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ADVANCE

Essays, opinions and ideas on public policy

October 2013

The social network
Taking the long view to create
good social policy

**Growing solutions,
harvesting answers**
Putting food onto the dinner tables of the world

Sharing, not shifting
Breaking the policy impasse over
asylum seekers

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Director's introduction

If there's one consistent message in the contributions in this issue of *ADVANCE*, it's that coming up with enduring, positive and achievable public policy means taking a long-term view.

But as we all know, taking a long-term view presents a number of significant challenges for everybody involved in the process of policy creation. Our political system, in particular, is not designed in a way to encourage this. All too often, we see short-term political gain, quick policy fixes and issues-based responses.

These problems aren't wholly owned by government. Because while the political system may foster their creation, it's incumbent on everyone involved in the policy process to suggest solutions. Big ideas are welcome, but real solutions have to be achievable and have to accept the political and policy reality facing Australia and many of its neighbours.

I'm proud to say that coming up with solutions to the region's policy problems is something where Crawford School of Public Policy at The Australian National University has a long and successful track record.

As the University's hub for public policy, Crawford School has a strong and growing academic staff in a wide variety of public policy areas. We've also been instrumental in helping to educate, train and inform many of the region's policymakers. Additionally, our strong and enduring relationship as a partner organisation with governments and policymakers gives us an unrivalled opportunity to share our ideas and influence public policy.

The essays, opinions and ideas on these pages were drawn from ANU Public Policy 2013 – our annual flagship public policy event. I'm grateful to the many speakers at the event, from all around the University, who provided these written contributions based upon their talks. Across their pages are many great ideas, and an understanding of the important role that academics can play in helping shape public policy.

I hope you enjoy it.

Professor Tom Kompas
Director, Crawford School of Public Policy

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The social network

Good social policy means taking a long-term view according to the Director of the new Social Policy Institute at Crawford School.

Divorce and separation are never easy, but in the UK from 1993 separated parents had more than just fractured feelings and scattered families to deal with. They also had to deal with the government, or more precisely, the deeply unpopular UK Child Support Agency (CSA).

The agency was set up to collect child support from parents and redistribute it to kids in need. But the good intentions turned into disastrous social policy. The agency quickly came under fire because the money being paid in by absent fathers wasn't going directly to their children.

By 1997 an Independent Case Examiners Office had been set up to deal with the barrage of complaints about the agency. By 2005 the then Prime Minister Tony Blair was admitting the agency was 'not properly suited' to its job after claims that for every £1.85 that the agency paid to children, it spent £1 on administration. Another MP called its tactics of 'snooping' on absent parents something like a 'sequel to *1984*'. In 2006 the government announced the agency would be axed.

For Professor Peter Whiteford, Director of the new Social Policy Institute at Crawford School, the CSA is an example of well-intentioned social policy going terribly wrong.

"It was both politically controversial and terribly unpopular," he says.

"One reason it was ineffective was that it initially was purely a savings measure. If the mother was on a welfare payment, the government effectively took all the money that went into child support, so none of the money that absent fathers paid went to benefit their children. That sort of design meant neither fathers nor mothers had any stake in the system, and I think that kind of design feature was very poor.

"If you want to have good social policy, you need to have something that gives people a stake in making it work."

If you want to have good social policy, you need to have something that gives people a stake in making it work.

Professor Peter Whiteford is Director of the Social Policy Institute at Crawford School of Public Policy in the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific.

That's where the Social Policy Institute comes in. The Institute draws in high-profile social policy researchers from inside Crawford School—including Professor Robert Breunig, Associate Professor Adrian Kay, Dr Sharon Bessell, Dr Ann Neville and Associate Professor Bingqin Lee—into a network of professionals from all around ANU and the social policy community more broadly.

Whiteford says there has never been a more important time to focus on designing effective social policy.

"Social programs such as social security, health and community services account for about 45 per cent of all government spending in Australia. In addition, we're facing very significant challenges, such as an ageing population putting pressure on age pensions, nursing homes and community care and the healthcare system. We would expect that the needs for social spending will be rising over the next 20 years.

"We are also seeing pressure in terms of desirable new spending such as DisabilityCare Australia, and we seem to have a gap between the amount we collect in taxes for these purposes and what we need to spend."

Whiteford suggests that the design of good social policy will require policymakers to take a long-term view of what's in the greater public interest. While he acknowledges that short-term politics makes that difficult to achieve, he says that Australia is experienced in making tough choices which work out well.

"An example of effective social policy is the superannuation system," he says.

"It was expanded in the 1980s and then made mandatory in 1992, and although there are challenges with the system we have grown a very large private saving in Australia through it. We now have accumulated savings in superannuation funds that are greater than our GDP, which helps the economy a lot.

"The gains of the system were not immediate, but it was something with a long-term impact. The combination of the means-tested age pension and growing superannuation savings both looks after the poor and provides improved income maintenance at retirement. I think it's a good example of effective social policy."

And it's that long-term view of good social policy design that he hopes the Social Policy Institute can contribute to.

"Good social policy is informed by evidence and research. You also need to take a long-term perspective and not develop social policies as a matter of expediency to meet current budgetary needs. You need to plan ahead and work out sensible structures and what is sustainable over the long run both financially and in human terms.

"For good policy we need long-term planning and lots of solid research evidence. I hope the Social Policy Institute can play a significant role in that."

Disasters and public policy

Australia is good at responding to natural disasters, so why the public backlash against emergency services and political leaders each time one happens, asks Stephen Dovers.

Disasters are anything but predictable, but the community's response to them follows a well-worn, time-honoured pattern. In the aftermath of each disaster we see confusion, blame and dissatisfaction squarely aimed at emergency services and our political leaders.

There's no doubt that, as a policy problem, disasters are deeply difficult. Disasters are uncertain and sporadic and we tend to forget soon after and leave policy improvement unfinished. On top of that, the stakes are high: people die, communities are devastated, political and professional careers are made or ruined, and feedbacks are fast and cruel through headlines, courts and inquiries.

But on international comparison, Australia is good at coping with natural disasters; well-equipped to prepare and respond, and with a proven track record of doing so.

Professor Stephen Dovers is an ANU Public Policy Fellow, a researcher with the Bushfire CRC and Director of the Fenner School of Environment and Society in the ANU College of Medicine, Biology and Environment.

So why, time and again, do we see the backlash? The problem is precisely that we are good at preparing for and responding to routine fires, floods and severe storms: meaning expectations are raised but then disappointed when the inevitable big event arrives and lives and properties lost.

