

# GREEN

MAGAZINE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GREENS



## Language and Politics



How positive language can impact campaign messages

Abusive language online: should identities be revealed?



Cause and effect: hate-speech and violence

To take the First Dog on the Moon Pledge for Greater Australian Niceness, place one hand upon your heart and the other upon a tea cosy, beloved pet or nearby friend.

Repeat after me:




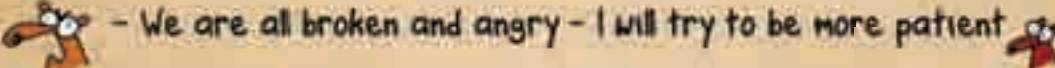
### My Pledge to Make Australia Nice Again

"I (your name here) do hereby solemnly swear to do at least a small something to make Australia a bit nicer at some point in the next little while but without going to too much trouble.

We all remember how things used to be nicer before. (Although I can't remember it exactly myself, I took a lot of drugs in the 80s so it may have been then, it certainly wasn't the 90s. Maybe it was the 50s) and it is important for us, as a nation, to try to recapture the spirit of things being pleasant even if we only imagined it.

Accordingly, I hereby undertake to be nicer.

Specifically, one or more of the nice things I do may possibly include, but is not limited to:

- Baking. Everyone likes baking 
- Tidying up a bit 
- Not biting 
- Having a lie down 
- Spending a moment to remember that patting animals can be just as rewarding as eating them 
- We are all broken and angry - I will try to be more patient 
- Being the very soul of politeness in traffic, at the shops, on the internet 
- Actively undermining the culture of results 
- Saying no to indignant screechiness 
- Bringing the neighbour's bins in for them 
- Saying hello to people 
- Putting the kettle on 

Also I might ----- (add your own nice activity here!)

All in all, I think it sounds lovely and I pledge to get to it as soon as I get a minute. For Australia.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print, sign and stick on fridge, workstation or Immediate Superior's forehead

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the australian greens wish to acknowledge that we are on indigenous ground – this land is the spiritual and sacred place of the traditional owners and their ancestors and continues to be a place of significance. further, we thank them for sharing this land with us and agree to respect their laws and lores.

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In recent months we've seen Tea Party style anti-carbon tax protesters holding signs calling our Prime Minister a witch (and worse) while the opposition leader stands resolutely next to them. Andrew Bolt is facing racial discrimination charges in court, and politicians continue to use our parliament to insult, denigrate and ridicule members of other parties. Isn't it about time to examine the language bandied about in these discussions and the impact it is having on our society? Free speech is something western democracies often proudly hold up as a fundamental right. We can lambast our governments, hold public officials to account, speak freely and advocate for change. But how far is too far? This issue of Green explores the sometimes shocking lows of the discourse in our government

and public arenas, as well as the power of language for transformation, inspiration and change.

Other recent events have, conversely, left us speechless. The natural disasters that rocked Japan, followed swiftly by a nuclear disaster that continues to rock the world, has us extend our thoughts to all who have been impacted by such devastation and loss. In the face of such tragedy, we are somewhat lost for words. While there was little time for us to include thorough analysis of the situation in Japan, we will endeavour do so in our next edition of the magazine. In the meantime, we hope the discussion on these pages offers a good starting point for important debate around the language at use in our community. As always, we look forward to hearing your thoughts.

**Lefa Singleton Norton - Editor**  
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As a Greens voter and financial contributor, I generally support your views and policies. However, after having read the article Killing Bees in your latest issue (#33 Summer 2011), I felt I must provide some balancing comments.

While it is true that some scientific studies have implicated the neonicotinoid class of insecticides as playing a role in the colony collapse disorder (CCD, which remains a nebulous description of symptoms) occurring in North America and Europe, it is also true to say that there is no scientific consensus as to the actual cause of CCD. Many other factors have also been implicated, such as poor nutrition in bees, parasites, fungal diseases etc. But your article points the blame squarely at insecticides and calls for a ban on the neonicotinoids when there is no conclusive scientific evidence to do so. Indeed, one could even say there is some evidence absolving insecticides given all the suspected causes for CCD are in Australia (except the Varroa destructor mite) and New Zealand, but there is no CCD here or in NZ; if the neonicotinoids are the cause, then why is CCD not here also?

I understand that community voices are needed to bring issues like this to the media's attention.

However, I believe it is damaging to the reputation of the Greens to be pushing a view that could be seen as extremist and not based on sound science. Even invoking the precautionary principle does not justify the call for a ban on these insecticides, in my view. Stronger evidence is needed before taking such drastic action. (And no, I have no link, financial or otherwise, to chemical companies.)

And calling for a ban on a particular chemical simply because it is banned overseas is not suitable justification either. If it was, then the corollary would be true: that chemicals registered overseas should also be registered here.

WAYNE LODGE  
*Reid, ACT*



Two articles in Issue 33 of *Green* made me sit up. The articles are Ethics of Food and Killing Bees.

The Ethical Food article displayed an absolute bias in favour of meat eating, and while it gave a lengthy description of the process to grow, harvest and distribute a bunch of asparagus, there was no such detail about the true, torturous journey of any animal classed as food. No word of the great volumes of water they need or the huge amounts of grain and the vast areas of land needed – all to produce

uneconomic second-hand food. No word, in fact, on the disgusting lengths to which we will go to maximise a profit. We confine gentle, sentient creatures in areas hardly their own size and feed them (rubbish) food foreign to them, until they are trundled off to their slaughter.

As if there are not enough of these outrageous factory farm systems already, there is another new horror in the form of a battery dairy (prison camp). It is already happening in the UK and there's talk of a start in New Zealand, housing thousands of dairy cows that will hardly ever see the light of day. Imagine the slurry, waste and excrement from these compacted practises, as well as the methane that contributes to climate change! I guess a bit of 'genetic modifying' will sort that out. Ethics of Food? Loved that article!

Then the article Killing Bees. It's not just Bayer chemicals killing them, though Bayer seems to be doing its damndest to have a chemical that will kill anything that moves. And we, of course, use these sprays on our gardens and yards with absolute abandon. We are also responsible for their decline, as we destroy the trees, shrubs and grasses and cause these poor creatures to travel great distances for their foods. Then we rob them blind.

Much reading needs to be done to see the big picture.

I was very pleased to see the article on Veganism in the same issue. Meat and dairy consumption is unsustainable for our planet.

JEAN DAGLISH  
*Redlands QLD*



Jeff Perz writes in issue 33 of *Green* that "going vegan is easy". This is not my experience.

If you're someone's guest, at a conference, or trying to find food on the run, it's a challenge to find a substantial vegan meal. And if you're wheat- or gluten-intolerant, good luck.

Being vegan is a laudable choice, but like being car free or buying nothing new, it is not always easy.

Neither is it always the only sustainable choice. My neighbour's chooks turn compost scraps into eggs. How can eating these daily deliveries be bad for the planet?

FRASER BRINDLEY  
*Victorian Greens*



The current human population is now in the most unique situation for at least 100,000 years because the decisions we make over the next five or so will determine whether we become extinct gradually or quickly.



## Join the Rapid Response Campaign Team!

Be part of the Australian Greens Rapid Response Campaign Team

### THE PLAN:

The Australian Greens are looking to build a national network of individuals who want to take up the challenge of responding to the misinformation and hate campaigns being waged by radio shock jocks and other sections of the community and media. This is critical work that will take you as little as a few minutes each month, depending on how many times you choose to act.

### HOW IT WILL WORK:

We know that many people don't have the time to monitor and respond to the issues that arise in the media or that they come across them too late to respond. Therefore, we will alert you about issues and reporting in the media that need our response, along with contact phone numbers and addresses, and send you key information which you can use to guide your reply on the issues you care about. You then call the radio station or write to the relevant newspaper.

