one from Bob in his opening address to the

conference. He said, "We should recognise the asymmetry between our technological and scientific genius on the one hand, and our relative stodginess as social engineers. It is as though we have suffered a collective lobotomy with one side of the brain functioning well and the other has atrophied. We must redress this imbalance."

Bob is also amongst those who have suggested that Australia should become a "clever country". Cleverness as a national ideal has been embraced and endorsed by politicians of all stripes as something that will benefit the country. It is indeed an admirable virtue, suited to the technological age we live in.

But today I would like to talk about the notion of wisdom, as compared to cleverness. Cleverness is a concept at home in the cut and thrust and one upmanship of political discourse. It is also a term whose connotations can be negative as much as positive: "too clever by half", "too clever for the other side".

Wisdom, on the other hand, implies a much broader and deeper outlook. It implies courage and compassion as well as intelligence. To return to Bob's metaphor, it implies both sides of the brain in harness and in harmony.

In most human cultures over the ages, wisdom has been the most valued and respected of commodities, as embodied in the images of the wise woman or the good wizard, the sage tribal elder. People who are able to see their community as a whole, and provide advice and leadership for the benefit of this whole community.

But in our technological age, the notion of wisdom as a high virtue has been usurped to a very large degree by the narrower, more sharp edged concept of cleverness.

What I am trying to say here may be dismissed by some as irrelevant, or warm and fuzzy, but that in itself might be seen as a symptom of the problem. There is actually nothing wrong with warm and fuzzy; it is a jolly sight better than cold and abrasive. It is welcoming. It is inclusive. When it is built on a foundation of common sense and wisdom, it can also be sustainable.

I suggested that wisdom implies the quality of compassion added to intelligence, and an outlook that encompasses the whole community. It also implies a far-sightedness that considers all the implications of an action.

I'm not sure exactly how we would formulate such a concept, but I would like to suggest a kind of 'wisdom test' that encompasses these attributes when considering public policy. For instance, the rationalisation of a particular public service may be cost effective, may be efficient, may be clever. But is it necessarily wise, if it results in deprivation in rural areas or outer suburbs that causes social dislocation and disadvantage; for not only might this cause hardship in the short term, it is likely to have costs and consequences down the track.

To take just one example, in my eyes there is little wisdom in education policies which tighten the screws year after year on our public schools and universities, and in this year's budget provide large increases in subsidies to the private system, whilst maintaining the policy of forcing state governments to return \$1700 to the federal government when a student moves from a public to a private school.

No wonder it is the private education sector that is growing in terms of student share and the number of schools. This may fit within the government's ideological framework; it may be consistent with abstract notions of choice. But again I ask the question of choice for whom?

Such policies can only force the public education system into a downward spiral. To quote Deborah Hope again; "Once the backbone of the cohesive Australia, a system that crossed all lines of class and nationality, public education is under threat of becoming the marginalised territory of the disadvantaged in the new century."

I gave this lecture the sub-title of "What kind of country do we want Australia to be?"

We could do worse than remember the values of Curtin and his successors, and the sentiments of Chifley's "light on the hill" speech. They are as pertinent today as they were fifty years ago.

Essentially what I am arguing for is to reassert the place of social policy alongside economic policy in national debate and national priorities, and national and community values.

Surely something has gone wrong, when despite an impending national shortage of teachers, education faculties at universities are being forced to turn away applicants due to funding cuts, whilst we see an ongoing expansion in business degrees, and masters of business administration.

John Curtin, for whom this particular university was named, was a passionate advocate of education. He would be appalled at the thought, I am sure.

I am not across all the trends of the emerging debate about the “third way”, and the attempts to negotiate a balance between the imperatives of the economy, and social needs and policy, but it is encouraging to see that the debate is taking place, and that there is more and more talk about ways of finding a synthesis between the two.

As I said earlier, we must look forward, we must seek, we must hope; but we must do this in a spirit of compassion, and with a sense of inclusion. The whole of this nation, in all its diversity, must be on board.