In the 2013 second edition of the *Handbook of Disaster Policies and Institutions*, John Handmer and I identify lack of attention to strategic policy and institutional aspects of disaster management (as opposed to operational emergency management), and the fact that with climatic, demographic and social change, future shortcomings will be more problematic. Additionally, responsibility across policy sectors is unclear, although the response has traditionally been left to emergency services organisations cleaning up after decisions made in other policy sectors.

That has shifted. The term 'natural disasters' is now less used, as policy and management experience shows that vulnerability to disasters is created by people, governments and land uses through building in flood zones, watering down building standards, and settling in the path of likely fires.

The paramilitary, top-down 'rescue' model of emergency response, while always required, has enlarged to a community-oriented model, and calls for the mainstreaming of disaster policy, attending the creation of vulnerability in multiple policy sectors rather than simply the aftermath. Similar but more recent shifts in thinking about the related area of climate change adaptation see a comparable broadening of policy thinking.

In Australia, two new policy goals express this transition: 'disaster resilient communities' and 'shared responsibility' across community and agencies. We are only beginning to explore the difficult, complex implications of these alluring notions as policy goals to be implemented.

Over the two decades I've researched this area, I've admired the commitment and professionalism of the Australian emergency management sector. The problem is not with our professionals or with the volunteers who work with them; they are good and constantly seek to do better. Instead the problem is with the political dynamic, policy and institutional settings, and media and public debates. I suggest three areas where Australia should focus its attention.

The first is to seek to reduce the profile of post-event litigation. As established by my ANU colleague Michael Eburn, cases are rare and litigants will rarely win. The cost and time taken is excessive, and fear and a dangerous caution is created in professional and volunteer responders. The wish for blame and recompense by those directly affected is more understandable than the eagerness of some lawyers and most media to prompt an unproductive blame-game and enjoy the court proceedings that follow. I fear a retreat into strict proceduralism, where the (inevitably inadequate) rule book is followed as a defence against later attack, and professional judgement and experience not employed.

The second is to ask whether Royal Commissions, coronials and special commissions of inquiry are the best way to learn and improve. Such inquiries too often apply an unusually high standard of proof, are adversarial, take forever as they cover too much, and have limited terms of reference drawn from the aftermath of one unique event. At the 2012 Australian Fire and Emergency Authorities Council annual conference, I promoted an alternative model of an independent but quicker initial inquiry, identifying issues that need to be addressed, and tasking these to different and specifically-constructed processes for resolution. Different issues—interagency coordination, communications, deaths, insurance policy, etc—are best dealt with in different forums, and more quickly.

The third is a gap exposed in every post-disaster inquiry; what are our expectations, what are the measures of success rather than those of failure that are the overwhelming focus of debate? Proving avoided losses after the fact is difficult, but is hardly ever discussed.

Colleagues and I are engaged in ongoing work on fire, flood and other policy, and the institutional, legal and market options available. Across a broad range of research projects there is a convergence in reframing the policy problem away from the specific to the broad. The core issues are governance, policy integration and institutional coordination, and relative public versus government responsibility. We spend too much time asking what emergency managers can do for the rest of society, not what can be done to support and enable those who clean up the messes other sectors create or seek to ignore.

There will be more and worse disasters in future. More people, properties and communities will be affected. It would be a costly and tragic mistake if Australia does not engage in a measured, informed and reasonable discussion over expectations, how to learn and who is responsible.

How universities are failing governments (and what we can do about it)

Universities need to raise their game in order to help governments respond to an increasingly complex world, writes Gabriele Bammer.

You might not know it from the simplistic sloganeering of our politicians and the reporting in our media, but the complex problems that governments must deal with—like global environmental change, organised crime, disaster preparedness and refugee migration—do not have perfect solutions.

The clear water of these problems is muddied by value conflicts, seemingly contradictory solutions, missing data, uncertainty and ambiguity, not to mention ideological, cultural, economic and other constraints.

Complex problems also do not exist in isolation; they are interconnected. Extreme weather events are part of global environmental change and require improved disaster preparedness. Refugee camps provide venues for organised predatory criminals, as well as for the spread of infectious disease. As a consequence, any intervention can have a ripple effect far beyond the immediate problem it is aimed at. This means that all the outcomes stemming from government policy cannot be predicted in advance. Unintended adverse consequences and unpleasant surprises are likely.

But complexity doesn't just lurk in the policy solutions, it's also in the politics that surround any choice. Any policy will have opponents and any government decision is open to criticism and attack. Opponents have also become more sophisticated in framing issues to generate public support, in using the media, and in generally making it hard for governments to ignore them.

The big challenge for governments is to both take the most effective action on these complex policy problems and to manage the politics decisively. The danger is that managing the politics may be done at the expense of effective action. As opponents get more sophisticated and the politics become more complex, this could lead to poor responses to complex problems and weaker governance.

Universities can and should do more to support strong democratic governance and effective public policy. In particular, universities can better educate politicians and public servants, and develop ways to improve understanding of complexity and imperfection, using that knowledge to support the development and implementation of effective public policy. Let's start with the skills that universities impart to graduates, who include many politicians and public servants. What we aim to do is to develop rigorous logical thinking, analytical skills, the ability to scrutinise a problem and gain more knowledge. Those are important skills. But they are not enough.

Universities do not yet have particularly well-developed and effective ways to ensure that graduates understand and can respond to interconnections between problems. Universities also still have a long way to go in helping graduates to identify 'best possible' and 'least worst' solutions and to be able to respond to the unintended adverse consequences and unpleasant surprises that may arise from policy decisions. Politicians and public servants—the good ones at least—learn these skills on the job, but universities do not capture that knowledge to add to our educational repertoire; that's an important task for us to undertake. Universities could also do better in how well we understand complexity and imperfection and use that to support the development and implementation of effective public policy. There are three areas in universities that we could build on to achieve this.

One is problem-based research and education. There are growing numbers of academic centres

Gabriele Bammer is an ANU Public Policy Fellow and Director of the Research School of Population Health in the ANU College of Medicine, Biology and Environment. She is a Research Fellow, Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management, John F Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University and Program Leader, ARC Centre of Excellence in Policing and Security.

dedicated to tackling complex problems, such as: sustainable futures, urban policy and health equity. These centres, by-and-large independently, find that they need to develop new ways of thinking and innovative methods for tackling their problems. But there is no way for them to share and build on their insights.

A second set of developments is a growing number of groups which are starting to build theory and methods for dealing with complexity. But these groups are small and fragmented and again, do not share and build on insights.

The third area that universities could draw on involves bringing together the insights of existing disciplines and practice areas on topics that are fundamental to dealing with complexity and imperfection; such as uncertainty and change.

