

POLICY FORUM

POD

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Reconciliation Week 2019 –
Honesty is the best policy
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About us:

Policy Forum Pod is the podcast of Policy Forum.net - Asia and the Pacific's platform for public policy debate, analysis and discussion. Policy Forum is based at Crawford School of Public Policy at the Australian National University.

Our regular podcasts are written for a broad audience of public policy professionals, and those interested in public policy throughout the region.

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Martyn Pearce: Martyn Pearce, Main Presenter

Sharon Bessell: Sharon Bessell, Director, Children's Policy Centre, Crawford School, ANU

Tony Dreise: Tony Dreise, Professor of Indigenous Policy Research and Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at ANU

[intro music 0:00:00-0:00:10]

Martyn Pearce: Hello, and welcome to Policy Forum Pod – the podcast for those who want to dig a little deeper into the policy challenges facing Australia and its region. I am Martyn Pearce.

Policy Forum Pod is produced at Crawford School, the region's leading graduate policy school, and you can find out more about us, check out our short course and our degrees at crawford.anu.edu.au.

I am delighted to be joined in the studio today by Sharon Bessell. Hello, Sharon, how are you?

Sharon Bessell: Hi, Martyn. I am great, and it is good to be back. I have been in Pod withdrawal of late. I have not been around much.

Martyn Pearce: Well, we have been in work withdrawal for not having you in the studio, as well,--

Sharon Bessell: Oh, thank you.

Martyn Pearce: -so it is fantastic to have you. Sharon, for those of you who do not know, is a Professor here, at Crawford School. She is the ANU lead on the Individual Deprivation Measure project and she is also the editor of Policy Forum's Poverty in Focus section.

At the beginning of each week's Pod, we go over some issue that have caught our eye in the news over the last week. Tell me, Sharon, what has caught your eye?

Sharon Bessell: Well, there has been a lot going on, of course, and lots of discussion in Australia about the post-election situation and what that means, but what has caught my eye has been two of our neighbours across the ditches, they say, so New Zealand's Wellbeing Budget I think is really interesting. It has been greeted with both enthusiasm and scepticism in New Zealand and beyond.

The sceptics wonder what this is all about, and it is a radical shift away from thinking about GDP as the primary measure of how well a country is doing and of taking what might be a narrower economic approach towards a budget.

Jacinda Ardern again is, sort of, leading global debates by saying that the focus in New Zealand is to be on people's wellbeing and they are focusing on GDP, or increasing income alone for individuals is not the way to achieve overall wellbeing and public health in the country, so I think this is going to be really interesting to see how it plays out and whether this is, indeed, a model for other countries.

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Bhutan has had its Growth National Happiness Index, but I think you could perhaps question how far that is gone, in terms of really shifting policy in the country, although it has been important. Maybe this Wellbeing Budget is quite a different way of thinking about policy.

The thing has been of particularly interest to me is the way in which it is focused on childhood poverty. Childhood poverty in New Zealand, like in Australia, is at very high levels, a very deep concern, and so this Wellbeing Budget is really closely focused on trying to address the problems of childhood poverty, and so I am watching it with great interest and I am going to be in Wellington next week, so I am very excited about talking to people there and hearing more about it.

Martyn Pearce: I have heard a lot about this, as well, but what does it actually mean in practice to hand down a budget which is focused on wellbeing?

Sharon Bessell: Well, I will be in a better position to talk about that next week, after I have been able to talk to people in Wellington, but I think one of the key issues is the way in which we use indicators to measure progress. My understanding is that the Wellbeing Budget in New Zealand is really focused around addressing a series of wellbeing indicators that were adopted earlier this year.

It is really about shifting the focus, in terms of what we prioritise and what we try to do, so I think, maybe, in some ways, I think back to the Rudd-Gillard-Rudd years and the establishment of a Social Inclusion Unit and a Social Inclusion Index, and an effort in Australia to try to think about what it really matters for people to be connected and to have a sense of wellbeing within their communities, and that is what that social inclusion approach was about.

I think, in some ways perhaps, a wellbeing approach is not mirroring that but is more that kind of approach where what you are really most concerned about is not economic growth, although that is important, but it is about how you enhance people's wellbeing, how you connect people, how you ensure that social inclusion is occurring.

That does not mean — certainly as I understand it — that economic growth is not a focus. It means that economic growth becomes a means to an end, and that end is the wellbeing of people, and particular concern about those who are being left behind, those who are most marginalised.

I guess, we have had Reconciliation Week, we have had Sorry Day in Australia recently, and maybe there is something for us to learn in terms of thinking about wellbeing and Indigenous policy.

Martyn, you would remember that great discussion with Peter Yu some months ago, and he was talking about Indigenous concepts of wellbeing and how different that is

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from, what we might call, mainstream or wide approaches to wellbeing. I think there is a lot for us to learn, both from New Zealand but also some of those concepts of wellbeing in Indigenous Australia, so I think it is a really fascinating initiative for us to keep our eye on.