### HOW TO BECOME INVOLVED:

Please email the following information to [chris.harris@greens.org.au](mailto:chris.harris@greens.org.au) or call on 1800 017 011.

What we need:

- Name
- Email
- Mobile number
- Your city/town and postcode
- How many alerts per month you wish to receive
- What issues motivate you

We will then be in contact when issues arise.

Help to combat the shock jocks' forces of darkness!

We have reached plague proportions because of our intelligence and capacity to use technology. Our problem is simple to see, but will be difficult to solve. The Green movement has our best options, but they may not be enough. We not only have to cut back on the massive over-consumption that we enjoy in the Western world but we have to dramatically reduce the world's population. We cannot tell third world countries to restrict themselves to no more than one or two children per family whilst we continue to massively consume the world's resources.

The problem and solution is clear: have we the will power to adopt it?

E.W. HAWTHORN  
WA Greens



I really look forward to receiving *Green* magazine and issue 33 was very informative about some of the food we eat and the kangaroo issues. However I was gobsmacked when I read Peter Marshall's (member of the Braidwood Greens) letter to the editor.

Peter obviously has not realised the absolute necessity for the Greens to push the climate change issue; pollution and environmental degradation is the reason the climate all over the world is changing. Pollution and environmental degradation is releasing more CO2 into the atmosphere, which is causing global warming.

If Peter can't grasp the connections I think he should go and join one

of the parties who don't believe that pollution and environmental damage is a major cause of climate change.

TRISH BROWN  
Sou-west Greens



Thank you to the Greens for their persistent action to get a bill through parliament on physician-assisted dying. The issue has the support of 75-80% of the community, based on current surveys. For the Liberals and Labor to block these bills is undemocratic and denies the right of the terminally ill to have the choice of a peaceful death.

I assure the Green team that there are dedicated bands of supporters, mostly seniors, out in the community talking for change. Whether known as voluntary euthanasia, dying with dignity or assisted suicide, laws will change in Australia as they already have in other countries. The Physician-Assisted Dying Bill must be successful at sometime in the future and much unnecessary suffering will be avoided.

AVIGALE  
BISCHARD  
Ballarat, VIC



**ED: Thank you to all our letter writers. We encourage you to write a letter to the editor on any issue. Letters are requested to be no longer than 400 words and will be edited for length. Please email them to [greenmag@greens.org.au](mailto:greenmag@greens.org.au) ▲**

# hate speech and violence

dan coss unveils the truth behind hate speech and its relationship to violence

If politicians are intent on whipping up a lynch mob to divert attention from their own culpability, it is not arsonists who should be hanging from lamp-posts but greenies.” *Miranda Devine.*

“This is not some nice little debate. This is war.” *Tom DeWeese, American Policy Center, a think tank linked to Exxon-Mobil and Koch Industries.*<sup>1</sup>

Hate speech seems to pose three serious threats to the green movement. Firstly, it may lead to acts of political violence directed against politicians, leaders or activists. Secondly, hate speech undermines the constructive political discourse we need in order to deal with climate change. Thirdly, hate speech is the leading edge of a novel species of fascism that is emerging in the USA.

How is hate speech different from angry political speech? For our purposes here, hate speech is any public communication that incites or justifies violence against a social group. It would not, for example, include a death threat made for an idiosyncratic reason, against a sole politician by a legally deranged individual. Nor does it include the legitimate argumentation of Parliamentary question time.

We are dealing with hate speech when death threats are made towards a group (or an individual based on his or her membership of a group); for example, when directed against US President Barack Obama on the basis that he is an African-American. I propose that hate speech is present in Miranda Devine’s slippery quote above, in which she sneaks a proposal to lynch greenies behind a hypothetical IF-THEN clause.

Hate speech is shifting our culture, creating a social licence to commit political violence against people who belong to designated groups: Jews, greenies, Muslims, progressives of any stripe. It is part of the deliberate political programme of the extreme right in the USA, and is funded by various ‘philanthropists’, most notably the Koch brothers<sup>2</sup>, who own America’s biggest private corporation, Koch Industries (a

major polluter). Rob Stein, a Democrat insider, analysed the conservative echo chamber (echo chambers result when media outlets repeat the reports of other media outlets) in 2004 and estimated that they received more than US\$300 million annually.

The issue of hate speech and violence crystallised early this year, after the attempted assassination of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords. On 8 January 2011 an assassin shot Congresswoman Giffords in the head, killed six people and injured another 13; it has been frequently noted that his motivations may have been inspired, at least in part, by right-wing hate speech – especially given that Giffords is widely hated for being Jewish, pro-choice and supporting community solar energy (and despite her relatively conservative positions on immigration and in support of gun rights).

Fox News successfully campaigned to strip the Giffords assassination of political meaning. Fox and its political wing – the Republican Party – painted the assassin as an exceptional case, deranged either by mental illness or “extreme” ideology. They used the ‘Palin defence’, which is that when they call for people to kill the president, the word kill has a rhetorical function and is thus not an incitement to violence.

The best readily available study of political violence in the US is the Secret Service’s Exceptional Case Study Project.<sup>3</sup> This five-year long project looked into every person who attacked, or attempted to attack, a prominent US public official since 1949.

Bryan Vossekuil, the Secret Service’s former National Threat Assessment Center Director, warned against media agendas that explain assassins as having ideologically caused ‘political’ motives or as being ‘deranged’. He concludes: “This is a narrow and inaccurate view of assassination.” The most common factor (across 97% of cases) is that offenders had a “history of grievances and resentments”.

The point is that the culture of hate erodes the social taboo against political violence and reinforces the ‘intuitive’ worldview of the mob. Professor



**“The point is that the culture of hate erodes the social taboo against political violence and reinforces the ‘intuitive’ worldview of the mob.”**



Rod Tiffen of the University of Sydney says that the political parties and the Murdoch media work in tandem to drive populism. He writes, "Together they form an outrage industry that absents proportion, reason and reasonableness, and where it is difficult – soon, perhaps, near impossible – to have a measured debate of policy options."<sup>4</sup>

The US Department of Homeland Security monitors domestic terrorism threats and warns of a dramatic rise in "right-wing extremism" in the USA.<sup>5</sup> It blames the rise of extremism on both domestic and global changes. The key domestic causes include the election of a black man to the office of president and the economic stress caused by the financial crisis. Global factors that stimulate extremism are largely to do with the relative decline of the US in relation to China and India.

The Department of Homeland Security report also points to specific shifts in patterns of thinking and organisation within the extremist community. Extremists are becoming better at recruiting, by mixing their political asks with "accusatory" language, such as blaming the recession on the Jews. They are also becoming more unreasonable and paranoid. Fox's Glenn Beck, for example, apparently thinks the US Government is planning to allow a foreign country to invade America and enslave its white, Christian citizens.

David Neiwert is a US journalist who specialises in investigations of extremists. His 2009 book *The Eliminationists: How Hate Talk Radicalized the American Right* explains how the conservatives got as crazy as they are and where they are headed.

*The Eliminationists* cites the story of Jim Adkisson, who killed two people and wounded seven in an act of extremist political violence in July 2008. Adkisson wrote, "Know this if nothing else: This was a hate crime. I hate the damn left-wing liberals ... Who I wanted to kill was every Democrat in the Senate & House..."

