



***AUSTRALASIAN STUDY OF  
PARLIAMENT GROUP  
(Queensland Chapter)***

**FORUM ON POLITICAL TRUST**

**TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS**

**MONDAY, 27 FEBRUARY 2017**

**Brisbane**

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**Mr GIBSON:** Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you for your patience during some small technical problems and new arrangements with security for coming into Parliament House. I welcome you all to the Queensland parliament tonight for the ASPG Queensland forum. I would like to recognise Mr Speaker. Thank you so much for your support for ASPG through your term and I say quite genuinely: enjoy your retirement! We also have members of the Legislative Assembly here tonight, and I hope I have captured all of them and I am not doing this in alphabetical order, which is correct protocol, but just in the order that I happened to catch them—Chris Whiting from Murrumba, Leanne Donaldson from Bundaberg, Leanne Linard from Nudgee, Rob Molhoek from Southport, Peter Russo from Sunnybank and Christian Rowan from Moggill. To our members of parliament, thank you for your time in coming here. We know how busy your schedules are, particularly on a sitting week, and we thank you for that. If your seats have changed between now and the end of the night, it is not our fault but you should learn how to pronounce your new seat titles!

I commence by respectfully acknowledging the traditional owners of the land upon which we gather today, the Jagera and the Turrbal peoples. I pay my respects to their elders—past, present and emerging—and acknowledge the important role that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play in our community. I recognise those whose ongoing efforts to protect and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures will leave a lasting legacy for future elders and for leaders.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are a few elements of housekeeping. This is me doing my best Qantas flight steward impersonation: in the event of an emergency, you will hear and be advised by an emergency tone. From that tone we are not to panic but simply to listen to the instructions over the PA system which will advise us what to do depending on the type of emergency. I am reliably advised that we will not have a drill tonight during the forum. If you require any of the rest rooms, they are in the corridor behind you—the one that you would have come through. Both are on the left-hand side as you exit the red chamber and you will see the ladies and then the gents.

We are recording this session and Hansard has very kindly agreed to transcribe this, but I would also—in this world of social media, fake news, 24/7 and all the other things we experience—encourage you to record this session. If you have Facebook Live, stream it live. If you wish to tweet, tweet away to your heart's content. Snapchat as much as you want, and there are some great pics for Instagram, so please feel free to use all of the channels available throughout the course of the evening. We would encourage you to do so and please tag ASPGQ into anything that you are posting.

We are delighted to have you here as our guests and we hope that the effort you have made to be here and to contribute tonight will see you rewarded on what I think is a particularly interesting topic. I want to thank our panellists who have joined us tonight: Professor Ian McAllister from ANU; Dr Tracey Arklay from Griffith University; Dr David Solomon AM, the former Queensland Integrity Commissioner and, I am advised, retiree working on his golf handicap; and Josh Robertson, the Queensland correspondent for the *Guardian*. We will hear from Professor McAllister first and then open to a panel discussion on what, I am sure, will be some very interesting discussions.

But first let us review why we are here. As many of you know, the Australasian Study of Parliament Group Queensland, or what we like to refer to as the ASPGQ, was established in May 1993 as a nonpartisan body to encourage and stimulate research, writing and teaching about parliamentary institutions in Australia in order to generate a better understanding of their functions. The Queensland chapter holds three functions on seminar topics each year on those matters that we feel are topical relating to the parliament in Queensland and Australia. Tonight's event has recently been described as the issue of our time. Indeed, the year has barely kicked off and 2017's biggest political issue seems to be the declining political trust in the establishment. In December 2016 the Australian National University published its report *Trends in Australian political opinion: results from the Australian Election Study 1987-2016* which showed a massive

decline in political trust, with Australian satisfaction with democracy having collapsed to its lowest level since the Whitlam dismissal. With a state election due some time before May 2018—and, if we listen to the news, it is most likely to be in 2017—tonight Professor Ian McAllister will present his findings from this highly regarded Australian Electoral Study report and our distinguished panel will then discuss the impact of the collapse in political trust in Queensland and ask the question: is there a rebellion brewing in Queensland?

Let me commence by introducing our panellists. I start with Dr David Solomon. David was the Queensland Integrity Commissioner from 2009 to 2014. The Queensland Integrity Commissioner is an independent officer of the Queensland parliament who is responsible for providing advice on integrity and ethics issues and for maintaining the lobbyist register. A former journalist, Dr Solomon wrote of politics and the law for such newspapers as the *Australian*, the *Australian Financial Review* and the *Canberra Times*. He moved to Queensland in 1992 to chair the Electoral and Administrative Review Commission and has subsequently chaired the independent panel that reviewed Queensland's freedom of information laws. He is currently an adjunct professor in the School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry at the University of Queensland. He received the Centenary Medal in 2001 and was appointed a member of the Order of Australia in 2006.

Dr Tracey Arklay is a senior lecturer in the School of Government and International Relations at Griffith University. She is an adjunct research fellow in the Institute for Social Science Research at the University of Queensland. Dr Arklay's research methodology is to engage with policy practitioners and political actors across the three jurisdictions of government to gain insights into where the policy gaps exist. Her scholarly interests include federal and state politics, political capacity, parliamentary analysis, disaster management and electoral campaigning. Dr Arklay has authored two books and one internationally cited monograph—*Arthur Fadden: A Political Silhouette* in 2014 and *The Eyes Have It: The History of the Queensland Parliament, 1957 to 1989* in 2010 with John Wanna. Dr Arklay is a member of the editorial board of the *Australian Journal of Public Administration* and a research associate of the TJ Ryan Foundation.

Joshua Robertson is the *Guardian Australia's* Brisbane correspondent. He previously worked on the investigations desk and has covered organised crime, including reporting extensively on the outlaw motorcycle gangs for the *Courier-Mail* and the *Sunday Mail*. He studied philosophy and history at the University of Queensland.

I turn now to our main presenter whom we will now hear from—Professor Ian McAllister. Ian is a distinguished professor of political science at the Australian National University and from 1997 until 2004 was the director of research of social sciences at the ANU. He has previously held chairs at the University of New South Wales and the University of Manchester. He was president of the British Politics Group from 2001 to 2002, has edited the *Australian Journal of Political Science* since 2004 and was chair of the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems projects from 2003 to 2008. He is an honorary professor at the University of Aberdeen, a fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences in Australia and a corresponding fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. His research interests are in the areas of comparative political behaviour, political parties, voters and electoral systems. One of his research projects involves coordinating the Australian Election Study, a national survey of political opinion conducted after each federal election since 1987. Recent publications include *Trends in Australian political opinion: results from the Australian Election Study 1987-2016* and the book *The Australian Voter* published in 2011. I would now like to invite Professor Ian McAllister to come forward and make his presentation.