Martyn Pearce: Look, I think it is really interesting, as well. Playing a devil's advocate for a second, because you could argue, I think, that economic growth is easily measurable — however faulty it may be as a measure of a country's success, it is easily measurable. Something like wellbeing, surely, that is much more nebulous, it is much more hard [*sic.*] to get a handle on whether you have actually succeeded, particularly when you are handing down a budget which is based on it.

Sharon Bessell: Yes, absolutely. You are talking to someone who has spent the last decade trying to develop an incredibly complex gender-sensitive measure of multidimensional poverty and, yes, it would be much easier to measure income, it would be much easier to measure economic growth, but I think at the heart of this is that we measure what we think matters, and what we measure determines what we think matters.

I would not argue for a moment that economic growth is not important and we should measure it, but we also need to measure other things, and it is a difficult thing to do, it is a complicated thing to do, but it is certainly not impossible. There are a range of wellbeing measures that are already in existence. Much of those wellbeing measures already have data around them.

I am not sure exactly what it is that the New Zealanders are planning to measure but, for example, I would argue that one measure of wellbeing is tiredness, and this is particularly an important issue for women, but also for men in terms of the time you spend at work and the time you are able to spend in the community, with your family, doing other things. We already have those data.

Those data are there and collected through census data and other surveys, so it is a matter of deciding what it is that matters and what the indicators are associated with them. Often, particularly that data is already there, it is not as difficult as we might think.

I think the other thing that I would add to that is one of the things that really disturbed me during the Australian election campaign. [*It*] was the way in which Prime Minister Morrison continually referred to the fact that we live in an economy, and I would argue we actually do not live in an economy — we live in a society, and economic growth is a tool to improve that society. That is not all about the economy.

Marty Pearce: There you go, listeners, you have heard what we think of that issue in New Zealand, but we are really interested to hear your thoughts on how effective you

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think it is, whether you think it is a good idea, how measurable it is, and whether it might add to the lead to lasting change.

The way to let us know your thought is, as always, on Twitter, where we are [@APPSPolicyForum](#), on email, where we are podcast@policyforum.net or, the best option, jump on to Facebook and join our Facebook group — we are [PolicyForumPod](#) on Facebook. In fact, if you jump on to the Facebook group, you can not only let us know your thoughts, you can join in some really stimulating and engaging discussions that are going on there. It is a very active group, indeed, and I love reading people's thoughts and comments on there.

You can join in there and you can also make suggestions for future podcasts and, if you make suggestions for future podcast which we subsequently turn into an episode of Policy Forum Pod, you could win one of our exclusive, very short run, get your hands on it before they are gone, Policy Forum Pod mugs. You have got one of these, haven't you, Sharon?

Sharon Bessell: I have. It is a fantastic thing to own. I love it.

Martyn Pearce: Takes pride to be placed on your desk, no doubt.

Sharon Bessell: Oh, absolutely.

Martyn Pearce: Goes everywhere with you?

Sharon Bessell: It does. It goes to class.

Martyn Pearce: It will be with you in New Zealand?

Sharon Bessell: I think it should be, yes.

Martyn Pearce: I think it should be, yes, a measure of your wellbeing.

Sharon Bessell: Indeed.

Martyn Pearce: If you want to get your hands on one of those mugs, you can jump on to the Facebook group. Stick with us, because in part three we are going to be revealing something about another way that you can get your hands on one of those mugs. We have had a few requests from people, Sharon, I have got to say.

Sharon Bessell: I am not surprised.

Martyn Pearce: Yes, people say that they really, really want the mugs. As a consequence, we had an emergency meeting of the mug-prize-award committee. We pulled together an emergency session and they have come up with a second method that people can get

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their hands on one of these mugs. In part three, I will reveal what that second method is.

Sharon Bessell: This is very exciting, because I know they have become *the* most sought-after item, not just at the ANU but across Canberra and, probably, globally.

[laughter]

Martyn Pearce: *The* most sought-after item, yes, absolutely. Alright, we will talk about that in part three but, for now, let's move on and talk about what we can be looking at today.

This week is Reconciliation Week in Australia — you mentioned that, Sharon, and the theme of Reconciliation Week this year is *Grounded in Truth, Walk Together with Courage*. With the election still on people's minds, today on the Pod we want to shed some light on Australia's Indigenous policies. We want to have a closer look and reflect on some of Australia's past policies, where we are at today and how the country can change to better meet its national aspirations of reconciliation.

We have got a fantastic guest — the perfect guest — to discuss this topic, haven't we, Sharon.