Neiwert believes it is a logical step from the right-wing extremism of Fox News and sections of The Republican party to get to violence. If greenies and liberals are in a global conspiracy with climate scientists, Jews, bankers and the UN to enslave the West, then it makes 'logical' sense to eliminate them. Ever since

the Exceptional Case Study Project, the Secret Service has implemented protective security using behavioural analysis of these 'logical' precursors to assassination.

Things have gotten far worse since Neiwert wrote his book and the Department of Homeland Security wrote the *Rightwing Extremism* brief. In 2010, the number of active hate groups in the United States topped 1,000 for the first time, according to the Southern Poverty Law Centre. Astonishingly, this includes 330 militias, the paramilitary arm of the Patriot Movement.

It is clear that some private companies in the US are prepared to pollute the peaceful political climate in the West, in order to keep polluting the atmospheric climate. Fox News and other media are the echo chamber that reinforces the toxic slander that greenies are a treacherous threat to society. A climate petition sponsored by Liberal MP Dennis Jensen carries this comment from a Buxton, Queensland, resident called Kevin Middleton: "Taitors (sic) should be hung!"<sup>6</sup> ▲

*Thanks to Charles Richardson, Jan Bryant, Tim Hollo, Guy Rundle and Deborah Cass for their comments.*

**Dan Cass joined the Greens in 1995. He is a lobbyist for climate action advocates and renewable energy companies.**

<sup>1</sup> Janet Smith, "Earth Worship: Environmentalism Seen as Police State Precursor", Intelligence Report, Southern Poverty Law Centre, Winter 2008, Issue Number: 132 <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2008/winter/earth-worship> Accessed: 21 March 2011

<sup>2</sup> See: [greenpeace.org/kochindustries](http://greenpeace.org/kochindustries)

<sup>3</sup> Fein RA, Vossekuil B, Assassination in the United States: an operational study of recent assassins, attackers, and near-lethal approachers. *J Forensic Sci* 1999; 44(2): 321-333.

<sup>4</sup> Rod Tiffen, "We, the populists: The perils of populism", *Griffith REVIEW*, Edition 31: Ways of Seeing, Autumn 2011

<sup>5</sup> *Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment*

<sup>6</sup> <http://petitions.listentous.org.au/signatories/index/pid/16> Accessed: 21 March 2011



Earlier this year, an assassin shot Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords in the head, killed six people and injured another thirteen.

PHOTO: CC LICENSE WIKIMEDIA, UNITED STATES CONGRESS

# parliament and language

marion rae discusses the use and misuse of language and hateful speech in our parliament, the media and society in general



Just another day at the ideas factory  
“Have you heard? The Greens eat babies.”  
A lot of nonsense is written about us. Much of it can be ignored. Some of it breeds ignorance and can be countered. A smaller but highly toxic element of commentary, often masquerading as news, runs the risk of inciting communal violence.

A healthy democracy should feature spirited debate, but hate speech endorses bigotry and allows injustice to fester. Allowing the right-wing trolls, shock jocks and wannabe controversial “journalists” to take charge of debate and guide the messages delivered by both old, tired major political parties also has an impact on the nation’s future.

If the government plays it safe and fails to promote innovative

21st century policy, such as a pollution tax that genuinely makes polluters pay and invests in clean, renewable energy or harnessing profits from Australia’s minerals wealth in a sovereign fund for the needs of future generations, then we are all left unprepared and ill-equipped.

Add to that an Opposition leader who fails to keep Alan Jones, reputedly “Australia’s most popular talkback presenter”, at arms length and you have a recipe for intellectual mediocrity.

Deadly floods, cyclones and bushfires have been a clarion call for shock jocks to personalise the debate in an attempt to counter evidence that global warming is causing catastrophes that are more frequent and more severe. Those shock jocks, endorsed by the Coalition, have inspired a wave of anonymous threats and cowardly rants, as well as a plague of climate change denial that cheapens debate and threatens to derail efforts to work towards a healthier, cleaner, safer economy – for all.

Neil Mitchell of 3AWRadio said on the morning of 17 January: “I would take Bob Brown and put him in cage with the looters and scam artists and put him in a river.” The 3AWRadio website was more direct: “Put Brown in a cage.” Mitchell’s fans, incited to make the same threat, began to make the same threat in a series of phone calls.

As Bob Brown wrote in Memo for a saner world, “Violence is the bully’s ally.” Anonymous threats are even more cowardly.

The Australian Federal Police was very pleased to be notified. Preventing and combating communal violence – defined in law as activities that are directed to promoting violence between different groups of persons in the Australian community so as to endanger the peace, order or good government of the Commonwealth – is their duty.

The previous day, Australian Greens Leader Bob Brown called for the full 40% mining tax on coal mining industry super profits, as recommended by Treasury, to be imposed with half set aside for funding recovery and rebuilding after future natural catastrophes in Australia.

“It is unfair that the cost is put on all taxpayers, not the culprits. Burning coal is a major cause of global warming,” Senator Brown said.

A week earlier, the Greens joined people right across Australia in offering our condolences to the people and communities who had lost friends and loved ones and wished Queenslanders as speedy a recovery as possible from the wild weather that was besetting them.

And yes, Senator Brown did visit Queensland – not as part of the media circus that drew resources away from immediate rescue and recovery tasks but as a private visit to Greens supporters

who had been affected by the devastating floods.

Tony Abbott and his colleagues Julie Bishop and Sophie Mirabella upped the ante last month when they stood in front of placards reading “JuLIAR ... Bob Brown’s bitch” and “Ditch the Witch” at an anti-carbon tax rally outside parliament in Canberra. Those paragons of the Liberal Party chose to represent and broadcast that message to Australian viewers.

Abbott called for a revolt and was, indeed, revolting. He was joined on the lawns in front of Parliament House by the Nationals Senate Leader Barnaby Joyce and federal Nationals Leader Warren Truss, anti gun law lobbyists, representatives of Lavoisier which disputes mainstream climate science, former One Nation leader

**“Those shock jocks, endorsed by the Coalition, have inspired a wave of anonymous threats and cowardly rants, as well as a plague of climate change denial that cheapens debate and threatens to derail efforts to work towards a healthier, cleaner, safer economy – for all.”**



PIC CREDIT: AAP/IMAGE

Pauline Hanson and representatives of the anti-Semitic Australian League of Rights, among others.

Hate speech is not new.

After the Victorian bushfires, Miranda Devine said, “It is not the arsonists who should be hanging from lamp-posts but greenies” and had her rhetoric published with an image of Senator Brown swinging by a noose. MediaWatch condemned her “Green ideas must take the blame for deaths” column as hate-mongering. The Press Council described her as dogmatic and confrontational and said “it’s also possible that her claimed facts would turn out to be wrong.”

Now promoted as a “leading columnist” with News Ltd, Devine had the gall to say “Hatetweeps should be run out of twitter” in a tweet on 14 March 2011. Pot, kettle.

Andrew Bolt also played a part in weak-minded tub-thumping, then and now. And he is also known to be spectacularly wrong – as in his claim that 800 people turned out in Melbourne on 12 March this year to protest for a carbon price mechanism that will make the big polluters pay and compensate average households, when it was actually 8000 and only a few hundred turned up at an anti-carbon tax rally down the road.

At least Bolt didn’t go as far as wanting to hang people from lamp-posts or put them in a cage. Small mercies. He didn’t dissuade his listeners from having views informed by misreporting of events. Nor did he attempt to explain causal factors facing Australian homes, farms and businesses.

Stripped bare of the fear, Australians prefer a polluters’ tax by a margin of 3-1 over a Tony Abbott-style plan to pay polluters, a Galaxy poll of 1,036 people across Australia on 18-20 March, commissioned by the Greens, shows.