What I have described—capturing the skills of effective politicians and public servants, combining methodological insights from groups researching complex problems, overcoming the fragmentation of effort, and drawing together knowledge about core elements of complexity from existing disciplines and practice areas—is not the mandate of any established group in universities. But making it our core business could be a major contribution that universities could make.

An effective way to approach this is to establish a cross-cutting, methodologically focused discipline—Integration and Implementation Sciences. Integration and Implementation Sciences addresses three domains: synthesising disciplinary and stakeholder knowledge, understanding and managing diverse unknowns and providing integrated research support (combining what we know and effective approaches to what we don't know) for policy and practice change.

The big challenge for governments is to take the most effective action on complex policy problems and to manage the politics decisively.

Such a discipline provides a way of capturing and codifying the diverse range of methods and concepts that politicians, public servants and researchers dealing with complex problems have developed. It also provides an organised way of scouring existing disciplines and practice areas for relevant knowledge.

It is an effective step that would yield rapid results for universities in supporting strong democratic governance and effective public policy. Instead of being silently complicit in disguising the difficult challenges and complex problems that underpin policy choices, universities have a responsibility to recognise, research and reveal the tapestry of options and trade-offs that should inform public policy. We need to embrace complexity and imperfection, not ignore them.

This piece was first published in The Australian *Higher Education section.*

Cognitive capital

We need new ways of thinking about our most valuable resource, writes Kaarin Anstey.

It's been said of the young, that the mind is a terrible thing to waste. That's true, but it's also a very expensive thing to waste. And yet, every day, the cost of that waste—caused by poor policies and a failure to recognise the issues associated with dementia and other cognitive diseases—sees a rapidly rising bill for society.

It is only recently that our minds, or at least our cognitive capacities, have been viewed as a form of human capital. But consider this; at a society level, the overall cognitive capacities of the population provide the main resource for creating wealth through innovation, research and development, education and employment. All of this adds up to society's cognitive capital.

A major threat to cognitive capital in ageing is disease related cognitive decline. Currently about 250,000 Australians are living with dementia, and this is projected to increase to 1.13 million by 2050 without any intervention.

When viewed as a form of productive capital, there is a strong social and economic case for investing in cognitive development in children, maintaining cognitive capital in adulthood and preventing cognitive decline in later-life. Taking care of cognitive development between birth and adulthood enables individuals to perform at their peak during their years of paid employment, unpaid contributions beyond middle-age and to maintain optimal independence through to the end of life. In other words, it pays off throughout people's lives.

In addition, development of the brain and cognitive reserve also creates a buffer against neurological insult and injury, including disease. Optimal cognitive capacity enables quality of life across all domains including health, social engagement, intellectual engagement and economic engagement.

Another potential payback for increased investment in cognitive capital is that as our population ages, enhancing cognitive capacities can contribute to retaining older adults in the workforce, maintaining the tax base, and minimising needs for health and welfare expenditure. *Living Longer, Living Better* reforms in aged care can be enhanced when people are better able to maintain their independence, self-manage chronic disease, and lead their own consumer directed care.

Maintaining cognitive capacities is also a fundamental way to address age-discrimination against older workers. With the increase in age at which adults are eligible for the aged pension, and a decreasing dependency ratio, there is also an increased need to keep older workers' minds sharper for longer.

Of course, even with more focused policy and increased investment there will still be an increased risk of cognitive impairment and dementia; for which there is presently no cure or effective treatment. But there is increasing evidence that building cognitive capital throughout life provides a buffer against cognitive impairment in later-life and may delay the onset of dementia. There is also increasing evidence showing that many risk factors for cognitive decline are amenable to intervention.

The good news is there is plenty that can be achieved through public policy to build cognitive capital areas of education, environment and public health. Risk reduction can be achieved through promotion of lifestyle factors, including quitting smoking, reducing unhealthy diets and sedentary behaviour, and avoidance of head injury. Then there are disease factors that can be addressed such as prevention of hypertension, high cholesterol and diabetes if possible, and optimal management of these conditions once diagnosed. There are also social and environmental factors that have been linked to cognitive function and the pathology that is the hallmark of Alzheimer's disease. These include exposure to environmental toxins, air pollution, second-hand smoke, and pesticides. Each can be addressed by public policy.

Finally, the amount and quality of education has been demonstrated to be one of the strongest predictors of how individual cognitive function develops over an adult's life, and their risk of dementia. Taking a life-long approach to cognitive capital is a new way of thinking that will increasingly be critical for countries to remain economically competitive and improve well-being as populations grow older worldwide. And it's a great way to ensure that we're looking after our most valuable resource.

Professor Kaarin Anstey is an ANU Public Policy Fellow and Director of the Centre for Research on Ageing, Health and Wellbeing in the ANU College of Medicine, Biology and Environment.

Growing solutions, harvesting answers

Putting food onto the world's dinner tables is a challenge the new Food Policy Institute aims to tackle.

Good policy doesn't just mean it's clear, easy to understand and straightforward to implement. It can also mean the difference between life and death. Take food policy; get it wrong, export industries can collapse, crops can rot in the ground and people can starve.

Our supermarket shelves may be stacked high, but in our region these concerns are never far from the surface. In 2008, while the affluent West reeled from the Global Financial Crisis, in many of the world's developing nations another crisis was unfolding— the Global Rice Crisis. In Vietnam, the rice bowl of the world, the government—fearing a poor crop and aiming to protect people from the effects of rising oil prices—banned export sales of rice.

The consequences were devastating. Throughout Vietnam, people, fearing shortages, began hoarding rice. Prices quickly doubled, stock was emptied from the shelves and farmers lost countless millions from not being able to sell their products into lucrative overseas markets.

"This is in Vietnam—the world's biggest rice factory where there is plenty enough rice for everyone, more than enough to go around. It's an example of bad food policy," says Professor Tom Kompas, Director of Crawford School and the newly-formed Food Policy Institute.

Kompas was in Hanoi during the 2008 Global Rice Crisis. What he saw there left a permanent impression on the importance of getting food policy right.

Moreover, he thinks that even now, another piece of poor food policy is having unintended effects—the production of biofuels.

"In the last five years there has been a big move in the USA to use soy and other kinds of food for energy—biofuels," says Kompas.

Food is one of the major challenges facing society. We need to have a stable food supply system to make sure we can feed everyone.

"It sounds like the right idea—let's use all of this corn and soy beans that we grow, turn it into ethanol and use that as an energy source so that we use less oil; there's less carbon dioxide from oil, and we're using a home-grown product.

"But the effect is to increase the price of those foods dramatically, which of course disproportionately affects people on low incomes. Also, given the change in the price of oil recently as a result of using less of it, it causes producers to extract faster. That increased use of oil around the world then generates more carbon dioxide than they would without the policy."