**Prof. McALLISTER:** Thank you very much, David, and I thank you and your colleagues for the very kind invitation to speak on this topic. I will be talking about political trust, but political trust is really only one part of the whole plethora of topics that we cover in the Election Study. It covers a whole range of areas looking at voting, campaigning and a variety of other things. There is a report which David mentioned, *Trends in Australian political opinion*. It is available on our website to download, but if anybody wants to drop me an email or a letter I would be happy to send them a hard copy because we got some printed at the same time. Also on our website, [australianelectionstudy.org](http://australianelectionstudy.org), apart from being able to download the report itself, you can download unit record files from the original data, you can download codebooks and a whole series of data which you can analyse yourself from the Election Study itself going right back to 1987.

The survey that I will be mainly talking about today is the 12th in the series. As I say, we started the operation in 1987 but we also very consciously copied questions that go back to surveys that were conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, so we have a whole series of data which allow us to trace trends in

political opinion over a very extended period of time. In the survey we typically ask about 250 questions of the respondents. We ask them about the election campaign, we ask them about media sources, we ask them what they did during the election campaign or if they did any campaigning themselves, we ask about their vote and their voting history, we ask them a whole series of questions about the leaders, about the personal qualities of the leaders and then we look at issues, general political attitudes and social background. We have a huge amount of data in each of the election studies about the mainsprings of why people voted the way they did. In the 2016 survey we sampled just over 2,800 respondents nationally. Half the sample was drawn from the electoral register, as we have always done in the past, and then for the first time we used a geocoded national address file to form the other part of the sample. We will also be running a panel survey between 2016 and 2019—only the second time it has been done in Australia on a topic to do with electoral behaviour.

Today we are looking at measures of political trust and we have three measures in the survey. We have satisfaction with democracy, which David referred to before. That is a generalised sense of how the democracy is actually performing and looking at democracy as a political principle. The second measure is to do with trust in politicians. That is directly asking the respondents what they thought about the political class. Thirdly, we have a measure of who people thought the government was actually run for. Was it run for the benefit of all the people or just for a few particular interests? There is a big academic debate about how well these measures actually reflect political trust and there is an argument that there is very partisan overtones in it in the sense that, if your party has to be the incumbent government, then you will be more trustful, you will be more satisfied with democracy and so on. There is a bit of this in our election survey, but, in fact, not as much as a lot of the academic debate actually suggests.

The first measure is support for democracy and we ask a question: on the whole are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in Australia? As David mentioned, we find that satisfaction with democracy in 2016 is at its lowest level since just after the 1975 dismissal. Just 60 per cent of the people we interviewed in 2016 were very or fairly satisfied with democracy and that compares with 86 per cent in 2007, which was the high point. That is a decline of 26 percentage points in just 10 years. In terms of the sorts of changes you see in survey research, it is not quite an earthquake, but it is something very major that is happening. That is the actual trend, if you can follow it. You can see the great dip there in 1979, just after the 1975 dismissal. Then you can see the figures increasing through to 2007, when, in fact, we had one of the highest levels of satisfaction in the world. You can see since 2007 there has been this secular decline and really quite rapid decline from this high point.

You might make the comment that this is only one survey question; this is not really telling you very much about what people think about democracy. We also run another survey at the ANU called the ANU Poll. We do that two to three times a year. It is always on different topics, but we always ask a question: what do you think is the first or second most important issue facing Australia? We ask it as an open-ended question, so it is different to the question that we ask in the election study. What we have observed there is that the first three issues that people tend to mention are the economy, immigration and then better government. We saw that really first become significant in 2010 after the Gillard government was elected and we saw the arrangement with the Greens. People were very unsatisfied with that. Suddenly, this aspect of people wanting better government and being dissatisfied with the government they actually had started to figure in what they were saying. You can see that it has never really gone away. I expected it to disappear in 2013, but it did not; it has actually stayed there.

I mentioned that, in terms of international comparisons, historically Australia has been at the top. That is the current position of Australia compared to 20 other countries measured in the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems project. You can see that Australia becomes 11 in the category. At the top you have Norway, Switzerland and the United States. We are a bit behind Germany and a bit ahead of Poland. If we use the 2007 figure as a comparator there, we would have been at the top along with Norway, Denmark and the other Scandinavian countries. We have fallen very considerably in terms of the ranking. I guess the only good news there is that we are ahead of Greece. Six per cent of people in Greece are satisfied with democracy, so there is worse out there.

The second question that we ask is this question about trust in politicians; this direct question about what people think of the political class. Again, what we find in 2016 is that it is at the lowest level that we have recorded since the question was first in an academic survey in 1969. We find that in the 2016 survey almost three-quarters of the respondents believe that people in government looked after themselves. You

can see the trend there. Particularly notable is the very first data point there, 1969, when, in fact, slightly more people were trustful of politicians than distrustful. Ever since then, the trend has been effectively down, but particularly since 2007.

The third question we ask is: who is the government actually run for? This is asking about all of the government and not just the political class and the politicians. It is asking about the Public Service, legislative promotion and so on. What we find here is that, in 2016, just 12 per cent of the people we interviewed said that government was run for all the people and more than half of the people we interviewed said that government was run for just a few big interests. Again, that is the trend. We do not have that over an extended period. It starts in the early 1990s, but again you can see that the change really took place in 2007 and, ever since then, people have started to say government was run for a few big interests.

I was anticipating that two questions I would be asked are the state differences in these and also how they relate to age. That is the breakdown of the state differences in terms of these questions, if you can read them from that distance. A basic summary is that there are very few state differences, particularly in Queensland, which is very similar to all of the other states. There are some differences. For example, people in WA are a bit less satisfied than people in the eastern states. They are much more likely to say that they distrust politicians. There are some differences there, but they are all almost within sampling error. Once we control for differences in social structure between states and territories, a lot of this actually disappears. I am afraid that state differences do not really stack up as a possible explanation for this.

The other issue is to do with age. A lot of literature has come out recently that says that young people do not support democracy, there is going to be a major crisis, they want some other form of government and so on. Basically, the evidence does not support that. That is the proportion of people who were satisfied with democracy, desegregated by age. I have calculated it for 2007, which is the blue line, and 2016, which is the red line. You can see in 2007 it is pretty even across all of the age groups. In 2016, there are some differences. You can see that people aged in their 30s are a bit less satisfied with democracy than the other age groups. A lot of that is to do with economic insecurity, cost of living, cost of housing. You can also see that people aged in their 50s are a bit less satisfied with democracy. A lot of that in 2016 was to do with the coalition policy on superannuation, which was particularly unpopular. If you look at younger people, you can see, in fact, they are one of the groups most supportive of democracy. They are 63 per cent and the only other group that exceeds that is people who are aged 70-plus, at 73 per cent.