In contrast to the 58% that believe it better to tax the big polluters, just 17% consider it more effective to pay incentives to the big polluters as a way of encouraging them to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Our party covers a great spectrum of ideas. We can help an informed debate occur, on climate change or other issues that get the reactionaries riled up – such as the right to equal marriage or access to euthanasia, both of which have majority support in the community, or protecting our mighty forests.

The Australian Greens believe that people want to see a contest of ideas, rather than a head-butting contest. The News Ltd media rolls out headlines about the nation “tearing itself apart”. We see diversity.

We receive all kinds of missives, be they orchestrated by the right or otherwise, threatening or downright stupid. Many Greens receive verbal, and sometimes physical, threats.

Shots have been fired in Senator Brown’s direction and anti-logging camps raided, in the 1980s, and a local shotgun owner fired in the air just last month during the gifting of his Tasmanian property Oura Oura to Bush Heritage Australia.

We have seen it before and we will see it again, but we will not be silenced. ▲

**Marion Rae is Director of Media for Australian Greens Leader Bob Brown**

# power of the positive

holly hammond of the change agency shares the power of positive language and messages in campaigns and activism



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One of the most widely known and acclaimed political speeches in history is Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech. In this speech, King defined a future beyond racism and tied the struggle for African American civil rights to the broader American dream.

In the first part of the speech, King eloquently outlined the "sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent" – of police brutality, repression, exploitation and disenfranchisement. He emphasised the urgent need for change. In the second part of the speech he presented his dream of a future beyond racism: "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'"

With references to the American dream, tenets of liberalism and the Bible, King created a picture of a world almost beyond imagining in the context of a deeply divided nation characterised by bitter racial prejudice. He held out a vision that "we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood."

Would the 'I have a dream' speech have been such an effective rallying cry if King had stopped at the end of the first part? Would this speech continue to resonate so strongly without a positive vision, delivered with conviction and emotion? I think not. A positive vision, which can unite a social movement and invite others to be part of it, can be key to creating progressive social change.

We are familiar with the negative fear-mongering of conservative politicians and right-wing shock jocks. We know the impact this kind of rhetoric can have on some people, including a tendency to cling to the status quo and resist change. I think we on the other side of politics need to be mindful of not engaging in similar communication styles.

For example, many activists in the climate movement focus on educating people about the

reality of climate change and the likely consequences of inaction. Although it is important that people have an understanding of what's going on, we can sometimes start to tell a 'very bad things will happen if we don't act' story. This sounds scary, hard and overwhelming. The impact can be denial, avoidance and shutting down – all understandable reactions to unpleasant information. The alternative is the 'good things will happen if we act' story. Painting a picture of a positive vision brings this story to life.

The Transition Towns movement has been especially effective at portraying a positive vision, and providing opportunities for people to participate in making it happen. In the Transition Handbook Rob Hopkins writes "It is one thing

**In the second part of the speech (King) presented his dream of a future beyond racism: "I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.'"**

to campaign against climate change and quite another to paint a compelling and engaging vision of a post-carbon world in such a way as to enthuse others to embark on a journey towards it. We are only just beginning to scratch the surface of the power of a positive vision of an abundant future: one that is energy-lean, time-rich, less stressful, happier and healthier" (The Transition Handbook, Rob Hopkins, 2008, page 93).

A positive vision relates to two things hard-headed activists may dismiss as unimportant: imagination and hope. In order to engage in social action most people need to believe their actions will make a difference. Articulating exactly what that difference could look like in the world increases the likelihood that people will make the effort. Activists often try to rally people around a problem – something bad that's happening, or going to happen. The civil rights movement similarly arose in response to problems. However, it was a shared vision of positive change that sustained the movement through the many hard years of mistreatment. If we stop at the level of problems, without defining a vision and proposing solutions, we can leave people depressed and despondent.



PIC CREDIT: CC LICENSED FLICKR USER US NATIONAL ARCHIVES

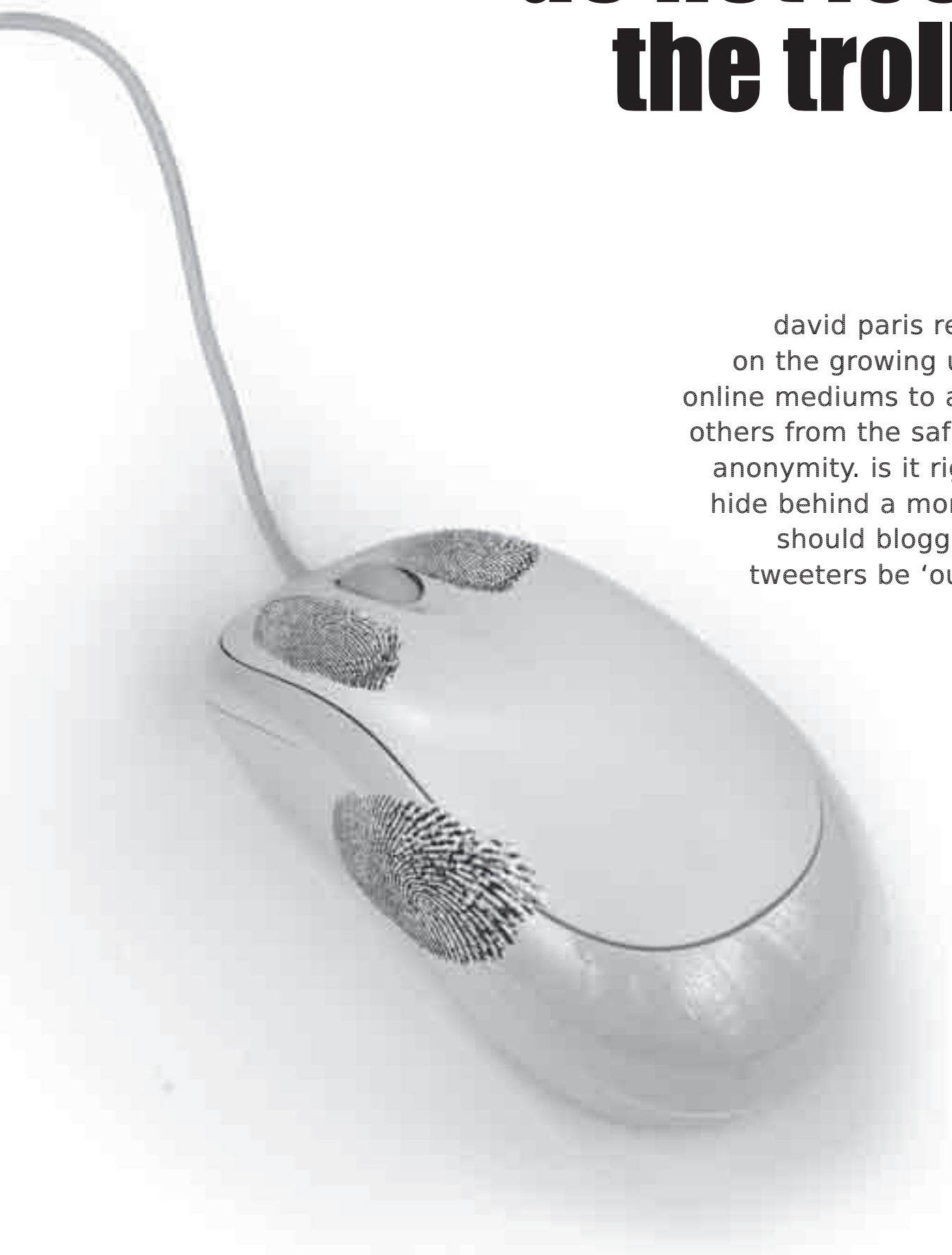
Cognitive linguist George Lakoff challenges progressives to use language that reflects our values and worldview. Frames are “mental structures that shape the way we see the world” (Don’t Think of an Elephant, 2004, page 3). Our frames define “common sense” for us – if information doesn’t fit our view of the world, it tends to bounce off. Language “activates” frames, by bringing up associations and memories linked to values and cultural stories. This means that using the language of our opponents, even when arguing against them, serves to reinforce their frames.