Kompas calls this a Green Paradox, where well-meaning policy has a disastrous, unintended and undesirable effect elsewhere.

The answer, he says, is to avoid it in the first place and not to use basic foods for energy. But

Professor Tom Kompas is Director of Crawford School of Public Policy, Dean of the Australian National Institute of Public Policy, Director of the Australian Centre for Biosecurity and Environmental Economics, and Director of the Food Policy Institute.

the Green Paradox highlights another significant issue—that food policy sometimes comes into conflict with climate change policy. It's a conflict he hopes the formation of the Food Policy Institute can help to address.

The Institute—officially launched at ANU Public Policy 2013 by the Hon Joe Ludwig, the then Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry—aims to bring together researchers working in food policy with researchers working in climate change, the environment and energy.

"The Institute has two roles," says Kompas. "First, it's an umbrella organisation that captures existing centres within Crawford School and brings them together to form nice synergies and new ways of connecting together. That includes the Australian Centre for Biosecurity and Environmental Economics, the Centre for Water Economics and Policy, and the Centre for Climate Economics and Policy. Food can't be disconnected from water, energy, climate change and natural resources, so those centres will come together at the Food Policy Institute to focus on food.

"But the Food Policy Institute will also bring together expertise from throughout the region and the world. We already have some very important partners throughout the region, including groups in Vietnam, Indonesia, China, India and more, all working with us to try and tackle food policy issues."

For Kompas, applying academic expertise to the issue of ensuring that people have sufficient food on their plates is the most important role that the Food Policy Institute hopes to play.

"Food is one of the major challenges facing society. We need to have a stable food supply system to make sure we can feed everyone.

"We want to study ways to guarantee we have an adequate food supply and that there is stability in the provision of food. That's an issue tied to poverty. Some of the poorest people in the world are the ones who don't possess adequate supplies of food.

"So good food policy should look at all of these things—the things that we care about in terms of providing the essentials for alleviating poverty, thinking about development and also looking at what policies might be put in place to ensure that we have stable food supplies.

"For the Institute that means bringing in new students, that means education, it means executive education, it means a stream of research designed to inform individuals and government about what good food policy is. That's what really excites me—that we're reaching into the region, getting all that expertise and bringing it together through the Food Policy Institute to really make a difference in people's lives."

More: watch a video interview with Tom Kompas at http://bit.ly/growingsolutions

Free but not equal

In today's neo-liberal world freedom may be taking away our right to be treated equally, writes Margaret Thornton.

The twin values of liberalism, contemporary Australia's prevailing political philosophy, are equality and freedom. This is liberalism with a small 'l', with its focus on civil liberties and the rights of individuals; values of which are supported by the major parties and the Greens. But while equality and freedom have an ancient lineage their meaning is shaped by time and place.

The contemporary understanding of equality is that every citizen has the same rights and entitlements as every other citizen regardless of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age or other feature of identity. Nevertheless, as equality is an ideal rather than a reality, anti-discrimination legislation has been enacted to ensure a certain level of equality between citizens. The legislation provides an avenue of complaint for those subjected to

Margaret Thornton is an ANU Public Policy Fellow and a Professor of Law in the ANU College of Law.

discrimination in specified areas of public life, as well as promoting equality through community education.

Counterbalanced with the principle of equality is that of freedom, or liberty. Today, a cluster of familiar freedoms are valued, including freedom of speech, freedom of belief, freedom to associate, freedom to travel and so on. These freedoms are not guaranteed by an official instrument such as the Australian Constitution or a bill of rights but are implicit in liberal democratic government—although some freedoms have been judicially recognised by the legal system.

What is notable about the relationship between freedom and equality is the constant tension between them; when freedom is in the ascendancy, there is a struggle for equality and vice versa. Historically, equality has played second fiddle to liberty. It is really only after the Second World War that it has grudgingly been accepted that people stigmatised by virtue of characteristics over which they have no control should receive equal treatment. It is the responsibility of the liberal state to implement some sort of redress.

The incremental passage of legislation at the federal level nevertheless points to the timidity surrounding state responsibility. Over the last few decades we have seen government take small steps to ensure equality: race in the 1970s, sex in the 1980s, disability in the 1990s, age in the 2000s and sexuality in the 2010s. In regard to the latter, an amendment to the *Sex Discrimination Act* has only recently been tabled to disallow discrimination in respect of sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex status. The amendment is presently before the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs which called for public submissions in order to report to parliament.

Today, the embrace of neo-liberalism has seen a greater emphasis on freedom, particularly freedom within the market, which has induced something of a retreat from equality. Most notably, employers have sought greater freedom from regulation in terms of who they employ and the conditions under which they employ workers.

In fact, the ill-fated *Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination (HRAD) Bill 2013*, abandoned by the Gillard Government, emerged largely as a result of pressure from employer groups to reduce regulation and 'red tape'. A major aim of the Bill was to effect a consolidation of five separate Acts that had emerged over four decades with numerous discrepancies and inconsistencies.

The draft bill was trenchantly attacked on the ground that it constrained freedom, particularly freedom of speech. Criticism focused on the extension of the vilification provisions in the *Racial Discrimination Act* to other grounds because of the outcry over Eatock v Bolt in 2011, which related to several newspaper articles and blogs published by journalist, Andrew Bolt, and the *Herald & Weekly Times*. Bolt was found to have engaged in conduct reasonably likely 'to offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate' a group of fair-skinned Aboriginal people by making derogatory imputations about their Aboriginality. This case is a classic instance of the way freedom is pitted against equality.

While equality may have triumphed in the Bolt case, the political pendulum could be about to swing back to freedom more forcefully. Following the withdrawal of the HRAD Bill by the Gillard Government, the then Shadow Attorney-General, the Hon George Brandis SC, signaled his intention to shift the focus of the Australian Human Rights Commission away from anti-discrimination legislation towards positive rights and freedoms, particularly freedom of speech. This is despite the fact that the primary function of the Commission since its inception has been to administer the anti-discrimination acts.

Strictly speaking, no one can be against freedom, but to privilege it over equality invariably favours those with property, power and influence. Mr Brandis' proposal therefore does not bode well for a society still struggling to come to terms with the long history of exclusion and discrimination against disfavoured others. Once the political pendulum points firmly towards freedom, it is very hard to shift.

This piece was first published in The Canberra Times.

Sharing, not shifting

How Australia can contribute to refugee protection in our region. By Penelope Mathew.

Cognitive dissonance is defined as an uncomfortable feeling that results from holding two conflicting beliefs. If this feeling seems strangely familiar, it might be because you've been keeping a close eye on Australia's response to refugee protection, where what we know we should do is quite the opposite of what we are actually doing.