Age does not matter all of that much and state differences are relatively minor, so what does explain the decline in trust? I think there is a variety of things going on here which we can support with the survey evidence. One is weak economic performance. People have a very strong sense of economic insecurity based on our surveys. They are worried about unemployment for themselves or somebody in their family. They do not believe that the government can really do very much about the economy. I will show you some survey evidence on that in a minute. Growing economic inequality has two effects. It has effects on voters who are very begrudging of this. They see it as very unequal for them. It has an effect on politicians who have relatively low salaries and they see people in the private sector who are on salaries that are maybe 10 times what they are on, so it has an effect on them. Also, there is the rise of the career politician, which we have been tracking in our candidate surveys. That it is a worldwide trend. People see career politicians as unable to keep promises. We saw the carbon tax in 2010, we saw the superannuation promise that was broken in 2016 and we see the overly partisan nature of debate in politics. Also there has been this rapid turnover in political leaders since 2007. Again, I will show you evidence on that in a minute. Voters are very disapproving of it. Then, finally, there is weaker partisanship.

I mentioned that people really do not see that the government can have very much effect on the economy. When we ask a question about whether people think that the government is going to have a good effect on the country's economy over the next year, two-thirds of people we interview say that the government will not make any difference and it is only about 12 per cent of people who think that the government will have a positive effect. The interesting thing there is that, when we desegregate that by party supporters, by voting, we find, for example, in 2013 almost two-thirds of coalition voters thought that the government would have a good effect. In 2016, that was only one in four. Even the coalition's own supporters and voters are tending to think that the government really will not have much effect on the economy.

The other thing I mentioned was people's disapproval of the leadership changes that have taken place since 2010. We have always asked a question on this in the election surveys, and that is the basic result. What you find is that only 25 per cent of people approved of Julia Gillard's replacement of Kevin

Rudd, who was very popular among voters, his problem being he was not popular within his own party, unfortunately. Only 42 per cent of people approved of Rudd replacing Gillard and then it was about a similar proportion approved of Turnbull replacing Abbott. In each of those cases, a majority of voters actually disapproved of the leadership change.

On the rise of voting volatility, people are much more weakly attached to political parties. When the question was first asked in a survey about lifetime voting in 1967, the survey produced the finding that 72 per cent of people never ever changed their vote from the very first election they voted in to the last election before they died. That is a huge degree of political stability, with almost three-quarters being rock solid behind a political party. The figure we find in 2016 is just 40 per cent, so 60 per cent of people were saying that at some stage they have voted for another political party. The trend you see there is really quite interesting, because that is what we call a 'secular trend' in the sense that it is something that has just been happening over a very extended period. It has not been affected by whichever party is in office, by major social structural changes; it is just happening from election to election.

That is some of the evidence for the decline of trust and, hopefully, some evidence that I think supports the arguments for why it is actually happening. The question is: what do we do about this? These are some possible solutions that have been mentioned. I am not a particular advocate of any of these. I just mention them because they are things that are around there in debate. Four-year parliamentary terms at the federal level seems to be something that should be fairly obvious, in the sense that it cuts down party pressure to get rid of a leader who is not performing in the opinion polls, so a leader and a party have a much more extended period to prove themselves and then they can either be rewarded or punished at the an election.

Term limits for elected politicians is something that has been widely discussed. It is rarely used at the level of elected representatives in the Lower House. It is used in very few countries, some in Latin America, but hardly any that I can think of within the advanced democracies.

Senate reform is something that possibly needs to be discussed. It is pretty clear, since the change in the electoral system to the Senate in 1984, that it has long ceased to be what it was designed to be, which is a representative of the states and territories. It is effectively a body to represent the parties and that is because it is known as a de facto party list system.

The introduction of voluntary voting is something that has been discussed. The reason for that would be that it would make political parties work more. You would have a larger membership base. The two functions of the political parties are to mobilise the vote on the one hand and then to convert it at the ballot box on the other. When you have compulsory voting, political parties do not have to mobilise; they only have to convert. Making political parties work a bit harder would hopefully widen the membership base and provide a bigger base for legislative recruitment.

There is a variety of things that could be done in terms of parliamentary procedures. An independent speaker might be one thing that could be introduced. You could limit the prime minister's question time, which currently goes for at least one hour every afternoon when the House of Representatives is sitting. That does not happen in most of the other Westminster democracies. The sort of overly partisan debate that people see, which is then televised in the evening, tends to turn a lot of people off politics.

The chances of any of this happening, I think, are pretty limited. We have asked questions about virtually all of these in our surveys and I have to say that three-quarters or more of people are in favour of compulsory voting, in favour of parliamentary terms, et cetera. It would require very great political will for a lot of this to happen. I will leave it there, thank you.

**Mr GIBSON:** Professor, thank you very much. What I would like to do now is start the discussion off with our panellists and keep it fairly free-flowing. For you in the audience there will be time. Allowing for how we are running, I would like to think that at about five to 10 past we would like to open to questions from the floor. If you have anything that has come from Professor McAllister's presentation, please jot it down or just make reference to it, and we can come back to that in the open question time for everyone around.

To kick off I would like to start with Dr Arklay. Tracey, do you feel that Professor McAllister's findings resonate with what is happening in Queensland? I ask that because of our unicameral parliament and whether that gives a different feel for what happens in Queensland on the ground compared to other states in Australia.

**Dr ARKLAY:** Thanks, David. That is a very interesting and somewhat depressing analysis, Ian. I do not really think the unicameral parliament has much to do with the distrust more generally. I do not think you can look at Queensland and say that it is remarkably different from other states, as your data shows. It is a fascinating problem. As governments increasingly deal with lots of wicked problems such as globalisation and lower paid jobs being lost, how do you talk through that with the public and get them on board? We had the Bligh government here, part of the long-term Labor government, that lost an election on asset sales—that was really one of the ostensible reasons why she lost—and then we had the Newman government elected with a massive landslide with the same kind of privatisation platform in many respects, so I think it is really hard to draw analogies as to how to explain why distrust is growing.

Maybe one of the issues is that we are replacing ideology and that rusted-on support for parties with these loose, fragmented ideas that do not have an underlying coherence so it is really easy for people to grab onto some points and say, 'Don't like that; don't like that,' and the parties are not able to fill that void anymore with what they stand for. I think that people are uncertain now about what parties stand for.