I have argued for the notion of wisdom as a value we should encourage and aspire to. Wisdom will be needed to find the right synthesis of economic and social policy in the complex world of the new millennium.

I have even suggested a “wisdom test”. Perhaps one approach to this would be to imagine another Polishman like Kapuscinski asking the same question fifty years from now. “Is there anywhere in the world where market forces rule, but they look after the young and the old, the sick and the poor, and the workers get a fair go?”

If the actions we take, the policies we implement are likely to contribute to the answer once again being, “Yes there is – Australia”, then we are on the right track.

Hazel Hawke, introduced by the Hon Gough Whitlam

A year and a half ago in Canberra, as a former prime minister, I spoke in the lecture series for the 70th anniversary of the Old Parliament House. The warmest response to my lecture came after this passage:

A view is held, and sometimes expressed, in the Whitlam household that wives of prime ministers are more highly regarded and widely loved than prime ministers themselves, both during and after their terms of office. Perhaps tonight I should only pay tributes to the wives of my predecessors or opponents, although I may venture the thought that if her generation had enjoyed the opportunities for women provided by my government, Margaret might well have been speaking in this series in her own right.

Hazel Hawke was born ten years after Margaret. She is the only person born in Western Australia who has resided in the Prime Minister's Lodge. If she had enjoyed the opportunities for women provided by my Government she might well have spoken in that lecture series as the first prime minister who had been born in Western Australia.

Hazel has become a strong and active leader in issues relating to the community, the family, the environment and the arts throughout Australia. While perhaps achieving greatest prominence during the period when Bob was prime minister she had always worked independently and become involved in important social issues. Her profile today remains high and her daily schedule quite daunting. Margaret and I were recently among the hundreds of people of all backgrounds who applauded the case she made for the Republic at a meeting in Sydney.

Hazel was born in Perth in 1929. She was educated at Mt Hawthorn State School and the Perth Central Girls' School. She attained an Associate Diploma of Pianoforte in 1945. From 1944 to 1955, she worked as a secretary/bookkeeper for an electrical engineering firm and at the Institute of Statistics in Oxford, UK.

In 1956 she married, working at the Indian High Commission in Canberra during this year. From 1958-83 the Hawkes lived in Melbourne, where Mrs Hawke was a full-time

homemaker, then worked at the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne, was a volunteer in the Action Resource Centre for Low Income People and was employed in the Social Issues and Research Department from 1975-79. She pursued a Diploma of Welfare Studies at the Caulfield Institute, Melbourne from 1980-81.

Hazel lived in the Prime Minister's Lodge from March 1983 to December 1991, actively pursuing her interest in community work, women's and children's issues, music and the arts. In January 1992 the Hawkes moved to Sydney to live and in December of that year her autobiography, *My Own Life*, was published. They divorced in 1995.

Among her numerous positions across a broad range of organisations, Hazel is chair of the NSW Heritage Council, a Board member of the Australian Children's Television Foundation and Patron of the World Wide Fund for Nature. Hazel has two daughters and a son — a second son died as an infant —, and six grandchildren. Her interests include her family and friends, community work, family and women's issues, reading, gardening, music and the arts.

This year WA celebrates the centenary of women's suffrage. It is also the centenary of the WA Branch of the ALP. WA Labor women have achieved a significant number of firsts:

- In 1925 May Holman was the first Labor woman elected to any Parliament in the British Empire,
- In 1943 Dorothy Tangney was the first woman elected to the Australian Senate,
- In 1954 Ruby Hutchison was the first woman to win a seat in a State upper house in Australia, and
- In 1990 Carmen Lawrence was the first woman to be elected a head of government in Australia.