Sharon Bessell: We have. We have Professor Tony Dreise to talk through these issues. Tony brings an enormous wealth of experience on a range of Indigenous policy issues. He was previously principal Indigenous Research Fellow at the Australian Council for Education Research. That is a really fantastic research institute that does some fascinating research, and Tony has been at the heart of some of that really interesting work.

This is an interview that I am really looking forward to hearing.

Martyn Pearce: He is a really interesting guy and, of course, he delivered the Reconciliation Week lecture here, at ANU, last week. I think that is online, and we will leave a link to it in the show notes. It is well worth listen.

We will get to that interview in a second but a quick reminder before we do: do get in contact with us about the podcast, any question you have got, any comments. We are really keen to hear them. On Twitter, we are [@APPSPolicyForum](#), email podcast@policyforum.net or jump on that Facebook group, [PolicyForumPod](#) on Facebook.

Sharon, you are going to duck out for this interview. You are going to leave it in my, hopefully, capable hands.

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Sharon Bessell: In your very capable hands, Martyn, but I will be listening to it afterwards.

Martyn Pearce: We will have you back for part three and we will get your thoughts on it. For now, let's meet our guest.

[interlude music 0:12:05-0:12:13]

Martyn Pearce: Welcome, Tony, thanks so much for joining us today.

Tony Dreise: Pleasure.

Martyn Pearce: Tony, last week you delivered the annual Reconciliation Week lecture here, at the Australian National University. It was titled *Who is Australia? Public policy imagination and national identity — past, present and emerging*.

2020 will mark both 30 years since the creation of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation and the establishment of the ANU Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, which you lead. Could I briefly get you to reflect on the past 30 years of Indigenous policy in Australia?

Tony Dreise: It has been a period of progress, it has been a period of frustration, it has been a period of ups and downs. What do I mean by that? Around the period of which CAEPR was established, you had the establishment, as you point out, of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation. Not long after that, we saw the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and, around that period as well, we saw the introduction of the Native Title Act.

One could argue there was progression toward recognition of Aboriginal rights, in the form of Native Title as one form of rights, the establishment of a reconciliation agenda, which sought to facilitate a national conversation about Australia and our relationship with its First Nation's People and, of course, with the creation of ATSIC, we saw a march toward giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice within national affairs and, more specifically of course, Indigenous policy-making.

One could argue that that was a period of where Aboriginal rights and Aboriginal voice was--; Well, significant inroads were beginning to be made. Then, we saw the political contest in terms of the abolition of ATSIC. An independent panel, incidentally, had pointed out that the regional structure of ATSIC was very effective. What we had, of course in politics, I supposed, gobbled up this debate around the leadership of ATSIC, which saw both Labor and the conservative side of politics eventually rise to abolish it.

That, I think, led to a period of stagnation and real questioning around the relationship with First Nation's People and government, and there was a void — it was a, kind of, patch-work, trying to fill that void around an advisory committee to the Prime Minister

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and other mechanisms, but that lack of strong voice then led to a period where, I think, Indigenous affairs struggled. The low point of that is arguably the Northern Territory intervention, where Aboriginal voice and control was severely diminished.

You have had a period, as I say, of highs and lows, which now brings us, of course, to where we are at now.

Martyn Pearce: I want to take a look at the past and present, to begin with. From Kevin Rudd's National Apology to Stolen Generations in 2008 to the Uluru Statement from the Heart, there have been a number of attempts to bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians together. Starting with Kevin Rudd's Apology, in retrospect, what do you think the Apology has achieved?

Tony Dreise: The apology certainly helped shine a light on a very unfortunate chapter of Postcolonial Australian history — that is the removal of children from their families. One could not think of a more damaging act than the removal of children from families and that, of course, triggered — and we are still seeing it today, in 2019 — that has led to intergenerational trauma, often where Aboriginal people do not know where they are from, do not know who their mob are. That, of course, leads to identity crisis. It can also lead to unfortunate things, such as self-harm, et cetera.

Now, of course, we have got children of Stolen Generation's, who equally, on occasion, struggle with identity. There have been support mechanisms established, which were attached to Kevin Rudd's National Apology that have sought to, I suppose, try provide a remedy to some of those practices which still have a current and present effect on people, but I think the Apology was aimed at people from the Stolen Generation.

I think some of the words were so powerful that it spoke to a large issue of Australia's relationship with its First Nations People. That, in itself, was significant — equally significant if not more significant was Paul Keating's statement and Redfern address where he, as a Prime Minister, I think like no one before him and no one since, really spoke the truth of Postcolonial Australia. We did the stealing. We did the killing.