**Mr GIBSON:** Tracey, in Queensland we have seen that voter volatility certainly displayed in the format of the parliament and people getting elected. Are Queenslanders more comfortable breaking away from being rusted on and giving a minor party a chance?

**Dr ARKLAY:** Historically minor parties they were not really players. We always did have Independents in the parliament, but they were usually very long-term and very stable—Tom Aikens for example. Then of course since the 1990s we have had some key Independents that, through their personal support, the way that they serve their electorate as well as the role they play in the House, have had a degree of popularity and success. On the whole Queensland has been very much dominated by the parties, either one side or the other, and that has been part of its history. That seems to be changing now, despite the fact that the electoral system was not really altered, which I think is indicative again of the strife the parties are in. The solution is something that eludes me completely. I really would hate to be advising the parties on what to do.

**Mr GIBSON:** David, your former role was Integrity Commissioner. We hear scandals about travel reports by MPs and a range of things. I think it has been reflective of both political parties. Do we need someone like an Integrity Commissioner looking over the shoulder of MPs and making sure that they are doing the right thing to restore this trust that is in decline?

**Dr SOLOMON:** We do, but that is not the job of the Integrity Commissioner in Queensland.

**Mr GIBSON:** Can I tweet that you are saying you were a toothless tiger?

**Dr SOLOMON:** The Integrity Commissioner was established to provide advice to politicians and senior public servants—about 5,000 people in all—initially just about conflict of interest issues because sometimes they get difficult, and later that was expanded to include any ethical issues. The requirement was, though, that the person concerned would have to ask the Integrity Commissioner for advice. The Integrity Commissioner could not go around and say, 'Hey, you're doing the wrong thing,' so that is why I answered the way I did.

I think the Integrity Commissioner should be able to look and see what is happening and should be able to tap people on the shoulder. To some extent this is allowed in some changes that were made to the ministerial code of conduct under the Newman government. The Integrity Commissioner was allowed to have a look at what ministers were doing and tap them on the shoulder and tap the Premier and say, 'Hey, look at what that minister is doing. It's not right.' That does not happen very often in my experience. It happened once in my experience.

**Mr GIBSON:** Do you feel that the role is important to the broader public? I often wonder if having the role implies that we cannot trust our politicians and therefore we need someone in that role. Or do you feel that it actually reinforces that there is someone here who has this role and this function so that you can have some confidence as members in the public in politicians?

**Dr SOLOMON:** That was certainly the reason why it was established: to give the public confidence that politicians and senior public servants were able to get good advice and to act on it about ethical issues. I do not think the role is sufficiently understood. In my contact with politicians, certainly they understood very well and they developed a system whereby all politicians met the Integrity Commissioner at least once a year to discuss their declarations of interest and so on.

The system in Queensland is based very much on what happened in Canada. I met the Canadian Senate Ethics Officer once and he said, 'The idea is it's like going and seeing your accountant about your tax. It just reminds you of the need to do things properly.' The Integrity Commissioner is there for that sort of purpose, but it mainly affects politicians and senior public servants rather than the public's view of them.

**Mr GIBSON:** Ian, you showed the data on the states and it did not vary greatly between each of the areas. Each state has a version of an integrity commissioner. Do you feel that role has not been effective in building public trust or keeping it there?

**Prof. McALLISTER:** I think you can impose all sorts of rules and regulations on this. It really has to be down to the politicians themselves to make good judgements that are ethical. To give you an example of that, in one of our election surveys we asked a series of questions about different scenarios which would be, on the face of it, corrupt. We also asked the same questions of elected representatives and candidates in our survey. There were three categories: what we would call white corruption, which was fairly trivial things. Both voters and politicians just said, 'Okay, that doesn't matter.' There was black corruption, which was exchanging money for favours, which everybody thought was wrong, both politicians and voters. Then there was a huge range of scenarios in the middle which were in the grey category. The majority of the politicians thought that, if they were in the rules, they were fine. The majority of voters thought they were unethical and it should not happen. This is where the problem arises. You cannot control or have a framework to cover all of these various things. The people who have been elected themselves have to make an ethical judgement, and that involves getting the right people into politics.

**Mr GIBSON:** Josh, this is a beautiful segue to you because often you will hear a politician say, 'I've done nothing wrong by the rules,' and yet by the public barometer they are disconnected because everyone is saying, 'I don't care what the rules say; anybody can see that's the wrong thing.' Does the media go overboard, though, in reporting it? We live in this age of digital media. You have pressure to compete with what is being tweeted, and people are talking about fake news and if it is embedded. Let me be blunt: is the media part of the problem in the loss of trust?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Media is always part of the problem, but that is a really interesting question. Does the media go overboard in probably searching for things that they might think are indicative of character, things that may not be clear breaches of the rules? A huge political story in this state involving somebody in this parliament involved something that had nothing to do with politics but a marital indiscretion that ended up with somebody dipping their member in a glass of wine. That was a huge story, and yet when you sit back and think about the political implications of the story, well, they were very serious for the person involved because they affected his future, but really in terms of judging the political import of that act it is up for debate.

The media would probably be more inclined these days to cross that line. You saw BuzzFeed in the US publish the dossier prepared by the former British intelligence agent on alleged activities involving Donald Trump in Russia. They candidly admitted that it was impossible to verify those claims, and other media organisations decided not to air it on that basis. They said, 'Hang on, there's a story around this. Because this document is being referred to and we are kind of playing shadow games with the public, maybe they need to know what's in this document in order to make up their minds about the rest of the story,' so they defended the publication on that basis.

**Mr GIBSON:** Can I come back to you on that, because I think it is a really interesting point. Often the media get private briefings with politicians, particularly ministers, premiers and prime ministers, who will want to push a particular piece of information. They will call particular media representatives in for an off-the-record briefing where a lot of information is shared, and then that individual is able to go back to their outlet and present something. That is when it works for government. Then you have the other side: the whistleblower. An innocuous person who is coming to you and saying, 'You should know about this. I'm not comfortable with it,' or whatever the context would be. In both cases should the media be declaring to the public where their sources are, whether they be a confidential briefing that came from a chief of staff on a particular government issue or an anonymous briefing? Would that help that public trust in the media and in what is being reported? At times it can be quite selective in that, 'Anonymous sources say the Premier is being rolled tomorrow,' can often build enough momentum among themselves that they are designed in that way in some cases to bring on the spill because it is now on the front pages of the paper and a leading story online. What are your thoughts on that?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Yes, I think you are right. I think that journalists in Queensland could be more up-front about, if not the exact source of information, the kind of sources. The *New York Times* might be a bit better than the *Courier-Mail* in this respect. They describe with a little more precision what kind of source—who is speaking on the condition of anonymity—is giving the information, and that gives the reader something a little better to maybe judge the motives of the source of the information and so forth. Maybe in Queensland we—and I am guilty of it as well—could be better about being more precise about the nature of the source of the information.