This cognitive dissonance is illustrated most vividly by the effective excision of Australia from its own migration zone.

On one level we know we have certain legal obligations and, that underlying those, are certain moral values. We are party to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, and we know that the Convention's obligations, particularly the duty not to return refugees to persecution, apply to all refugees, no matter where they come from and no matter how they arrive in the country.

We're probably conscious that the Refugee Convention reflects a fundamental moral insight— that to return a person to persecution makes us complicit in that persecution.

But despite what the Convention says, Australia has literally shrunk from the obligations in the Refugee Convention.

The first shrinkage occurred after the arrival of the *Tampa* in 2001 when amendments to the *Migration Act* were passed in order to excise Christmas Island and other territories from the migration zone, and to send asylum seekers to Nauru and PNG under the so-called Pacific Solution. Recently, this has been extended to any 'unauthorised maritime arrival', meaning that none of these people may apply for a protection visa as a right, regardless of which bit of Australia they land on.

> **The effectiveness of deterrence measures is debatable, and the evidence we have indicates that deterrence is not working.**

To justify the shrinkage, lawyers will do what they do best—exploit legal loopholes, pointing to the absence of a full right to asylum in the Refugee Convention as opposed to the obligation not to return someone to a place of persecution.

However, it is doubtful that the drafters of the Convention intended to create a second-class category of refugees who could be 'warehoused'. Like all human rights treaties, the Refugee Convention should be interpreted *pro homine*—literally 'for man' or 'for humanity'—that is, in a manner that affords most protection to the human person.

Those of us who are not lawyers have other justifications that operate at a moral level, rather than a legal level. Indeed, we might say the law is somehow irrelevant, or out of date despite the fact that it appears to reflect some moral values that a lot of us care very deeply about.

Professor Penelope Mathew is an ANU Public Policy Fellow and the Freilich Foundation Professor in the ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences.

For example, we might tell ourselves that those who arrive unannounced and by sea are bad refugees, because they have jumped the so-called queue. This probably reflects a deep-seated need for, and very understandable attempt to impose some order on an otherwise disorderly situation. However, a queue only works when the stakes are not particularly high, and when there is hope for those at the back of the line.

We know that the global refugee population stands at around 12 million people, yet the number of resettlement places available globally stands at around one per cent of that total. Fewer than 100,000 refugees a year benefit from resettlement, while local integration in a country of first asylum is often not an option, and repatriation remains a distant dream. This means there is no legitimate expectation of gaining a durable solution by waiting and there is no orderly queue—crowds in refugee camps, perhaps, but nothing like a queue.

Most recently though, the story we have been telling ourselves is that we're doing this for asylum seekers' own good. It is to stop them getting on boats and endangering their own lives.

This reasoning simply doesn't float. The effectiveness of deterrence measures is debatable, and the evidence we have indicates that deterrence is not working. Meanwhile, the purportedly 'humanitarian' aspect of this story ignores the fact that people have a right to live in dignity. What gives us the right to tell refugees that they must live a precarious life that they deem unliveable instead of risking death? And how do we justify the impact on human dignity of the 'no advantage' concept, which sees asylum seekers in limbo, without work and trying to survive on 89 per cent of the Centrelink special benefit? This is not humanitarian. It is discriminatory, and a penalty for the mode of arrival. Calling it 'no advantage' cannot hide the facts.

At the bottom of all the stories we tell ourselves, there lies a fear—a fear of being overwhelmed. It is important to confront that fear and to question whether it matches reality. At an abstract, big picture level, we might question whether all people would move if they were in fact able to do so and what the world might look with more global migration. It is possible that the world would look a lot fairer if people were able to move more freely. At a more practical, here and now level we might do a

Australia could look to best practice under the Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action, which aims to deal with refugee issues in Latin America using a geographic approach instead of a population approach.

cost benefit analysis and decide that the costs of attaining perfect border control are overwhelming. Reading the Senate estimates committee transcripts and discovering that we have already paid Nauru $1.6 million just for the Nauruan processing visas, certainly suggests that this is not money well spent.

Instead of asking 'what if they all came here', I think we should ask 'where do they all go?' The reality is that 80 per cent of the world's refugees are sheltered in developing countries. It is for those countries and for refugees that we must craft a response.

The way forward is to focus on what the Houston report, the report of the panel of experts on asylum seekers, calls incentives for lawful movement. Of high priority should be the report's recommendation that Australia should double current expenditure on capacity-building, and focus this aid on 'programs in support of building the regional framework for improved protections, registration, processing, integration, resettlement, returns and other priorities'.

One idea suggested by lawyer Keane Shum is twinning resettlement with local integration. Could Australia encourage other countries to offer local integration, by offering to resettle one refugee for

every refugee who is locally integrated, with a focus on resettling refugees who cannot be integrated in those countries? Australia could borrow from the idea of 'resettlement in solidarity' practised in Latin America through which a number of countries resettle refugees from Ecuador, the country that currently receives most asylum seekers in that region.

Note here that I am talking about twinning, not swapping. The swapping envisaged by the so-called Malaysia solution, is built on a precarious foundation of governmental assurances with no legal mechanisms to ensure refugee protection. The focus needs to be on ramping up protection first, which might give asylum seekers the confidence to remain where they are, and which also might give countries of first asylum the confidence to become party to the Refugee Convention.

Another idea is to give additional overseas aid which funds integration projects that benefit both locals and refugees and asylum seekers as recommended for many years by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Australia could look to best practice under the Mexico Declaration and Plan of Action, which aims to deal with refugee issues in Latin America using 'a geographic approach instead of a population approach, so that receiving communities benefit on [an] equal footing with refugees and other persons in need of protection'.

To give a practical example of Latin American cooperation, in September 2010, Brazil agreed to support the integration of 15,000 Colombians in Sucumbios in Ecuador, which is a border region, by funding projects including education, and water and sanitation infrastructure. Projects like these benefit both citizens and refugees in the underdeveloped border areas.

The focus on citizens and refugees does things for both Australia and recipient countries that go beyond refugee protection. Additional overseas development assistance offers the possibility that the citizens of developing countries will benefit and that refugees will not need to move on in search of greater protection.

The message sent by such initiatives is very different to the message of excision. Instead of projecting cognitive dissonance, the message is that Australia is concerned with sharing responsibility for protecting refugees. What we need are collective solutions that lift and harmonise standards of protection rather than shift the sites of protection in order to lower standards. To achieve these solutions we need clarity in our thinking and the messages we send to potential partners.

Food into the future

What will Asia's emerging economies mean for the region's food production? Kym Anderson offers some insights.