Lakoff encourages progressives to reframe public debate by intentionally communicating from values,

rather than at the level of policy or technical detail. Progressive values are widely held values. Lakoff argues that all people have internalised conservative and progressive values and frames, and either can be activated depending on the language used in political discourse. Conservative opinion leaders consistently portray progressive views as marginal – and the Greens as extreme. We can play into their hands by focusing on technical ideas that few people understand. Or, like Martin Luther King, we can connect to broadly held values and communicate hope, inspiration and a compelling vision of a better future. ▲

# do not feed the trolls

david paris reports  
on the growing use of  
online mediums to attack  
others from the safety of  
anonymity. is it right to  
hide behind a moniker?  
should bloggers or  
tweeters be 'outed'?





**D**espite the staggering quantity and quality of information at our fingertips, the deterioration of both the tone and substance of public debate is nowhere more evident than it is online. Even the most passionate discussions in person seldom give rise to the fury we see across our computer screens.

It's a subject that has been hotly debated in recent weeks, and further inflamed by the furore surrounding Opposition Leader Tony Abbott's appearance at the No Carbon Tax rally outside Parliament House, with a backdrop not befitting the alternative Prime Minister.

In the early days of the internet, online discussions and communities were the exclusive domain (ahem) of the geek. As first blogs, then MySpace, then Facebook and now Twitter reshape the way we communicate with friends and strangers alike, we're seeing vast numbers of people launching themselves into a new common space that is yet to develop standards of etiquette and widely accepted social norms. Lord of the Flies on an island of ones and zeros.

Safe from face-to-face scrutiny, people online are behaving in a manner that bears more than a passing resemblance to an alcohol-fuelled shedding of self-consciousness. Affected by what psychologist John Suler termed the Online Disinhibition Effect, people are expressing aspects of their personality that they could not otherwise explore, or dissociating themselves from their own actions entirely. They're brave enough to be forward to that person they're attracted to. They say what they think. They type without thinking. And they are getting ever more vitriolic, and, yes, violent.

This serves to dissuade participation, or compel other contributors to remain anonymous as well. Voices that dare to dissent in strongholds of ignorance are abused and belittled. As in the broader media, snappy soundbites overpower reason and analysis. Being right is irrelevant; the chorus of derision or praise for the hilarity of your tormentor in the subsequent comments is what matters.

The egalitarianism, anonymity and independence of the internet coupled with the explosion of social networking means there are far fewer barriers to communicating directly with whomever we wish. MPs, high profile activists and academics are being targeted personally and viciously. The noble ambition of openness and accountability is being threatened by

those who forget that there is always a real human at the other end of their tirade.

Wikipedia defines "trolling" online as "posting inflammatory, extraneous, or off-topic messages in an online community, such as an online discussion forum, chat room, or blog, with the primary intent of provoking other users into a desired emotional response or of otherwise disrupting normal on-topic discussion." It is being used ever more explicitly as a tactic to disrupt conversation, to either derail a discussion or to incite the recipient or other participants to lose their temper, giving the "troll" their gotcha moment of triumph.

As more and more of our political debate is conducted online, by more and more people, we Greens need to realise that our principles of non-violence and participatory democracy are being tested in ways that many of us may not be familiar with.

We're at the leading edge of political debate and change advocacy in Australia, and are more influential than ever.

We are speaking out on issues that are contentious, controversial and confronting. Those that oppose us are more motivated than ever to attack and discredit us by any means possible.

It can be exhausting, but we must not surrender our spaces to those disruptions. We must maintain a safe and positive environment in our own online spaces, utilise the same sort of safe meeting practices

we would in a face-to-face situation, and dismiss deliberate attempts to sabotage the discussion.

If every conversation we participate in, in every forum we participate in, overwhelmingly consists of thoughtful, positive and respectful discussion, and the bait is never taken, the aggressors will go elsewhere. Our debates should be meritocratic, where no matter how passionate the discussion becomes and no matter who is making the argument we focus on the evidence and the validity of the ideas.

If we avail ourselves of the opportunity to participate in discussions in more forums, we can "virally" propagate the same ethic. It won't be easy, and it won't be quick. But in this brave new world of online communication, the nascent culture is there for the shaping. We can demonstrate the kind of societal transformation we aim to achieve in the world by exhibiting it online. With a few thoughtful keystrokes and clicks, we can start right now. ▲

**“Safe from face-to-face scrutiny, people online are behaving in a manner that bears more than a passing resemblance to an alcohol-fuelled shedding of self-consciousness.”**

# president by popular appointment

at an australian republican movement dinner in canberra late last year, bob brown talked about having a plebiscite to determine whether australians support a republic. a plebiscite would be an attempt to seek consensus by setting aside the long-standing question of how the president is to be chosen. in this article, political scientist mike pepperday suggests a possible way of achieving consensus on the issue of choosing the president, which could then pave the way to a republic

**T**he hold-up with Australia's becoming a republic is disagreement over the method of choosing the governor-general or president. The current, monarchical, method is prescribed in section 2 of the constitution:

"A Governor-General appointed by the Queen shall be Her Majesty's representative in the Commonwealth, and shall have and may exercise in the Commonwealth during the Queen's pleasure, but subject to this Constitution, such powers and functions of the Queen as her Majesty may be pleased to assign to him."

These are the words that stand in the way of our becoming a republic. This power to appoint and dismiss the GG is the only remnant of power the Queen has. This vestigial power is what the quarrel has been about since the early nineties. To give effect to her power in practice, the Prime Minister consults informally with the UK government then writes to the Queen proposing a candidate and she writes back appointing the person as GG.

A republic, we say, is where the people are sovereign. Do we take this as a real definition or is it just a nice sentiment? If we take it seriously, then to make the people sovereign, we would have to replace "Queen" with "People". There are about two dozen mentions of the monarch in the Constitution but as far as appointment of the GG is concerned there would be only two replacements. Section 2 would read:

"A Governor-General appointed by the Queen People shall be Her Majesty's representative in the Commonwealth, and shall have and may exercise in the Commonwealth during the Queen's People's pleasure..."

Those two replacements would transfer to the people the Queen's sovereignty regarding the GG's appointment. The transfer would be quite complete as there are no other provisions concerning the appointment in the Constitution. Hey presto, the stumbling block to becoming a republic is removed!

Would this almost trivial alteration really resolve the question that divides republicans and disrupted

the 1999 referendum? And if it is so simple, why hasn't it been considered? There is a complex and unedifying answer to these questions.

If a republic is where the people are sovereign then to move towards a republic we must replace the monarch with the people. If there is something wrong with this concept, let it be pointed out and we need say no more. However, having the people replace the Queen must be the starting point. The reports of two public enquiries (1995 Turnbull enquiry; 2004 Senate enquiry) did not even mention it. If there are reasons why the people should not replace the Queen, they should be openly stated.

Most Australians don't realise that the 1999 referendum would have replaced the Queen with the leader of the federal Opposition. Under the legislation proposed in federal parliament, the PM was to seek the Opposition leader's approval for his or her candidate. Instead of a GG appointed by a hereditary, apolitical monarchy, we were to become a 'republic' with a president chosen by the power brokers of the two major parties. In the 1999 referendum we were asked if we wanted this political pawn as the replacement for the Queen. Though the voters may not have quite known what was going on, they did smell a rat and the referendum failed.