People are going to say ‘sources say.’ From my experience generally I think the political reporters in Queensland are pretty accurate with ‘sources say’. Generally, with the reporters who report on politics here in Queensland that is all they do and from what I see, from my vantage point, they can generally sniff out bullshit. So when ‘sources say’ gets into the paper, particularly on the front page, I am fairly confident in believing that it is so. The motives of the source are the question, I agree. I think there is more scope to do that to increase public awareness of how this information is getting out there.

**Dr SOLOMON:** Can I give just a little bit of history. Up until a long-time ago—50 years ago—the ABC was not allowed to write a political story unless they could attach a name as the source. Saying it came from a ministerial officer or informed source was simply not allowed. The story could not go to air.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Wow. Wouldn’t you struggle to break a yarn with that rule.

**Mr GIBSON:** Tracey, can I get your views from a Queensland perspective. We have seen the domination, as you mentioned, of the major parties in Queensland but we have seen the decline of media outlets—from the Fitzgerald era, where we were having our own programs on the ABC and breaking those stories, to today, where not just the ABC but the commercial broadcasters are having a lot of those programs being nationalised and fed out from a studio in Sydney, Melbourne or even Brisbane to the whole country. Do you feel from your studies that that decline in media diversity adds to the problem of trust?

**Dr ARKLAY:** I think it is a terrible shame that we do not have a local ABC 7.30 on Friday night even. That was wonderful when Quentin Dempster used to head that and you had the politicians having to go in and actually answer the questions that really related to a Queensland audience.

I was thinking as you were talking, and this has become really close to me again because a colleague, Jenny Menzies, and I did the 30-year release of the 1986 cabinet minutes back in December, so they were released on 1 January. In those days, the public did not distrust the Queensland government, yet the Queensland Premier was taking money under the table to build the world’s tallest building, and I could go on and on and on.

**Mr GIBSON:** Was it that clear in the minutes? I am really curious.

**Dr ARKLAY:** I triangulated with other sources so I used other interview data as well as the minutes—the Singapore businessman who claimed that they did this. What the cabinet minutes actually spelled out was that the department was advising that it would be a bad idea and we know now that some in cabinet were saying that it was not a great idea but the Premier’s view that ‘This is the recommended proposal’ was pushed despite advice saying ‘this should not be happening,’ yet—

**Mr GIBSON:** Yet it was still going ahead.

**Dr ARKLAY:** It did not go ahead; the Premier lost office before it went ahead. Yet if you had asked Queenslanders at the time, they would have said, ‘We are great in the Sunshine State. We are booming.’ Is it economic pain that is the problem here? We have so many groups who no longer feel part of the broader society. They are not part of it anymore. They feel left out. They feel excluded. Is that what attracts them to other parties? I am not sure but I think that has to be something to do with this. With my definition of good governance, I do not think I would rate the 1980s that high.

**Mr GIBSON:** Ian, you showed us some data with regard to that economic uncertainty. I am curious when we go back in Queensland’s history. In 1998, we saw One Nation taking seats within the Queensland Legislative Assembly. I know this is a question on the spot so you may not have the answer for us. Looking at those numbers, was 1998 as bad as it is now with economic uncertainty or were there other factors at play for that?

**Prof. McALLISTER:** There is a big academic argument about the routes of One Nation support, for example, in 1998—whether it was economic or whether it was to do with immigration and other things. I think the balance of opinion now is that it was pretty much driven by economic insecurity. People were feeling under economic pressure, and you can see very similar things happening now.

In terms of the expression of the One Nation vote in 1998, it was much more a programmatic vote in the sense that people were voting for a particular program. There was a concern about immigration underlined by weak economic performance. What we have found in the 2016 election survey is that the vote for One Nation this time around is pretty much a protest vote. In fact, the people who voted for One Nation in our survey in 2016 were drawn equally from Labor and from the coalition.

I think weak economic performance is a major factor behind all of this. People just do not think the country is doing particularly well. They do not see the government or the politicians dealing with it. They see politicians as having particular entitlements and they are not imposing the same rules and regulations and austerities on themselves that they are actually imposing on other people, and I think that is a major part of the problem.

**Mr GIBSON:** Josh, last year we heard that 2016 was the worst year ever. I think the media bundled that out. I do not know who actually articulated it but it got repeated a few times.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I think it was when Prince died, wasn't it, that that idea came to the fore.

**Mr GIBSON:** That is the challenge. When I think about 2016, globally we did not have any death camps occurring, we were not marching people through to gas chambers, we certainly were not using mustard gas in trenches and taking people out and we did not see a collapse of the economic system that we saw during the Great Depression with people committing suicide. What happens to political trust when the media bundles that into a nice, neat headline that says it is the worst year ever?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** This is not my observation, but whenever you have media bundling anything complex into a headline you get the corrosion of reality. It is a valiant daily attempt to represent complex events. It is always shorthand. What you probably do see—and, again, I am saying this purely from anecdotal observation, and this is widely observed too—is that people's news sources are being filtered through social media. It is so common now, so you are probably seeing a lot more engagement with global news. That is a good thing ironically.

You can be prone to the echo chamber effect because you belong to a certain social media community. In line with the increasing partisanship of political parties, you might see that reflected in a division in media outlets trying to cater to niche tastes oddly reflecting similar movements in cultural spheres like music, record companies and so forth, as the mass market fragments. With the echo chamber effect, ironically, with all of these diverse new pockets of information or diverse new sources of attention, you are going to get a surprising unanimity amongst a certain kind of group of people about some complex events.

**Mr GIBSON:** On those complex events, David, when you were in the role, were politicians dealing with the challenge of social media? They are often tweeting and telling their side of the story that they feel the media is not representing. They are wanting to get that message out there, but in doing so they are limited by 140 characters or the photo that they decide to take to represent something. Is that part of the ethical dilemma that erodes the trust?

**Dr SOLOMON:** It did not arise during my time. It may be that social media has become more of a problem in the last three years, but certainly I did not encounter a single instance where someone said to me, 'I've got a problem about that.' Could I raise something else?