When it comes to Asia's emerging economies, much of the focus has been on the insatiable need for natural resources, particularly from the mining sector, to sustain growth. But, with a growing economy comes a burgeoning need for access to other primary products, including food.

The rise of Asia's emerging economies is remarkable for many reasons, not least of which is the sheer weight of numbers. Earlier industrialising East Asian economies represented a relatively small proportion of the global population, whereas the growth in today's emerging Asian economies, particularly densely populated China and India, marks a change in the collective economic future of two-fifths of the world.

Recently colleagues and I examined the impact of these growing economies on world trade through to 2030. While we modelled several scenarios, this article focuses on the 'business as usual' model.

In that period, bilateral trade will have to shift significantly to accommodate the growth of emerging Asian economies. What that means is that natural-resource-rich economies will boost their share of exports to China and other non-resource-rich Asian countries.

To give some sense of the enormity of the trade shift, by 2030 emerging Asia will consume more than half the world's grain and fossil fuel and three-quarters of its other minerals. The Asian emerging economies' share of global exports of all products will nearly double by 2030. China's share alone will grow from eight to 21 per cent. That rise in export share comes at the expense of high-income countries.

Primary products will become less important for emerging Asian countries' exports and considerably more important in their imports, which is good news for countries that are comparatively lightly-populated and have agricultural land and/or mineral resources. Regions that fit that description include Australasia, the Middle East and Latin America.

These changes mean that food self-sufficiency in emerging Asian economies will fall considerably by 2030 under present policies. For the purposes of this research, we did not assume any agricultural protection growth. It is possible, however, that China may try to slow the growth in food import dependence by putting in place increasingly protectionist import barriers.

Self-sufficiency isn't the best measure of ensuring food security though. A more meaningful indicator is real per capita private consumption of food products by households. On our projections, real per capita food consumption increases by 76 per cent for these emerging economies and more than doubles for China and South Asia. Even if income distribution worsened in these economies over the next two decades, their people almost certainly will be much better fed by 2030, thanks to growth in their disposable incomes.

A far more efficient path for emerging Asian countries to take to boost their food security is to increase investments in agricultural research and development and rural human capital and infrastructure. This in turn, will boost food productivity growth and farm household incomes.

For naturally resource rich regions, Asia's emerging economies are a bright light on the horizon if China and India continue to grow as projected. But even if their growth rates were to slow considerably, the outlook is still very positive.

Kym Anderson is Professor of Economics in the Arndt-Corden Department of Economics at Crawford School of Public Policy, ANU College of Asia and the Pacific.

Equity, social capital and sustainable well-being

We have never had a greater opportunity to create the world we want, writes Robert Costanza.

The world has changed dramatically. We no longer live in a world relatively empty of humans and their artefacts. We now live in a new geologic era—the Anthropocene—a full world where humans are dramatically altering our ecological life-support system.

But despite this change, our traditional economic concepts and models simply haven't kept pace. They were largely developed when the human population was relatively small and natural resources were abundant.

So how do we go about creating good public policy and sustainable prosperity in the third millennium? We are going to need a new vision of the economy and its relationship to society and the rest of nature that is better adapted to the conditions we now face. We are going to need policies that respect planetary boundaries; that recognise that the material economy cannot grow forever on this finite planet; that recognise the dependence of human well-being on good social relations and fairness; and that recognise that the ultimate goal is real, sustainable human well-being, not merely growth of material consumption concentrated in the hands of a few.

The time has come when we must make this transition. We have no choice. Our present path is clearly unsustainable. As Paul Raskin,

Professor Robert Costanza is Chair in Public Policy at Crawford School of Public Policy in the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific.

founding Director of the Tellus Institute and the Global Scenario Group, has said, "Contrary to the conventional wisdom, it is business as usual that is the utopian fantasy; forging a new vision is the pragmatic necessity." But, we do have a choice about how to make the transition and what the new state of the world will be. We can engage in a global dialogue to envision 'the future we want', the theme of the UN Rio+20 conference, and then devise adaptive strategies to get us there, or we can allow the current system to collapse and rebuild from a much worse starting point. Obviously, the former strategy is better.

To achieve the future we want, we need to focus more directly on the goal of sustainable human well-being rather than merely Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth. This includes protecting and restoring nature, achieving social and intergenerational fairness (including poverty alleviation), stabilising populations, and recognising the significant non-market contributions to human well-being from natural and social capital. To do this, we need to develop better measures of progress that go well beyond GDP and begin to measure human well-being and its sustainability more directly.

We need a new model of the economy that starts by recognising that our material economy is embedded in society, which is embedded in our ecological life-support system, and that we cannot understand or manage our economy without understanding the whole, interconnected system. It also recognises that growth (increase in size or scale) and development (improvement in quality) are not always linked and that true development must be defined in terms of the improvement of sustainable well-being (SWB), not merely growth in material consumption. Finally, it recognises that SWB requires a healthy balance among thriving natural, human, built, social, and cultural capital assets.

Social and cultural capital are defined as the web of interpersonal connections, social networks, cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, trust, and the institutional arrangements, rules, norms and values that facilitate human interactions and cooperation between people. These contribute to social cohesion, strong, vibrant, and secure communities, and good governance, and help fulfil basic human needs such as participation, affection, and a sense of belonging. If we're serious about finding a new way forward, these important elements need to be given at least as much importance as the amount of market activity an economy generates.

Public policy for the third millennium needs to provide ecological sustainability within planetary boundaries, fair and equitable distribution of wealth and resources, and economic prosperity beyond mere GDP growth. Doing this will require policies that recognise and balance the contributions to human well-being of natural, social, human, and built capital. Substantial recent research and practice has emphasised the contributions of social capital and the difficulty of building social capital in societies with massive income inequalities. Higher income inequality across countries has been shown to be significantly correlated with a range of social problems, indicating that policies to reduce inequality are key to building a sustainable and desirable future.

To achieve the future we want, we need to focus more directly on the goal of sustainable human well-being rather than merely Gross Domestic Product growth.

There are also specific policies that could contribute to a more equitable distribution of income and the protection of opportunities and capabilities for flourishing including:

- Reducing systemic inequalities, both internationally and within nations, by improving the living standards of the poor, limiting excess and unearned income and consumption, and preventing private capture of common wealth – the gifts of nature and society.

- Sharing and redefining work to create more fulfilling employment and more balanced leisure-income trade-offs.

- Establishment of systems for effective and equitable governance and management of the social commons, including cultural inheritance, financial systems, and information systems like the Internet and air waves.