The first woman elected to any Parliament in Australia was Edith Cowan, after whom another university is named. She was a Nationalist member of the Legislative Assembly of WA from 1921 to 1924. Dame Annie Cardell-Oliver, who was born in

Victoria, stood against John Curtin in 1934. In 1936 she became the Nationalist member for Subiaco in the Assembly and in 1948 the first Australian woman to attain full cabinet rank. The first Coalition women in Western Australia elected to the other houses were Agnes Robertson to the Senate in 1950, Margaret McAleer to the Council in 1974 and Judith Moylan to the House of Representatives in 1993. There are now two Liberal women from Western Australia in the House of Representatives, five in the Assembly, two in the Council and one in the Senate. There are now three Labor women from Western Australia in the House of Representatives, six in the Assembly, three in the Council and none in the Senate.

There are many Western Australian women who, like Hazel Hawke, made a difference throughout Australia without standing for Parliament. I mention two who lived in Government Houses; Alexandra Hasluck and Rachel Cleland. In the 50s Alexandra Hasluck's first book aroused Margaret's and my interest in the social history of this State. It was a biography of the pioneer botanist, Georgiana Molloy, who was the wife of a natural son of George III's second son. One of her daughters was the second wife of the First Anglican bishop of Western Australia.

Rachel Cleland is the widow of the brigadier who was the Liberal candidate for Fremantle at the by-election caused by the death of John Curtin. He was the Administrator of Papua New Guinea from 1953 to 1967. In her *Pathways to Independence* (1983) Dame Rachel Cleland recalled her sympathy for the indigenous teachers for whom Bob Hawke was appearing in arbitration proceedings in the Territory in the mid-60s. She still exercises influence in this State.

May I quote again from the inaugural lecture:

Australian courts have been able to secure compliance with the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women because Senator Susan Ryan, Australia's most successful woman legislator before Cheryl Davenport, persuaded the Senate to pass a Sex Discrimination Bill to enact the Convention in 1982 and then persuaded the Hawke Government to enact it in the Sex Discrimination Act 1984 and the Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunities in Employment) Act 1986.

The next sentence does not appear in the published text. I believe that Hazel Hawke would approve it and I now repeat it:

God-fearing men and women should thank God that, more than ever before and largely due to several competent and compassionate Labor women in the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly, the babies born in Western Australia will have been wanted by the couples who begot them and will be cherished by them.

I recommend that you read Susan Ryan's excellent autobiography, *Catching the Waves*, which I launched in May. She attended the 1975 World Conference on Women in Mexico City and the United Nations Decade for Women Conference in Copenhagen in 1980. The platform of action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995 is to be examined at the Special Session of the UN General Assembly in New York next June. Jenny Macklin ascertained a week ago that the Howard Government has not yet determined the composition and size of the Australian delegation. Go for it!

I may have an obsession with enacting the human rights conventions adopted by the United Nations and its specialized agencies which deal with labour, education, health, agriculture, disarmament and trade. The earliest such convention, the 1948 Genocide Convention, has still not been made part of Australia's domestic law. Since 1974 Labor leaders have been able to achieve an equal franchise, one vote one value, in the House of Representatives and in every chamber in Australia except the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council of Western Australia. It is not a novel concept in Western Australia. It was canvassed in the Assembly over 70 years ago, on 1 November 1928 by the Deputy Leader of the Nationalist Party, T.A.L. Davy, a South Australian Rhodes Scholar and the MLA for West Perth, who died in 1933, while Attorney-General, at the age of 42. If Australian Federal governments had enacted the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights which entered into force in March 1976, Australian officials and judges would already have ensured that the Western Australian Parliament was elected in accordance with proper democratic principles. In December 1993 Carmen Lawrence was the first Western Australian leader of any party to take steps to secure one vote, one value for all the men and

women in this State. In this place and at this time I again assert my respect and affection for Carmen Lawrence and my support for all her activities.

In this introduction I have broached some of the issues that I believe will take a man and woman born and raised in Western Australia to the Prime Minister's Lodge in Canberra. I now introduce a woman who before, during and after her residence there has made a difference in the lives of women, men and children who live in every part of Australia.