**Mr GIBSON:** Yes.

**Dr SOLOMON:** Ian, does your survey distinguish educational backgrounds of people? There was an article by Barry Jones a month or so ago where he pointed out that this discontent, this movement away from the major parties, is occurring at a time when there has never been so many graduates, for example, in Australia. The level of educational achievement has been going up and up and up and the access to media through the internet is going up and up and up. Does that explain why people are moving away from the political parties?

**Prof. McALLISTER:** We ask a lot of questions about education. What you find is that a tertiary education is a major factor in terms of predicting a sense of distrust in politicians but it also matters in terms of having a positive view of democracy. The interpretation of that is that people who get a tertiary education tend to be much more critical in their views. They are more supportive of the system as a whole, but they are more critical of what it actually does.

There is another interesting thing we have observed in the election studies over time. We ask a quiz, so we ask five questions with a true or false answer, and we have been asking that since the early nineties. Over that period, there has been a huge expansion in higher education but the level of political knowledge has actually not increased one jot—whether that matters to what we are actually telling our students or whether it is something else that is going on. So tertiary education does matter in all sorts of different ways. Barry Jones is correct.

**Mr GIBSON:** That is fascinating. Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to open the floor to you. I would like as many people as possible to ask questions and for the panel to be able to move through them, so we will aim for 15 minutes of Q&A. If you do have a question, I ask you to sit on those seats on my right and we will have a mike at the lectern. Having done this once or twice before in public forums, I may cut you off if you are just making a statement. I would like it to be a question. I am happy if there is a preamble, and I am going to follow the guidance of the Speaker to allow people to give context for the question they wish to ask, but I ask you to come to the question quickly. If you would like to direct it to any member of the panel, please indicate that so they can start thinking about their response, or if it is an open question I may then direct you from there. If there are no questions, I have a couple of Dorothy Dixers that I am happy to use.

**Mr BLACK:** David, I will try not to have too much of a preliminary statement here but there is a question for Ian McAllister. I had an interesting insight this afternoon when I was talking to a former colleague of mine and asking him whether he was going to come tonight and unfortunately he was not able to. He had been down campaigning for same-sex marriage in country towns in New South Wales and lots of people were coming up to him quite openly as One Nation supporters. Many of them were actually in favour of same-sex marriage themselves, yet they are flaking off from the major parties to support One Nation. The reason why they are supporting One Nation seemed to be not so much mistrust in the corruption sense but mistrust of the current political class in their ability to actually get things done. Did your survey try to sort out much of these two kinds of mistrusts—the feeling that they are corrupt and they go on helicopter flights et cetera, and the feeling that they just get tied up so much in party games in the parliament that nothing actually comes out of the parliament?

**Prof. McALLISTER:** We have looked at these various aspects of trust and we have looked at things like partisanship and so on and how it relates to One Nation support. As I mentioned, it is very much this time around a protest vote drawn very equally from Labor and coalition voters. We do find people are more distrustful of the political class but it is very difficult to disaggregate that to say whether it is to do with actually getting things done. Certainly, there is an economic dimension to it. People feel under economic pressure. They feel economically insecure and they are also much less likely to be partisan. Then once you get into general issues it is very difficult to distinguish them in any particular way.

I am sure there is a sense that it is this efficacy that people want—they want political efficacy—but what you most see it in is this distrust of the political class. For example, the way Pauline Hanson speaks and so on, she is clearly not a very articulate politician. It reminds me very much of protest politicians around the world, of which Donald Trump is one, and these people are elected for largely one reason—that is, because they are not politicians. They are anti-politics politicians, as we call them. They are people who actually do not like the political process and the political class.

**Mr BLACK:** And they will not get much done, either

**Mr GIBSON:** Ian, can I just pick up on that? You talked about the rise of career politicians. Is there a future for the anti-politician? Does the public want ordinary people who fumble at press conferences, who forget to pay their speeding fines—and mea culpa here—who do those types of things? Do they want ordinary people in politics or is it the career politician who will bring back the trust?

**Prof. McALLISTER:** I think what people want is authenticity. You see it, for example, in Donald Trump. He got 49 per cent of the vote and the majority of the electoral college. You also see it very clearly in Britain, with Jeremy Corbyn, the leader of the Labour Party, who is a classic anti-politics politician. He has been opposed to virtually everything that has happened over the past 30 years in British politics.

There is support for this. The public want to see it. I think part of the problem with career politicians is that they create expectations and those expectations are largely unfulfilled. That then creates disenchantment among voters and that breeds a lot of this, along with all of the other things that we have mentioned like economic performance and so on.

**Mr GIBSON:** Just very quickly, when the media pack are looking at a career politician versus an anti-politician, what goes through your minds?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Anti-politician—just wind them up and stand back and see what happens. There is nothing more dismaying than knowing politicians on a personal level and knowing that they are intelligent, sentient beings and watching them revert into these focus group machines—‘Hang on, your colleague just said those exact seven words in the same sequence this morning. What the?’ That frustrates people. I really think that is an element of the frustration.

**Mr GIBSON:** Next question?

**Ms McGOVERN:** One of the things that seems to be emerging worldwide is the attempt to implement sustainable development goals and now it is a new permanent agenda. A lot of work needs to be done and it needs to be done at the local government level. We have structures of government rivalling the United Nations, with national governments and state and provincial governments and local governments, which are not funded, yet have a lot of hard lifting to do. Where does the role of local government sit and people’s experience of local government sit within the whole trust spectrum?

**Mr GIBSON:** Ian, can I start with you and then Tracey, I would like to go to you from the Queensland perspective. Did the survey look at local government?

**Prof. McALLISTER:** No, I am afraid that is not something that we cover in the survey. We are concerned with national elections, so others could probably have a better perspective.

**Mr GIBSON:** I understand. Tracey, Queensland’s local government laws?

**Dr ARKLAY:** The way I know local government best is through its disaster management system, because in disaster management it is bottom up and so it starts with the local government area. It is hard to compare, because we have big councils with lots of resources like the Brisbane City Council and then we have really small councils with much fewer resources and people. On the whole—and I cannot quote who has said this—the government closest to the people is the one that people trust the most. The ones they have the most contact with and who they see as authentic, I suppose, are the ones that they trust more than the ones further away from them.

Local government is incredibly important. Maybe that is one positive story out of this. It is also a potential area for corruption, of course. There are two sides of that coin and we cannot forget about that, either.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Can I say something about that?

**Dr ARKLAY:** Yes, please.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Paul Pisale was the subject of a Crime and Corruption Commission investigation. It did not really dent his election result too much. He got about three-quarters of the primary vote.

**Dr ARKLAY:** He is a fantastic local campaigner.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Dynamic, yes.

**Dr ARKLAY:** And authentic, I think you would have to say.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** The teacup collection and everything.