Unquestionably, that would have been very confronting for a lot of Australians because, as with any country, Australia would want to be always strengthening its sense of patriotism but, of course, the sad history of First Nations' affairs has meant that there has always been this diminished aspect of our national identity, and — the author I cannot think of, but Henry Reynold often quotes him; he talked to "that whispering in our hearts" [*possibly intended to be the title of Henry Reynold's book, "This Whispering in Our Hearts", ed.*]

Whilst we are in a reconciled country and whilst we are giving proper authority and voice to First Nations People, I think we will have that lingering and 'whispering in our heart', and we will be a diminished nation.

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Marty Pearce: Beyond the Apology, it has also shifted public perspective.

Tony Dreise: Yes. Truth is incredibly important. You will see that in terms of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and other policy manifestations from First Nations People more many decades now — the absolute importance of truth-telling. It is not about guilt. It is not about brow beating. It is being prepared, as Australians, to tell our children this is what happened in Postcolonial Australia.

Marty Pearce: I do want to touch on the Uluru Statement from the Heart. That called for a referendum to embed a representative body in the Constitution, giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples a voice in the Commonwealth Parliament, but why have those reforms not been implement yet?

Tony Dreise: I think there were a couple of things. There is still, I think, a bit of ambiguity about what this voice is. How is it structured? What is its relationship to the Parliament? Now, it is not, of course--; The proposition is not another assembly within the Parliament. It is a voice, an advisory mechanism to the Parliament. Clearly, there is design work that needs to be done.

Now, if we look at the developments in the leadup to our recent federal election, there were a number of significant events. There was, of course, the release of the Statement itself by Aboriginal leaders and, as I have said before, we have rarely seen such a coherent, collective articular of our People's aspirations. I give great credit to those people, through the Referendum Council and others, who have gathered all those Aboriginal voices and that culminating in the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Of course, what we saw was an immediate and concerning political reaction and response by the, then, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull — I think he was still National leader, I cannot recall, with Barnaby Joyce, as well, where they immediately ruled it out, without giving it proper consideration. That, obviously, took rear area of the tyres in terms of progress.

Then, on the other side of politics, you had Patrick Dodson and Bill Shorten in Opposition, committing to a referendum within the first term of government, should they form it. Now, of course, the federal election saw the Coalition returned and, more recently, you have seen interesting announcement, notwithstanding that in the federal budget — the most recent federal budget — the Coalition did commit 7.3 million to co-design work with First Nations community on a voice and recognition.

So, there was quite a deal of political ambiguity because you had, then, the Turnbull Government rule it out and then you had the Morrison Government make a provision with the federal budget and, more recently, we have seen, of course, Ken Wyatt's appointment and there seems to be a shift toward, once again, dialogue with First Nations People about what this voice could look like.

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Marty Pearce: Do you think that, the money allocated toward the co-design that you talked about there, represents significant enough a progress for something as important as the Uluru Statement?

Tony Dreise: As I understand it, the funds for the design, so not the establishment of, or the management, or operations of, but rather design work, presumably, most of those funds would be going into some sort of engagement exercise with First Nations People. Of course, the concern there, and our people are fully conscious how governments can act, and often tricky issues can be like a can kicked down the road. I am hoping that is not the case.

I think the fact that Australia now has its first First Nations Person as its Commonwealth Minister for Indigenous Affairs is a good thing.

Marty Pearce: Well, it seems like a good time to talk about that, because on Monday — we are recording this on Wednesday, but on Monday Ken Wyatt was appointed Minister of Indigenous Affairs. He is an Indigenous man. He is the first Indigenous Australian to hold the position and, I believe, the first Indigenous Cabinet Minister, as well.

How, do you think, his appointment will likely impact on policy making in the field of Indigenous affairs?

Tony Dreise: I think of a couple of things. Firstly, I think it is a very positive symbol to our children and to our communities, and I think Ken's personal achievement — I am sure with the support of his family, as well — should be marked in very positive terms. One could argue that it is a shame it took to 2019 to get there. It seems to be a long time — 119 years of Federation that took but, nonetheless, it should not take away from his personal milestone and achievement.

It is also a positive reflection of his Noongar nation, over in Western Australia, so I think on that level Ken's appointment gives a sense of positive signal.

Now, let's go back, however, to the politics. Putting Ken aside, the politics of Indigenous affairs, in order for Ken to be successful he will need the support of his senior colleagues — most importantly, of course, the Prime Minister, and if we are going to see progress in the areas such as voice recognition, healing, truth telling, 'Makaratta', and the other aspects of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, then I think the support of the senior leader, Prime Minister, Treasurer, and those moderate voices within the Cabinet and caucus are going to be vitally important.

Marty Pearce: On our other podcast, *Democracy Sausage*, the panel there were speculating about the possibility of having Ken Wyatt in that position might actually lead the conservative side of politics towards creating a constitutional change, which we have talked about today, whereas it is something normally more associated with

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progressive side of politics. Do you hold that much hope that that constitutional change might come as a result of that?