If all we did was switch those two words in Section 2, how would appointment work in practice? Just as at present. Instead of the PM writing a letter to the Queen, he would write to the people – a postal vote. If the number of votes agreeing exceeded the number against, the candidate would be duly sworn in as GG. No campaign; no politicians.

No constitutional reform is implied. We would still be a monarchy and if for some reason the process proved unsatisfactory, we could change it, even give the appointment power back to the Queen. If it was satisfactory the states could adopt the same procedure for their governors. There would be no effect on our ability, or inability, to adopt any of the 'models' that have been discussed for the last 15 years.

Yet there is actually no need for any of those models in order to become a republic. All that is needed is to replace all the other constitutional mentions of the monarch with "People". They don't carry any significant meaning. The context sometimes requires a variation on a simple substitution but no difficulty or substantial deviation. If we want to change the name then "President" would have to replace "Governor-General" where it appears.

Job done. In these two stages we could become a republic without complex constitutional change and parliament would continue to have no role in choosing the head of state.

We have been brainwashed in Australia that there are only two ways to choose a president: either parliament appoints or else the people elect. Why such extremes? What about the middle ground? What about parliament elects or people appoint? In Germany and Italy the parliament elects. Their

sky has not fallen; it is a viable process. But in Australia it was ignored: under the 1999 referendum, parliament was supposed to obediently appoint the person cooked up by their leaders. Not only would the people have no say but in practice the parliamentarians would also have no say. To justify this our leaders never tired of pointing how absolutely ghastly it would be if the people were to elect the president. The moderate in-between possibilities were ignored.

Of the two moderate options, parliamentary election of the GG would require some re-writing of the constitution whereas popular appointment requires only a switch of two words. Popular appointment also has no influence on the possibility of any alternative model being introduced in the future.

The two extreme models continue to dominate the debate, such as it is. The polarisation suits those who hope one day to revive the 1999 parliament-appointment model. Although they know that popular election is politically impossible and will never happen, they hold it up as a dreaded bogeyman to bolster support for parliamentary appointment. Serious consideration of moderate options would undermine the dichotomy.

Neither of the two extreme models is acceptable. Popular election is not acceptable to parliament so will never get to referendum. Parliamentary appointment, on the other hand, might succeed at referendum if both parties supported it. But at best a 1999 re-run would only scrape in with the result that a narrow majority would celebrate victory over a large minority. The losers would declare it a sham, and might campaign against states becoming republics. A fine start to a new republic.

When East Timor voted for independence in 1998 everyone said it had to be a clear majority. Their 78% is the sort of consensus we should look for. Popular appointment might achieve it because it is better than Queen's appointment and no one actually loses, whatever their republican preferences.

What countries use popular appointment? None do for the head of state but it is how judges are appointed to the supreme court of Japan and how the judges in half the states of the US are appointed. In the US the process was adopted in state after state because of problems with popular election of judges. (Search "Missouri Plan".)

Popular appointment would be a straightforward, moderate way to accurately transfer the Queen's sovereignty to the people. It would leave the conventions evolved over centuries undisturbed and provide for a sovereign people to legitimise their head of state in a dignified way. It should be acceptable to all republicans and thus break the stalemate. ▲

*For more information on popular appointment, see the list of FAQs at <http://moourl.com/FAQS> or contact the author at [mike.pepperday@gmail.com](mailto:mike.pepperday@gmail.com)*

# europaean experiences

balance of power for the greens in  
europe - report from the political  
exchange of anna reynolds

**T**he Greens are not a party of Government.” So claimed Prime Minister Julia Gillard in March. It’s a view expressed by others who appreciate a minority role for the Greens, but think anything more is not a good fit for the party. Some of the doubters are political opponents, but some are in the ranks of the Greens – some who feel comfortable being a party of advocacy, not one of government.

For many Greens, however, it’s clear that with so much reform and innovation needed in the world, being in government has to be our goal. But how do we best prepare for such a role? How can we be sure that getting the Greens into government will actually deliver good results?

These questions are being asked by green parties around the world, as I discovered when I travelled to Europe in October 2010. I was keen to learn about the experiences of green parties when they become part of a governing coalition – where has it happened, what have greens achieved and what have been the lessons learned from having hands on the levers of power?

What surprised me was that green participation in government at the national level is surprisingly common. Over the last twenty years, green parties have participated in government in 17 European countries: Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Georgia, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

As 2011 begins, there are green politicians in the national governments of Finland and Latvia, and in the process of leaving the government in Ireland. Green parties have also participated in governments in Burkina Faso, Guinea Bissau, Mauritius, Kenya and Vanuatu. There are also, of course, many thousands of green councillors and dozens of green mayors working in local governments. My research, however, focuses on green experiences in national level governments.

The journey to government benches is very different in each case study, but a pattern emerges of three distinct models of participation in government.

- In the 1990s in Eastern Europe there were a number of environment ministers that came from the local green parties. These ministers tended to be high profile individuals from the environment movement, who had been part of the push for independence

from the Soviet Union. Bulgaria, Estonia, Georgia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovenia have all had green party ministers.

- In Europe, where multi-party governments are the norm, green parties participated in governments where their numbers were not essential for forming a majority. In Finland, France, Italy, Slovakia and Ukraine, green party MPs were included as a “safety margin” if another minor party left the coalition. They were also often

**“...it’s clear that with so much reform and innovation needed in the world, being in government has to be our goal. But how do we best prepare for such a role?”**



included to create legitimacy for the government in the eyes of the green movement.

- Perhaps the best-known Greens in government are where the vote has been strong enough to elect large numbers of MPs and put Greens into the balance of power. In Belgium, Ireland, Latvia, Czech Republic and Germany, the Greens' numbers have been strong enough to make their support necessary to the formation of government.

It's often assumed that holding the balance of power is the best way for the Greens to participate in government and get results. However, this is not always the case – some co-opted ministers have been able to exert a strong influence, and some green parties who have held the balance of power have not had as much. It's also clear that the experience of being in government has had very mixed results for the growth of the green party vote and its organisational strength.

How well a green party plans for and executes the opportunity to be in government appears to be a crucial factor in getting green wins. This is why many party officials in Europe are documenting what's been learned, as they have seen enough lacklustre or damaging examples to know that the opportunity can be wasted or mismanaged. Of course, there is also an element of luck – despite hard work and good planning the Irish Greens had the bad luck of being aligned with a conservative government at the time of a financial crisis that they had no role in creating.

I met and chatted to party officials and elected MPs from the Irish Greens, the Finnish Greens and the Swedish Greens as well as Britain's Liberal Democrats (who, while not green, are the progressive third force in UK politics, and have embarked on their first experience on the government benches). Some have been having a very difficult time in government and some have been thriving. Despite these differences many of the lessons they wanted to share with me are surprisingly similar.

Division and disunity is extremely dangerous for a small, emerging party going into the sometimes turbulent process of government. Those parties who ignore division do not grow and achieve green results from the government experience. The message from my interviews was that tension and division is to be expected, but that it can be

harnessed and managed if there are formal processes to promote unity and get broad engagement in the government experience.

Our green colleagues spoke highly of the value of a clear and toughly negotiated agreement for government that has specific timeframes for promised legislation and actions, as well as agreed budget allocations. Several of the parties spoke of the importance of getting the membership united behind the MPs and to give them ownership of the agreement; several parties held a meeting of members to endorse the program for government before it was agreed.