**Mr GIBSON:** Espresso cups, I think, not tea.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** Sorry, I beg your pardon.

**Mr GIBSON:** David, in your previous role—and I am just picking up on this point from Tracey—we do not have an Integrity Commissioner for local councils in the same way, do we?

**Dr SOLOMON:** I have just finished a report for the government on complaints against local government councils—or I chaired a group of three people—and I am trying to work out which of the 50,000 words that I have written about this are appropriate. No, we do not have directly, but we do, of course, have the CCC, which is concerned with corruption and which looks after local government as well as state government. The complaints system that we were investigating then deals with lesser problems—misconduct and also misbehaviour, in effect. We have recommended some changes to the way that should be done but, no, there is no body looking at it. It depends on complaints being made from the ground up. Mind you, there are lots of those and sometimes—often, in fact—the complaints come from fellow councillors as well as from the public.

**Mr GIBSON:** Can I ask you a question, doctor? I would like you to come in on it from a media perspective. Certainly, in my time of politics, politicians would refer themselves to the CMC to say, 'An accusation has been made. I have nothing to hide but, do you know what? I'm not looking to let you refer me; I'm going to refer myself.' Does that help in the community's confidence and trust in politicians in general when they self-refer?

**Dr SOLOMON:** I do not think it makes any difference. All that comes across generally is, 'Oh, well, the CCC is looking at them.' The CCC, of course, has just finished an inquiry to try to cut down on the number of—

**Mr GIBSON:** Vexatious—

**Dr SOLOMON:**— election related issues that come to them, both affecting local government and state government in the election period, where people are deliberately trying to make political capital out of making a complaint.

**Mr GIBSON:** Is it a story if someone is referred to the CCC or should we wait until their findings are released?

**Mr ROBERTSON:** People expect their media to wait to try to find out what is going on. Part of the job of the media is to inspect and scrutinise those claims as best they can. The usual journalistic practice should ensure that this is dealt with fairly which includes, obviously, getting both sides of the story. Again, I quote the Pisale example. I am sceptical of the damage that people may face by being under investigation by the CCC if only because of the volume of these investigations. Yes, there are many examples where people have not had their public popularity dented by these.

I beg to differ on the point of whether or not it makes a difference in the eyes of the public if you refer yourself. At least that shows that you are willing for justice to be seen to be done. I think that it cannot hurt you if you refer yourself if there is any question raised.

**Mr GIBSON:** Thank you.

**Mr GREENSILL:** I am looking at possible solutions. I am scared by the introduction of voluntary voting without a doubt. I will just throw up a crazy suggestion from the floor. I would ask Ian and perhaps Tracey to respond. Would there be any value in having a recall of representatives in our system of government? I appreciate that it is available in very few jurisdictions, but I wonder whether there is a level of accountability that it would bring to the conversation?

**Mr GIBSON:** For the benefit of the room, when you talk about a recall, are we talking about a petition style where—

**Mr GREENSILL:** A petition leading to a referendum where a member is recalled and has to hand in their job.

**Mr GIBSON:** A crazy idea on the table. Tease that one out.

**Prof. McALLISTER:** No, I think that would be a perfectly reasonable thing to look at. It has been used in a variety of jurisdictions, particularly in the United States. How effective it is in terms of enforcing accountability on the behaviour of elected representatives, I am not so sure, because the experience in Westminster systems is that, if elected members transgress what voters think is acceptable behaviour, they simply either do not stand at the next election or they do not get re-elected. That was certainly the experience in Britain, when there were the sleaze allegations in the 1990s and then, again, the expenses scandals more recently. There was a huge turnover in elected representatives.

**Mr GIBSON:** Do we have any other questions from the floor? Please come forward and state your name—and can I just say, awesome shoes.

**QUESTIONER:** I was going to ask Ian—and I apologise if this information is not available; I am not sure—how does the dissatisfaction with democracy being associated with increased protest votes, or donkey votes, or first preferencing minor parties focus the election on minor party representatives?

**Prof. McALLISTER:** The answer is not particularly. There is a bit of a correlation with protest voting and so on, but it is something that is happening separate from these variety of things. Donkey voting as a predictor thing does not really happen all of that much now, because of Robson rotation in elections. In the past, it has been a factor. By and large, dissatisfaction with democracy, or feelings towards it, do not have

that many behavioural consequences at the moment. It is something underlying a lot of things that are swirling around. At some stage it is going to come to the surface, because it correlates with other aspects of distrust in politicians and so on.

**Mr GIBSON:** Thank you. Is there anyone with a burning question that they have not just brought themselves forward to ask?

**Mr BLACK:** I would like to take issue with Ian for his possible solution. He has left out multimember electorates elected by proportional representation to break away from the present dominance of the two major parties. It would broaden the debate in the chamber rather than out there in the populous at large.

**Prof. McALLISTER:** A variety of countries have PR-STV in multimember electorates. They have them in Ireland and they have basically the same thing that we have observed—declining trust in politicians. I think you can certainly tamper with the electoral system and it does matter in particular ways—and Tracey was talking about the effect of having small electorates, district magnitude. That does affect it. On the other hand, there is only so much an electoral system can do in terms of changing things. I think multimember constituencies—PR-STV—possibly has some effect, but I cannot imagine that it would have too much effect on this, because what is going on is much too broad to be affected by electoral mechanisms.

**Mr GIBSON:** Ladies and gentlemen, any final questions?

**Mr McCOMB:** We talked a lot about systemic type of things, like the last questioner, and people may not be liking our politicians—about corruption, misbehaviour, travel rorts and the like. I am not sure that it is either. I am old enough to remember Menzies and I am old enough to remember Nicklin as Premier. As far back as I can remember, people have always complained about politicians with their snouts in the trough. I want to know why is it that people are prepared to exercise a protest vote. Why do we see so much of that now with the rise of Wilders, Trump and Hanson? Is it really just that people are sick of the establishment and really like someone who will stick it up the establishment?

**Dr ARKLAY:** I think that is very much part of it; I really do. During the Menzies era and throughout that period of time they had people who did not like them at all, but they had a hard core group of rusted on voters who supported the party no matter what. What we are seeing now is that is declining and it is on a downward trajectory. That rusted on voter is something you used to be able to rely on. You cannot anymore. Is it a lack of ideology? Is it the fact that people do not believe, because their expectations have been dashed so many times, that government can actually do something for them and so it has been replaced by these protest movements or these parties that say things that sometimes you do not agree with but other times you really do agree with. You say, 'I don't like that, but I do like that aspect.' You hear it all the time with Pauline Hanson One Nation. 'I don't agree with her stance on Muslims, but I do agree with blah.' How does that then convert to a vote for her? It is a fascinating conundrum.