Tony Dreise: There is a couple of lines of thought one could take around this. If we take the glass-half-empty approach, there are those who would argue that it would require progressive side of politics to really drive and give that agenda the oomph and push that it will require. Then, if we take the more-positive or, if you like, optimistic view of the glass-half-full, one could argue that there is a stronger chance that the conservative side of government can bring more conservative thinking Australians along that journey with them.

I hope that this is not a can to be kicked down the road. I reiterate the importance, I think, of the Prime Minister's leadership in working with Ken to bring people together around this agenda and, ideally — and it seems that Anthony Albanese is signalling bipartisan support, I think the politics have got to come of it.

What needs to come into it is a civil discourse about what is proposed, why it is important, its moral purpose, and then investing in information and awareness campaigns with the broader public, because at the end of the day, if it would go to a referendum, it is going to require a majority vote and all states and territories getting on board.

Marty Pearce: Turning back to that election campaign for a second, I wonder if I can get our thoughts on the quality of the policy put forward by the Coalition, because maybe I am being unfair in saying this, I think it is fairly light on the ground. I mean, there was 42 million committed to mental health initiatives, there was 236 million committed to Indigenous youth education, there was the money committed to the co-design that you talked about, but I did not see a great deal beyond that.

What were your reflections on both the quality and quantity of Indigenous policy proposals put forward?

Tony Dreise: I think our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been concerned for a long time, and I go back to the first Abbott Budget when 500 million was taken from the portfolio. That was a real low point because it seemed a strange decision, given the level's persistent locational and intergenerational disadvantage and trauma that people suffer. Probably, the Abbott Budget burns in the mind more than the recent Morrison Budget.

Now, that said, given that we have now had 10 years of annual closing the gap reporting, I do not see that there are substantial or substantive budgetary allocations that are really going to close gaps. There were measures in the Morrison Budget that, I think, would be helpful, whether there are sufficient they will be helpful. For example, you

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mention mental health. That is a real concern for our young people and our communities, so any allocation toward that area is ideally helpful, but is it proportionate?

Do we have budgets in Australia that are proportionate when you see our levels of disadvantage, when we have the annual reports to Parliament that closing the gap is either marginal, or no progress, or signs of some progress against a couple of indicators? The vast majority, however, little to no progress. Of course, the indicators that are not in that framework — closing the gap framework, for example our incarceration rates, since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Death in Custody, Aboriginal incarceration rates have doubled.

One in two of young people in our juvenile justice centres are likely to be an Aboriginal person, so when you see those threats to young people, and their wellbeing, and the risk around them, I would argue that our budgets are not sufficient enough or proportionate enough to meet our outstanding needs.

Marty Pearce: Now, of course, one of those huge challenges — and, in fact, Scott Morrison addressed this during the election campaign — were the very high rates of Indigenous youth suicide. Gerry Georgatos has written for Policy Forum about this before, about a terrible effect it has on the Indigenous communities and how Indigenous suicides can strain to adults. Quite young people taking their own lives. It is a terribly damning thing to read about, and very sad, as well.

How do policy makers go about tackling that problem?

Tony Dreise: Through, I would suggest, a couple of approaches that I do not see sufficient attention to in our public policy-making processes. The first is the idea of whole-child development. Now, when we, for example, have a conversation about how First Nations young people are tracking academically, we think, 'well, that is the business and the business alone of education systems', but to borrow the old African proverb, it takes a village to raise a child.

We have to give greater concerted thought and action in terms of whole-child development, which means emotionally, spiritually, academically, physically, nutrition, social relationships, allowing our kids to grow up in environments where there is not all this overt and horrid racism. We have to think about whole-child development, which means investment early, and early intervention, and prevention.

It is unlikely to change when all the initiatives are a response to suicide or at the latter-end, if you like, of that young person and the degree of risk. We are not investing enough in our young people, who are vulnerable, marginalised and not well — not well in mind, as well in terms of spirit and body. We have got to invest in those whole-child development approaches.

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The other thing I would add is we need to give stronger thought place-based interventions: invest in communities and empower communities so they get those wrap-around services to those young people before that level of risk starts to escalate.

Marty Pearce: Have you seen any good models of these place-based initiatives, perhaps where communities lead in this kind of change themselves?

Tony Dreise: Well, you have got children's [?? 0:34:56] in the Northern Territory, you've got models now starting to develop around place-based thinking and collective-impact thinking. Collective-impact models emerged out of the United States, out of Stanford, where you adopt a more holistic approach to a place as opposed to a programmatic place [*sic; approach? Ed.*].

This is one of the great failing, I think, of our current public policy outlook as it relates to First Nations Australia — this fixation on programs, programs that are sure way to grow silos. That is one of the things that is literally killing us, in terms of silos where services are not integrated, left and right are not talking. We have got to invest in initiative which bring about that collective impact.