They spoke about retaining a strong green identity and being honest with members and the public about what you have won and lost. Dan Boyle from the Irish Greens said they had started wanting to prioritise harmony with their coalition partners but felt they got lost in this goal for too long. In the last year of their government experience they worked much harder at asserting their own identity and priorities.

Having ministers has been one of the big bonuses of the government experience, and in all cases green ministers have performed well. However, the parties are aware of ministers being overwhelmed by their portfolio and losing sight of the bigger picture. Several of the parties have set up mechanisms to avoid this and ensure the party is engaged in the ministerial portfolios. For example, the Liberal Democrats established committees that shadow the portfolios where their party holds a ministry. The Liberal Democrat minister meets regularly with Liberal Democrat backbenchers, representatives from the party policy committee and local and European Government members. They discuss upcoming portfolio issues and opportunities for advancing their party's policy.

All of our green colleagues in government believe that the opportunity is an essential part of growing up as a political force. But they also recognise that it can be very difficult without clever planning, a spirit of goodwill and an eye on the lessons of history. ▲

**Anna Reynolds is International Advisor to Senator Bob Brown. Please contact her on [anna.reynolds@aph.gov.au](mailto:anna.reynolds@aph.gov.au) if you have comments or want further information**



# growing the nsw vote

against an unprecedented conservative landslide toward the liberal/national coalition in nsw, the greens vote continued to grow, reports lesa de leau

**A**t the March election, in our biggest ever campaign, we recorded a swing of 2 percent in the statewide vote from the 2007 election, recording our highest vote to date at either state or federal level.

We also had a historic breakthrough into the NSW lower house with Leichhardt Mayor Jamie Parker taking the inner-city seat of Balmain which was once Labor heartland.

In the Upper House we secured two seats, and counting is continuing as Green Magazine goes to print to decide if Orange City Councillor Jeremy Buckingham will take a third spot. Election analyst Antony Green predicts that the Greens are 'highly likely' to win this seat. This will increase our numbers from four to five in the NSW Upper House.

Greens MLC David Shoebridge was re-elected and the Mayor of Byron Shire, Jan Barham, was elected. Both will take seats beside current MLCs John Kaye and Cate Faehrmann.

In the inner west seat of Marrickville, Greens candidate Fiona Byrne did extremely well to record a 6.6 percent two-party preferred swing, bringing the seat down to the wire in what became an increasingly dirty campaign by NSW Labor. The local Greens' well-executed campaign delivered the highest ever lower house vote in any mainland state election with a 35.9 percent primary vote and 49.1 percent two-party preferred. With a 7.5 percent margin, winning this seat from Labor's Deputy Premier was always going to be tough. At the end of counting less than 700 votes separated the two candidates.

The Greens received other strong results across NSW. On Sydney's North Shore we shifted the electoral pendulum, outpolling Labor in eight electorates, including the seat of North Shore where a 2 per cent swing to the Greens broke through the 20 percent primary vote barrier.

In the Far North Coast seats of Lismore and Ballina positive swings delivered more than 20 percent of the primary vote to the Greens. In Lismore we won seven booths in total.

The Hunter and Illawarra regions recorded a swing to the Greens while NSW Labor was severely punished. The Greens doubled their previous results in the far-western seat of Murray-Darling, and in the South Coast seat of Bega we gained a 5 percent swing.

During the campaign we spoke out in favour of strong public services, a better deal for public schools and TAFE colleges, real action on climate change and fixing the state's broken planning system to empower communities.

Key policy announcements called for new solar thermal power plants to begin the shift to renewable energy, increased funding for dental care and two years universal pre-school to bring NSW in line with other OECD nations.

The Greens NSW are proud of our positive, policy-based campaign where we again ran candidates in all 93 lower house seats. We received unprecedented support from volunteers across the state, with more than 3,500 people working on booths on polling day. The campaign successfully dealt with the challenge of the carbon tax debate and worked hard to distance ourselves from a loathed state Labor administration whilst supporting our federal colleagues who are working in Canberra with Labor.

Our record vote is a tribute to the hard work of many and I would again like to thank all those who made such a valuable contribution to our largest ever campaign. ▲

**Lesa de Leau is the campaign co-ordinator for the Greens NSW**

“The Greens will never embrace Labor’s delight at sharing the values of everyday Australians, in our cities, suburbs, towns and bush, who day after day do the right thing, leading purposeful and dignified lives, driven by love of family and nation.”

- Prime Minister  
Julia Gillard,  
Gough Whitlam  
Oration, March 2011



# public opinion

“[The NSW election results] confirm the truth of that old cliché about a week being a long time in politics. It puts paid to talk of the Greens’ ‘failure’ in the state election trumpeted by the likes of Labor MPs such as Luke Foley and Tanya Plibersek.”

**Hall Greenland, Crikey, 4 April 2011**

“Not content with taxing the life out of working Australians, the Greens also want to tax us when we die by introducing death duties, taxing the frail and the elderly who wish to leave something behind for their descendants when they die.”

**Eric Abetz, MenziesHouse.com.au, March 2011**

“Not everything the Greens are promoting is bad public policy. Protecting the environment, for example, is an important responsibility, and we share the widespread concern that more needs to be done to achieve this. But concern for the environment does not mean that all Greens policies are acceptable.”

**Statement from the Bishops of New South Wales, March 2011**

“Whether it’s climate change or gay marriage, the Greens are in charge and Bob Brown is the real prime minister of this country.”

**Tony Abbott, Federal Parliament, March 2011**

“The Liberal candidate for Marrickville has backed Greens’ claims that they have been the victim of a manipulative and potentially illegal push-polling campaign in the marginal seat.”

**Matthew Knott, Crikey, 15 March 2011**



## tweetin' green



**@GreensJamieP**  
Greens NSW Member  
for Balmain

I look forward to doing a good job. Let me know what issues you think I should be looking at



**@CarolineLucas**  
Leader of  
Green Party UK

Enjoyed filming w/ @robin-hood campaign today - small financial transaction tax in UK alone could raise £20b



**@lynnmaclaren**  
Greens WA MLC

Greens vow to keep up the fight against sow stalls, despite the WA Government refusing to ban them by 2017



**@SenatorLudlam**  
Australian Greens Sena-  
tor for WA

Good win on journalist shield laws: now apply to bloggers, citizen journos and indy media #openinternet #auspol



**@greensjeremy**  
Greens NSW MLC

Just woke from a bad dream filled with Pauline Hanson, difficult maths, Albo and Penbo (or did I?) #dirtmerchants

**Find these green tweeps and more at [www.greens.org.au](http://www.greens.org.au)**





# Peter Shorne

despite being 95 years old, this adelianian continues to volunteer on a daily basis, writes penny wright

**E**arly on election day last year Peter Shorne walked across the road to his local high school in suburban Adelaide and set up a polling booth for the Greens. Later, after a full day of handing out “How to Vote” cards, he packed up and came along to our party to help celebrate the best South Australian Greens vote ever. He stayed for most of the festivities but left about 9pm because he was “a bit tired”. Nothing too unusual about all that, you may say, except that Peter was 94 at the time.

A thoughtful, considered man, and possibly the oldest active member of the Australian Greens, Peter has lived a life of conviction. He was born half way through the First World War, in February 1916. The Battle of Verdun commenced a week after his birth, ultimately resulting in 1 million casualties. In July 1916 Australians entered the Battle of the Somme. In October Australia’s first referendum on conscription was defeated, which led to the expulsion of Prime Minister Billy Hughes from the Labour Party several weeks later. Peter’s birth year was coloured by conflict. Since then he has had the chance, unhappily, to consider the nature of war and his opposition to it on a fairly regular basis.