We have never had greater global capacity, understanding, material abundance, and opportunities to achieve the world we want. This includes scientific knowledge, communications, technology, resources, productive potential, and ability to feed everyone on earth. The substantial challenge is making the transition to this better world in a peaceful and positive way.

Complexity, imperfection and public policy

Speech by Professor the Hon Gareth Evans AC QC, Chancellor of The Australian National University at ANU Public Policy 2013, Canberra, 6 June 2013.

D onald Rumsfeld is not my favourite role model as a policymaker, but there have been few more articulate descriptions of the difficulty and complexity of real-world problem-solving than his famous statement in the course of a press briefing in 2002 that:

"There are known knowns; there are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns; that is to say, there are things that we now know we don't know. But there are also unknown unknowns—there are things we do not know we don't know."

Far from being incomprehensible gobbledegook, justifying the 'Foot in Mouth of the Year' award that it received at the time, this is in fact a perfectly lucid and accurate account of what can go wrong in policy decision-making in any context, at any level.

The one thing for which Rumsfeld can be criticised in his statement was that he left out what is often the most dangerous type of unknown: the 'unknown known'—as someone once put it 'What you think you know that just ain't so'. In fact, the press briefing in question was on the issue of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and it was the Bush administration's certain knowledge of what just wasn't so—that Iraq actually continued to possess such weapons—that led Rumsfeld and his colleagues to undertake the disastrous military adventure that they did.

There are many areas of public policy which are full of the most complex and intractable problems, not least this area—my own—of peace and security.

Right now the most troubling international policy problem is the carnage in Syria—with after two years of civil war 80,000 men, women and children dead, and another 6.8 million in need of urgent humanitarian assistance: 4.25 million displaced internally, and nearly two million refugees in neighbouring countries.

Not the least of my own reasons for distress about the international policy paralysis on Syria is that I was one of those who helped to develop the new norm of the 'responsibility to protect', unanimously embraced by the UN General Assembly in 2005 and effectively implemented subsequently in cases

Universities have a crucial contribution to make, in multiple ways, when it comes to public policy-making.

Professor the Hon Gareth Evans AC QC is Chancellor of The Australian National University.

like Kenya and Libya. This was intended to ensure that the international community never again stood by impotently while mass atrocity crimes (major crimes against humanity and war crimes) were committed behind state borders—yet in Syria over the last two years such crimes have been committed over and again with apparent impunity.

This is a problem crying out for a solution, but the trouble is that every solution so far advanced has either been:

- wrong in principle (eg because it would involve coercive military action not authorised by the UN Charter);
- unable to be implemented in practice (eg because there have been no states willing to play such a role, even for relatively narrow purposes like the establishment of buffer zones or humanitarian consequences);
- ineffective (eg supplying arms to the rebel forces, because these have been and will continue to be more than matched by the supply of additional arms to the governing regime); or
- likely to cause more suffering than it will avert (eg again, the suppy of arms to the rebels, where there has been a close correlation in surges in such supplies from Saudi Arabia and Qatar and increases in Syrian casualties, without compensating strategic gains).

The only credible solution is a diplomatic one—in which both regime and rebels, pressured by their respective supporters, compromise on a transitional governing process. But, one has to be a supreme optimist to think that the chances of implenting this in practice within the next few months are more than negligible.

I don't know whether Syria satisfies the currently accepted academic definition of a 'wicked' problem, but with serious downsides to every possible solution, it looks pretty wicked to me.

The presentations at Public Policy 2013 wrestle with situations of at least equal complexity and difficulty in other contexts—in the areas of climate change policy, alternative energy sources, disaster response, and the general problem of translating credible scientific research into effective policy action.

The underlying issue that runs through the conference proceedings is whether the capacity to deal (or at least begin to deal) with problems of great complexity and intractability is just a matter of judgement and experience—judgement which you either have or you don't, and experience which can take a very long time to acquire—or whether rather the necessary skills can be taught and learned.

Professor Gabriele Bammer argues that we can do a better job of preparing future policymakers for their role through problem-based research and education, further work on the theory and method of dealing with complexity, and on bringing together knowledge and insights presently dispersed across different disciplines.

I'm not sure that I'm yet entirely persuaded by all the elements of this argument. But, I am certainly totally persuaded that universities have a crucial contribution to make, in multiple ways, when it comes to public policy-making: in generating evidence-based data; in developing rigorous analytical skills; in encouraging out of the box creative thinking about solutions; and in bringing together academics and practitioners, and those from multiple disciplines, to tackle complex problems from multiple angles.

And I am totally persuaded that there is no better university in Australia to play these roles than ANU, with its national charter, national capital location, huge reputation for intellectual excellence, and long tradition of major contribution to public policy debate.

The world's great universities are those that are great in three dimensions: traditonal teaching and learning and the total student experience that goes with it; traditional research and the contribution to scholarship that goes with that; and outreach and engagement with the wider community, particularly in policy-focused research.

ANU satisfies all those criteria. We are working hard to give particular new weight and emphasis to the third of them, including by:

- renaming the Crawford School of Economics and Govermment as the Crawford School of Public Policy;

- by expanding its resources and reach;

- by double-hatting high-impact policy-focused researchers around the entire campus as 'Crawford School Public Policy Fellows';

- by also appointing high-achieving public service policymakers as Public Policy Fellows;

- by planning, as a signature annual event, the 'Crawford School Australian Leadership Forum' which, starting February 2014, will bring together major international policy leaders, the country's top policymakers and those who advise them across a range of disciplines; and

- by hosting events like Public Policy 2013, which showcases the extraordinary intellectual resources we have at this University, and which is something we do every year.

I am very proud as Chancellor of this great University of everything that ANU, with Crawford School as its new focal point, has been doing, and will continue to do, to improve the quality of public policy both in Australia and internationally, and am delighted to have been asked to help set the scene for what I know will be a fascinating and enriching day of presentations and discussion.

Explaining uncertainty: a scientist's perspective

There are clear steps scientists and policymakers can take to tackle complexity in public policy, writes Ken Baldwin.

Modern public policy challenges are frequently complex and require the expertise of a broad range of disciplines covering both the natural and human sciences.

The Anthropocene—the new geological epoch in which human activity is affecting all life on the planet—is an example. It requires input from all science disciplines to meet the challenges of climate change, food, water, energy, population and health. There is no worldwide or Australian government agency, research organisation or NGO that has the mission or the scientific expertise to address the challenges of the Anthropocene.

Solving such complex and often ill-defined issues—so-called 'wicked problems'—frequently requires science with levels of uncertainty that are large and difficult to quantify. Those high levels of uncertainty can diminish the buy-in from policymakers, funding agencies and the wider community.