There is the start of the type of thinking through the empowered communities model the Commonwealth is investing in. We need more of it.

Another model that is worth looking at is the Bourke Justice Reinvestment strategy — that is saying to governments, “Your incarceration of our young people is costing societies this. Let's take that cost and reinvest it in the preventative measures so that societies are not bearing that cost.” That is the sort of creative and lateral thinking that we need more or in the Indigenous affairs space.

Marty Pearce: Let's just imagine for a second that Scott Morrison has listened to this podcast — I am sure he does on a regular basis, but you have got his ear right now: what three recommendations would you give to him? What three pieces of policy would you recommend that could change the face and change the nature of the challenges facing our Indigenous communities?

Tony Dreise: My three recommendations would be: back your Indigenous Australians' Minister with all you have got, be courageous and bold in terms of advancing the Uluru Statement from the Heart — it is what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are seeking, and the First Nations People that request ought to be honoured and respected, and, the third, is do not be scared to reimagine the kind of policy approaches to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander [??0:37:31].

I think these orthodoxy, which--; there is a lack of innovation, and reformist zeal, and the same ingredients keep going in and they are expecting a different cake to come out, and we hear every year through the Prime Minister's closing-the-gap report just how

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underwhelming progress is. We should not be waiting decades, upon decades, upon decades to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People enjoying the same human rights as all other Australians, the same opportunities, be it in education, employment, business, et cetera.

Finally, that we get our national story right. We have not had the true national story prevail.

Now, I am an optimist and I have seen, since my days at school going back, I am pleased to see what my children are learning, that I never did. For us, it was Captain Cook and Arthur Philip and the great landings and the great achievements and progress made. For some people, that remains their belief and through their eyes they see Cook and Philip as people who made significant achievements, but we know there is this other story, and this other story is a part of the shared story.

Let's not hide it away anymore. We will need the Prime Minister and other leaders to lead that dialogue, which is respectful and, most importantly, truthful.

Marty Pearce: You said you are an optimist, Tony. Are you hopeful that that can happen?

Tony Dreise: We will see. We will see. Certainly as a scholar and a First Nations Person, someone who has been in the policy sector for many years, nearing three decades now, I will say this: if the government is keen to pursue a bold and positive agenda then, certainly, [Aboriginal word? 0:40:09] will give them every assistance they need.

Marty Pearce: Tony, thank you so much for sharing your insights and expertise today. It has been a pleasure having you on the podcast.

Tony Dreise: Pleasure, thanks.

[interlude 0:40:21-0:40:50]

Marty Pearce: Welcome back and thank you, once again, to Tony Dreise for his time. I really enjoyed that discussion. I got a lot out of it. What about you, Sharon? What did you take from that?

Sharon Bessell: I think it was such an interesting discussion — and well done, Martyn, that was a really great interview. I enjoyed it. Look, there was so much in that interview. Because I work on children's policy, I guess that is always a perspective that I am thinking about things from.

There was a moment where Tony was talking about the experience of the Stolen Generations, how that is intergenerational, and the problems that children and young people face today, and Indigenous children and young people face today, and he just made this comment about the horrible racism that children and, indeed, Indigenous

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People regardless of age face. That comment in his interview has just struck at my heart, really. I mean, it is just shocking to think the way in which Indigenous people face racism on a day-to-day basis, and the way the permeates everything, from the way we address policy through to people's day-to-day experiences of life.

I think that is something that we simply have to address in this country. Perhaps the voice to Parliament taking seriously the Uluru Statement from the Heart is the way to begin that.

Tony also made the point that it is going to take political leadership, and I think that is just essential. We have our first Indigenous Minister for Indigenous affairs, which is a start, but I think it is like gender issues, where women should not be responsible for fixing the structural issues that create gender-based inequality.

Indigenous people cannot be expected to fix the problems that have been created in, as Tony called, a Postcolonial Australia. I think this is something where we, each and every one of us, have to accept responsibility and we have to demand leadership from our political leaders.

Marty Pearce: Yes, quite right. I am interested in what you said there about racism directed towards children. I mean, you do a lot of work on children's policy. What kind of impact does that attitude have on children? I mean, it must be tough enough on adults, but to hear that racism directed to you as a child, it must be terrible to have to live with.

Sharon Bessell: Yes, I think it is a devastating impact. There has been an enormous amount of research that demonstrates the impact of racism. Naomi Priest here, at ANU, has done a lot of that work. I have done a lot of work with children, not specifically with Indigenous children, but in the research that we have done with children, asking them about what matters in terms of feeling supported in their communities, one of the themes that comes up again and again is the importance of relationships, not within family but more broadly.

Children talk about how they feel or how they value themselves or not, depending on the way that other people treat them, their neighbours, the shop keepers, the bus drivers. And so, for Indigenous children when they are facing the sense of being excluded, the sense of being judged and facing racism on a day-to-day basis, it has a continually erosive effect. I think that impacts on children's relationships across all of their life, so it is devastating.