He was a young man in the 1930s and seeing war looming on the horizon he joined the “Peace Pledge” Union, a British pacifist organization. When World War II started he refused to fight overseas although his friends were enlisting around him. But in 1941, when the Japanese entered the war, he joined up to defend Australia. Later, in his 50s, Peter was active against the Vietnam War, attending every Adelaide march with one of his four daughters. He experienced the police violence which was a feature of these protests – they grabbed his banner on one occasion and on another they punched him, breaking his ribs. Peter gave evidence at the subsequent Royal Commission into the police behaviour. Since those days, sadly, he has witnessed other wars including Australia’s foray into Iraq. “I don’t approve of war,” Peter tells me, quietly but firmly.

When he was 15 Peter left home to work as a farm hand on a Mallee property. It was a tough life, doing the work of a man – lugging 90 kilo bags of wheat, tossing hay and clearing mallee roots for nothing but his keep. “It was a hopeless

proposition,” Peter tells me. “They used to say it would take four heartbreaks to make a farm out there, and even then the only way they could survive was to merge their properties.” Later work involved trapping rabbits in the Flinders Ranges, working in an abattoir and various trades, including building, making and installing curtains in his own small business and, in his 80s, baking for a weekend market stall. As was often the case with his generation, he didn’t get to finish primary school but throughout his life he has educated himself through reading and listening extensively.

Peter remembers hearing the first broadcast of the ABC in 1932, when he was 16, and he has been a passionate supporter and defender ever since. To him, the ABC is the most important cultural institution in Australia and a bulwark against the increasing Americanization of our culture and airwaves. I became acquainted with Peter in 1996, at a time when the ABC was being subjected to massive attacks and funding cuts by the Howard government. Peter had previously been asked to help rejuvenate the Adelaide branch of the Friends of the ABC organization in 1991 to fend off earlier attacks from a different government (the then Hawke/Keating government). “Not being one to say no,” the 75 year old had accepted. Thus, in 1996 in the face of a new, ideological campaign of vitriol against an independent, publically-owned, national broadcaster, the “Friends” were in a strong position to help defend the ABC. Peter has since become the first Life Member of Friends of the ABC, an honour of which he is justly proud.

Social justice and questions of fairness have always been guiding principles for Peter, shaping his interactions with people throughout his life and leading him on a varied course as he searched for a political party that accords with his ideals. Now he is an energetic and steadfast supporter of the Greens, attracted by the Greens’ willingness to take action to achieve those things that matter. “You don’t get anything without action,” he tells me. Through his example he inspires others, too. When he came back to the polling booth on Election Day, after a short break, he found the other parties’ workers handing out his cards for him.

Peter has lived long and well, exemplifying some of the best of our Greens values. We are lucky to have him. ▲



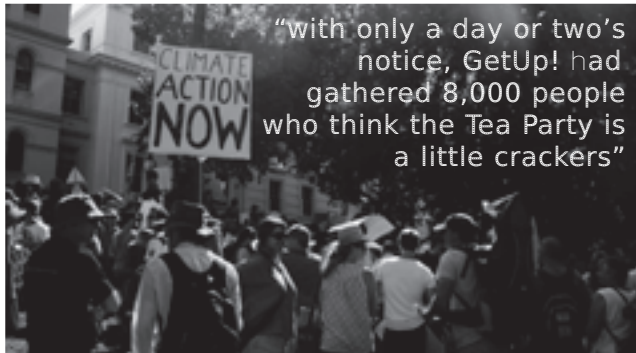
# Bob Brown



## BOB'S BACK PAGE MARCH 2011

### Frightened By Complexity

Some 176 Tea Party we-are-actually-very-frightened-of life folk, joined by Liberal Senators Mitch Fifield and Scott Ryan, turned out in Melbourne a few weekends back to bring the federal government down over the “great big new” carbon tax. These we-want-control-because-we-fear-complexity folk thundered about how Australians voted and demanded a new election because the votes for the Greens last year should have been invalidated. However, across town, with only a day or two's notice, GetUp! had gathered 8,000 people who think the Tea Party is a little crackers, if not worryingly anti-democratic. This crowd was motivated by saving the planet rather than hating or being fearful of other people. If there are enough frightened-of-life voters out there who also want to save the planet they could set up a Green Tea Party.



### Soothed By Simplicity

At Liffey on Sunday (20th March) we had a little gathering on the paddock for the gifting (how easily nouns become verbs these days) of Oura Oura to Bush Heritage Australia. Al Dermer of Bush Heritage asked me how it felt to have large signs around the place – I told him ‘good’. It is good to know that people will see the signs and feel relaxed about taking an amble up Drys Bluff or along Liffey riverside to sample something of the enjoyment Oura Oura has given me these last 38 years. Paul and I are signing up as Bush Heritage volunteers, so we can contribute to the management of Oura Oura, by the Tellerpanger (Liffey River) beneath Taytitikitheeker (Drys Bluff) in coming years. Just last week Paul discovered an entrance hall to the platypus burrow nearly one metre beneath the river level in the middle of Oura Oura's rock-lined swimming hole. I've often wondered how the ancient monotremes disappeared so easily beneath the bridge!

### 'Extreme' Greens

Prime Minister Julia Gillard told the crowd at the Don Dunstan Lecture in Adelaide that the Greens (and Tony Abbott) are extreme. Asked about it by the press through the next day, I replied that we are “extreme-ly popular and growing”. I should have added that I think Don Dunstan would like some of our extreme (judged by the fact that both Abbott and Gillard oppose them) policies like opposing the nuclear waste dump in the Northern Territory, supporting same-sex rights in marriage, wanting the big banks to stop hitting pensioners with \$2 ATM fees, and legislating for more humane treatment of asylum seekers.

### Change Of Climate

The biggest immediate challenge for our 10 federal Green MPs around mid-year will be finding agreement with the government on a carbon price package. The rich and powerful coal mining and other polluting industries are busy using extreme self-interest to get large amounts of “compensation” for cutting back on their destructive greenhouse gas emissions. Tony Abbott wants to transfer \$30 billion over the next 10 years to polluters from taxpayers to cut emissions by only 5%. By 2020 that cost would be \$720 per Australian household per annum. I can guarantee you we will be ASSISTING householders, not ROBBING them on the road to a less dangerous future.

### Ingrid's Oration

In 2001, at the Canberra Global Greens Conference, Colombian Green Senator Ingrid Betancourt's speech evoked a foot-stamping thunder of applause. Then, back home, she was abducted by terrorists and spent six harrowing years in the Amazonian jungle. On May 26 Ingrid will be in Hobart Town Hall to deliver the second Green Oration. The Oration celebrates the packed Town Hall meeting on March 23, 1972 that set up the world's first Green party. Ingrid's book on her life as a prisoner is galvanizing. Her oration promises us a night to remember. Book your seat at [www.greenoration.com.au](http://www.greenoration.com.au)

### Winter

Cold is cool. There's nothing like a hot red wine concoction, shared with good friends by the fire. Or the crunch of frost on a moonlit meadow. Or the silent tumble of snow. Or the thought that out of leafless desolation the pulse of life creates summer's cooling greenery. So, enjoy this winter of 2011!▲

Bob

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**“Thanks to words, we have been able to rise above the brutes; and thanks to words, we have often sunk to the level of the demons.”**

**- Aldous Huxley**

A large crowd of people is gathered outdoors, holding a long yellow banner. The banner has the text "WORLD LEADERS..... DELIVER A SAFE CLIMATE" written on it in black, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The background is slightly blurred, showing trees and buildings. The scene appears to be a public demonstration or protest.

**WORLD LEADERS.....  
DELIVER A SAFE CLIMATE**