**Prof. McALLISTER:** If we compare the current political situation with, say, the period of the 1950s and Menzies the obvious thing is that the expansion of government has been absolutely huge over that period. In one of our surveys we asked a question whether people received a direct government benefit and we found that about 64 per cent of the electorate received a direct government benefit, so the expansion of government into people's lives has been absolutely immense. That has the effect that people have an expectation that government will deliver certain things for them. When government does not succeed in delivering that then there is a degree of disaffection. I think that is a large part of this. It is not simply that the politicians are different between the current time and the 1950s and 1960s but that government does a lot more and people's expectations are a lot higher.

**Mr GIBSON:** We will now give our panels the final say. Josh, you have the mic so it is kind of like a game of musical chairs. If you could give us a few remarks summing up your thoughts on the decline in political trust and what it means for Queensland and we will work our way through. Professor McAllister, you will be the final person to have your say.

**Mr ROBERTSON:** I am going to say that at first blush to me it appears to be a particular moment in time where it is reflecting something that is perennial. You talked about what the Bjelke-Petersen did to warrant distrust at a time when trust was so high. The interesting thing, of course, is the manifestation of One Nation support. I am a mere scribe; I am not a political scientist. However, I am aware of researchers currently looking at the rise of One Nation in terms of being a far-right political movement akin to others that we saw with Brexit, Trump, Wilders in the Netherlands and Marine Le Pen in France. There is a little bit of dissent about the idea that movements like One Nation represent the revolt of the working class. It has

been argued by some, including Frank Mols, who is in this room and is a University of Queensland political scientist, that to get to the numbers that they are getting—if you believe that One Nation has one in four voters—you need middle class support. Frank is supported by the Griffith University political scientist Paul Williams in that idea in that the rise of One Nation sees this leaching into the middle class of people who objectively are not suffering economic privation, so there is something else perhaps going on. Frank has done work suggesting it might be about anxiety protecting upward mobility that you have already been able to secure. I find that a very interesting idea. The proof will be in the pudding—the exit poll data that comes out of the Queensland election—but it is something that runs counter to everything I am hearing right now about One Nation.

**Dr ARKLAY:** Last thoughts? I think what we forget sometimes in this discussion is the work that our members of parliament do. It is a tough job. They are away from their families. But I think somehow they have to be able to communicate better with the population. We hear it all the time: you need to get out there and actually sell the story. Most of them are trying to do that. We have had listening tours forever. Beattie had listening tours. Everyone goes out and talks to people but somehow they are not able to convert into policies the kinds of things that those people who are now changing to One Nation, let's say, want. What to do about that I am still not really sure.

**Dr SOLOMON:** Back in the late 1960s I remember writing articles about the decline in the support for the major parties and that was then in the Senate primarily, but it was a pretty steady decline and it has been pretty steady ever since; it has just kept going. What is interesting is to compare that to the very interesting graph on satisfaction with democracy, which is not steady at all. It varied quite a lot. It may be a general trend, but there were huge changes along the way. The correlation between not voting for the major parties and a decline in satisfaction with democracy is not exactly established. I am not sure what it is. It could be more economic than anything else. I suspect that is right. I am not giving up.

**Prof. McALLISTER:** I think we should not give up. I do think the evidence for the decline of political trust is reasonably well established. Certainly there are cyclical patterns, and you mentioned satisfaction with democracy and so on. What we have seen since 2007 has been an unprecedented decline in a variety of indicators from a variety of surveys which have all told us pretty much the same thing. The question is: what do we do about this? I think to do anything serious about this there has to be a degree of political leadership across the political parties that we really have not seen in maybe 15 or 20 years or even going further back. What it suggests to me is that there will not be any major reform in the political system unless there is some major existential political threat to the political parties and they are forced to adapt to a lot of this. The experience of threats to political parties is that once that happens they do adapt extremely quickly. For example, they have been very slow in adapting to the internet and to the role of social media. The Greens have really taken a march on the major political parties in how they have used that. I think in the short to medium term it is going to be a very pessimistic situation. In the longer term there has to be some concerted attempt to try to deal with this by way of institutional reform.

**Dr SOLOMON:** Apart from which we should bring back John Howard.

**Prof. McALLISTER:** Or somebody else. John Curtin?

**Mr GIBSON:** Ladies and gentlemen, can you please join with me in thanking our panellists tonight? I would like to present each of you with a small gift that we have prepared and the best of thanks from the ASPG. It is a good bottle of parliamentary wine. I thank Mr Speaker for the good quality of parliamentary wine that you have. There is nothing better than that.

Ladies and gentlemen, this ends the formal part of tonight. There is an opportunity out on the level 5 colonnade for us to chat and to discuss. If you have a question that you wanted to ask any of the panellists but did not want to ask it publicly, this would be a beautiful opportunity to do that. I would also like to encourage you if you have not yet, please like our Facebook page, follow us on Twitter, look for my big shots on Instagram of Cuba. It is a great country. Do follow the ASPG and become involved in this as an organisation. We have a series of events, as I mentioned—three each year. Each of them pick on different topics that are of interest to those who have an interest within the Australian and Queensland political process and within our parliamentary area. If you have not joined yet and feel so inclined, we have membership forms for the ASPG outside as well ready to go. You can sign up tonight. We would love to have you as a member.

## Forum on Political Trust

A couple of things I would like to mention is that photos taken during this evening may be placed on the ASPG website and a transcript of the proceedings will be also once Hansard has transcribed it. If anyone objects to their image being used in this way, could you please contact our ASPG secretariat so that we can ensure that we do not put any photos up on to our webpage.

This now ends what I think has been a very insightful discussion. I do agree that it is the issue of our time. Political trust is imperative if we are going to see our democracy, our parliaments and the institutions that we operate under do so in such a way with confidence for all people, but we need to ensure that our people have the confidence. There is no easy answer and tonight has shown that very clearly. It is something that we must continue to work towards because our democracy, the Westminster system, whilst not perfect, has delivered much not only within Australia and Queensland but globally. I think we need to ensure we protect that and preserve it. I know many speakers have said—and I think one of the great things about Australia and Queensland is—that we can change governments without protest or bullets in the streets, without people losing their lives. It is about the debate of ideas and that is what we should always continue to encourage. It is certainly what the ASPG does. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your time tonight. Please let us depart to the colonnade and enjoy some of the refreshments that are available for everyone. Thank you.