Marty Pearce: Hmm, yes, very good points and many thanks for that, Sharon.

Listeners, we are really keen to hear your thoughts about the discussion we had with Tony. Do get in contact with us. You can reach us on Twitter, where we are

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[@APPSPolicyForum](#). You can email us: podcast@policyforum.net or you can jump on the Facebook group and let us know what you think — we are [PolicyForumPod](#) on Facebook; we would love to see you there. I am there, Julia is there, and we are happy to engage in discussion and chat on there and get your thoughts.

Now, at the end of each week’s podcast, we go over some of your questions and we go over some of your comments and suggestions for future Pods, so let’s crack on with that.

The first one I want to talk about is a piece which was published on our website, [policyforum.net](#). It was called *Riding the rails to safety*. It was written by Cameron Gordon. In it, Cameron takes a look at Canberra’s new light rail transit system, and says, while it has many advantages, “regulators must continue to improve certain aspects of the system to maximise citizen safety”.

There is a comment from Roadrunners45 on Twitter, who wrote: “Good article. Zig-zag crossings are getting more and more popular and they make total sense. Also, getting in a car is one of the most dangerous things that people do so the more we can get people into public transport the better.”

Sharon, have you used Canberra’s new light rail transit system yet?

Sharon Bessell: Martyn, I am so glad you asked me this question. This vexes me. Now, I think the light rail is a great think actually, but it only goes North. I live in the South, so I have not yet ridden it, but I am looking forward to having a free weekend when I can ride up to Gungahlin and ride back again — that would be very exciting.

But the new bus system is terrible for anyone that *[sic.]* lives in the South. It is trying to direct everyone onto the light rail, but I do not live in the North and I am not going to Gungahlin. It took me an hour and 45 minutes to get to work on the bus this morning, so that is an hour longer than it would normally take. It now takes my children an hour and a half to get home from school, instead of the 25 minutes it used to take them so.

Yes, that was a great bit bleat. I think the light rail is a great thing, but for those of us who do not live between Civic and Gungahlin we still need a good transport system and the new timetables are just not doing it.

I think that Roadrunner — or Roadrunners45, is right about the importance of public transport, but if it takes people so much longer to go on public transport than it used to, then they are going to start to think about using cars instead of public transport [[crosstalk 0:46:58](#)] fits purpose.

Marty Pearce: Look, I hear your complaint, Sharon. I feel we are getting fairly micro in our analysis here, but even while you were saying it, producer Julia was nodding along in agreement about your points about just how appalling Canberra’s bus system is now.

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Sharon Bessell: It was very micro and so, for anyone that [*sic.*] that lives outside of Canberra, that was a very tedious moment. I think it speaks to the importance of well-designed public transport.

Marty Pearce: Coming to you live from the Canberra transport bubble.

Sharon Bessell: Absolutely.

Marty Pearce: Okay, so the next one I want to talk about is a podcast, which was called *A Pacific-specific approach to regionalism*, with Meg Keen, and Mat Dornan, and Colin Tukuitonga. Remember that one, Sharon?

Sharon Bessell: I do.

Marty Pearce: It was a good one, wasn't it?

Sharon Bessell: Stellar line-up.

Marty Pearce: Yes. In that episode — it was quite a while ago now, the panel discussed regional cooperation amongst the Pacific Islands and the challenges that the Pacific Islands face in coordinating policy efforts.

We had a comment from Liam Hughes on our podcast group — and Liam has been very active on the podcast group; it has been really nice chatting to him, and he wrote about this podcast: “I learned about a bunch of issues I hadn't considered — how much the Pacific relies on fishing as an industry, for instance. Some fascinating news about things like cooperation of tuna fishing — it means that Pacific tuna industry is the best managed in the world, and how those ideas can be applied to other issues, like climate change?”

Super interesting — what do you think of that, Sharon?

Sharon Bessell: I think it is a great comment from Liam. I think one of the things that that panel did was to, I guess, point to the diversity of the Pacific, the cooperation that is happening there, but also the innovation that takes place.

I think in Australia we often have a very narrow view of the Pacific, either as a tropical paradise where we go for holidays or, perhaps, some sense of it being threatened by climate change — which, of course, it is — or struggling with development, whereas what this panel showed is the ways in which the Pacific Island nations are leading the world. I think it is great to hear about that.

Marty Pearce: Yes, great, so many thanks for that, Liam. That is really appreciating. We are really glad you enjoyed the podcast.

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In the introduction to this podcast, I flagged up that we had changed the rules about how you can get your hands on one of our exclusive Policy Forum Pod, got-99-policy-problems-but-a-brew-ain't-one, mugs, and I would like to pass that on to you now — how you can also get your hands on one of these mugs. As I said, there was an emergency session of the mug-prize-award committee over the weekend.

Sharon Bessell: How did that play out, Martyn, because I want to get my hands on one of these mugs. How are you deciding who gets the mugs? I should add I have got one, but I would like a collection.

Marty Pearce: Well, it is not my decision. This was, obviously, the committee's decision.

Sharon Bessell: Who is the committee? Oh, did you know I am not on the committee myself? So, do share who is on the committee.

Marty Pearce: Well, you have already got a mug, so you would be a vested interest. We cannot put you on the committee. The committee--;

Sharon Bessell: I would say I would be a neutral party, because I have a mug. Anyway, tell us who is on the committee.

Marty Pearce: The committee is made up of various Nobel Prize winners, some world-leading experts on mug-prize-award distribution--

Sharon Bessell: Wow.

Marty Pearce: -and is Chaired — diligently Chaired — by my dog, Archie.

Sharon Bessell: I can think of no better creature, actually, than Archie, to Chair the mug committee.

Marty Pearce: He takes his responsibilities very, very seriously, I have got to say.

Sharon Bessell: That is very, very impressive. I should also just share with our listeners who are probably aware that you are a mad Crystal Palace fan, and I was rather worried that there would be a Crystal Palace logo somewhere on the mug.

Marty Pearce: [laughs]

Sharon Bessell: I have checked it carefully, underneath, inside — there is no sign of it so, listeners, you can safely request a mug, completely free of Crystal Palace paraphernalia.

Marty Pearce: It is completely free, but you have also now given me a really good idea, so than you for that, Sharon.

Sharon Bessell: No!

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Marty Pearce: Anyway, the committee has met, there are now two ways that you can get your hands on the mug. I am going to read this to you — the view of the committee, and hopefully this makes sense.

First of all, the one way that you already know you can get your hands on one of these mugs is you suggest a topic for a podcast that, subsequently, gets made into one here, on Policy Forum Pod.

You will already know to do that, and the way to do that is on our Facebook group, obviously, but the new, second way of doing that is, if you get five of your questions asked on our podcasts, then you can get your hands on one of these mugs. If you get five questions asked on a podcast, you can get your hands on one of our Policy Forum Pod mugs.

Note here, we are not keeping track of how many questions you actually get asked because we are pretty forgetful, so here is how you do it: if you hear one of your questions asked on our podcasts — and that mean both Policy Forum Pod and Democracy Sausage because they quite frequently dip into the questions, as well, then leave a comment under the post on the Facebook group, telling us what number you are up to. Once you get to five, we will send you a mug.

No cheating — we will know about it. We listen to these podcasts, too, so if you hear your question read out on one of our podcasts, in the post on Facebook write 'question 1' and, hopefully, 'question 2', and increasing levels excitement as you get to 'question 5' and, once you get to 'question 5', we will send you one of those mugs. Does that make sense to you, Sharon?

Sharon Bessell: That makes perfect sense.

Marty Pearce: Well, hopefully that makes sense to our listeners, as well. Now, before we wrap up, I would like to do two things quickly. First of all, I would like to welcome some new members to our Facebook group. Hello to Prue Axam, Daniel Etzion, Michelle Wyatt, Isabella Svinos, Tanim's Lounge, Nick Lindsley, Jack Evans, Mark Snow, Inacio Santos, Dan Gregg, and James Baylis — hello to all of you, and special thanks to Dan, Inacio and James who have all given us suggestions for future podcasts. Watch this space, perhaps they may get them made into episodes.

Dan Gregg wrote that he would like to hear something about LGBT issues, Inacio wrote that he would like to hear something about the sustainable economy and James Baylis wrote that he would like to hear how do[ed.] the Middle-East and Africa fit into Australia's conception of the Asia-Pacific. What do you think of those ideas, Sharon?

Sharon Bessell: All fantastic ideas, so looking forward to the Pods that come from them.

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Marty Pearce: Yes, keep your eyes and ears peeled. Let's see if we do make those into future Pods.

Sharon Bessell: The stakes are high for people now.

Marty Pearce: The stakes are very high, yes. If you would like to give us an idea for a future podcast, jump on to the Facebook group, [PolicyForumPod](#). You can also reach us on Titter — we are [@APPSPolicyForum](#) or email us: podcast@policyforum.net.

I would like to say huge thanks to everyone, also, who has given us a review or rated us on iTunes. Please, do that if you get the opportunity to do so. It only takes 30 seconds or so and it will be a big help to us in getting the word out about this podcast.

We will be next week with another Policy Forum Pod, but until then from me, Martyn Pearce, cheerio.

Sharon Bessell: And from me, Sharon Bessell, bye-bye for now.

[closing music 0:54:36-0:54:55]

[audio ends 0:54:55]