Nevertheless, there is a responsibility on the scientific community to articulate uncertainty even if the possible scenario outcomes of policy decisions are varied and difficult to precisely quantify. Scenario building—where the results of policy choices are explored in depth—and the plotting of trajectories with their associated uncertainties, will be key tools for applying science to public policy.

To further complicate the issue, when it comes to government planning, the challenges of the Anthropocene require global environmental and societal responses, but face a policy vacuum. Scientific uncertainty can act as a pretext for government policy uncertainty or even paralysis; when the opposite is needed to provide a firm direction whose consequences can be tracked over time. The short-term election cycle and multiple layers of government further compound disjointed decision-making, whereas long-term, coordinated solutions are required.

Uncertainty also opens a window of opportunity for people opposed to the science who try to promote the idea that 'scientists don't know what they're doing'. This is exacerbated by the explosion of information available on the Internet, little of which is scrutinised for scientific validity. This wealth of unvetted information means that people can more easily cherry-pick ideas that best match their world-view, thereby presenting opportunities for opinion to polarise sympathetically around anti-science perspectives.

This has serious implications for science communication. Complexity and uncertainty make it difficult to communicate the science needed to address wicked problems. This encourages simplistic, knee-jerk responses that may appeal to non-experts. Opportunities to spread mis-information also abound, and in particular, public

Professor Ken Baldwin is an ANU Public Policy Fellow, Director of the ANU Energy Change Institute, and Deputy Director of the Research School of Physics and Engineering in the ANU College of Physical and Mathematical Sciences.

'debates' on complex scientific issues can be confusing, and can't adequately convey the scientific consensus.

At both The Australian National University's Energy Change Institute and Climate Change Institute we are keen to present the scientific consensus and to answer people's questions—but not to debate the science.

We take this stance for a number of reasons: because complexity and uncertainty need to be articulated comprehensively rather than in sound-bites, and not mis-used to confuse the picture; because the most appropriate forum for debate is in the scientific arena where evidence can be rigorously scrutinised; because adversarial one-on-one debates cannot reflect the true scientific consensus; and because debates give oxygen to misinformation and 'anti-science'.

When it comes to establishing the knowledge needed to solve wicked problems, attempts to systematically identify perceived knowledge gaps may be even more distracting than a random, inquiry-led knowledge evolution. It is unlikely that setting prescriptive, national, discipline-based science priorities will address knowledge gaps in the solution of interdisciplinary wicked problems such as climate change or food security.

The complexity of the challenges that life in the Anthropocene poses also leads to funding gaps in the search for solutions. For example, funding for the Australian Research Council and other national competitive grants programs is largely divided into scientific discipline groupings. If we really want to find solutions to these wicked problems, specifically identified trans-disciplinary and whole-of-science research funding is critical.

Most importantly, we need to recognise the complexity of the world we live in and how, more often than not, most things are connected; including the solutions to our problems.

Finally, immediate, clear and present, close-to-home priorities often conflict with long-term, global priorities that are required to address complex and uncertain challenges. Responding to these challenges needs to become a national priority in a way that will assist—not conflict with—other economic, strategic and social priorities.

It's clear that if we want to find solutions to the challenges of the Anthropocene and other pressing public policy issues we not only require a whole-of-science approach, but also a whole-of-planet and a whole-of-government approach. We, as scientists, also need to better communicate scientific uncertainty through trajectories and scenario building. These steps will help minimise government policy uncertainty, which in turn will provide certainty to industry and the wider community—something that will benefit everyone.

Smashing the glass ceiling

Why are women still underpaid and under-represented on the nation's boards, asks Alison Booth.

It is a depressing, dismal and enduring fact that, despite decades of calls for change, well-meaning initiatives and societal awareness, women are still fundamentally under-represented on the nation's boards, underpaid by employers and under-recruited in job interviews.

The average pay gap between men and women may be between 11 and 12 per cent, but that disguises some big numbers across different salary levels – what we call wages distribution.

Even when men and women have the same characteristics, there is an increasing gender pay gap across the wages distribution due to different returns to the same characteristics. We shall call this the 'glass ceiling' effect. In some cases this is as high as 26 per cent—and it's worse in the private sector than the public.

But what is causing this? And why—even after decades of trying to change—haven't we been able to even scratch the glass ceiling, let alone shatter it? The truth is the complex reasons behind it mean that the glass is made of tough stuff.

A fundamental challenge for labour economists like me is to identify the extent to which observed gender differences in pay for apparently identical men and women are due to discrimination, to other unobservable factors, or to intrinsic differences between men and women.

An example is expectations of family formation and fertility. This is private information, so employers base their behaviour on averages. That means women may not get pay increases, may not get promoted when they deserve to, and may not get offered the jobs they deserve. But statistical discrimination is not the only explanation for wage gaps.

One thing that certainly has an impact is that women's willingness to pursue outside offers and their ability to accept these may differ from that of men, reinforcing their poorer position in the labour market. Moreover, many labour markets are hierarchical, and promotions and appointments procedures can widen gender pay gaps.

Additionally, promotion procedures favour men rather than women and promotion criteria can act to perpetuate gender gaps. For example, studies

Looking through the glass ceiling from above, what you can see below is a dismal, enduring and complex picture. But there are still steps we can take to find a way through the barrier.

Alison Booth is an ANU Public Policy Fellow and a Professor of Economics in the ANU College of Business and Economics. She is the author of *The Jingera Trilogy.*

of US law firms show how criteria for promotion, like excessively long hours of work, can widen gender pay gaps towards the top of the lawyers' wage distribution.

Prejudice or discrimination at the hiring stage can also matter because it can affect women's willingness to bargain over offered wages.

Suppose for a second that a woman has overcome the hiring barrier for the organisation where she wishes to work and has actually got offered a job. Given this is hard—hiring procedures are not always impartial—the woman may be so grateful for the job offer that she will not bargain as aggressively as comparable men for her starting salary. Moreover, since her outside options are poorer, even if she were to bargain aggressively she would still get a smaller share of the cake.

Studies have also shown that employers' tastes for discrimination may arise because of what sociologists refer to as 'homo-social' preferences, defined as a social preference for being with members of one's own gender without any implication of erotic attraction. Put simply, men may feel more comfortable working with other men.

Psychological studies also reveal why women suffer discrimination in some roles but not others. They suggest two forms of prejudice. First, women are perceived less favourably than men as potential leaders. Second, if women do manage to obtain a position of leadership they are then evaluated less favourably because they do not fit society's prescriptions of what is appropriate behaviour for women.

Looking through the glass ceiling from above, what you can see below is a dismal, enduring and complex picture. But there are still steps we can take to find a way through the barrier.

First, mentoring. US research finds that women executives working in women-led firms earn 15 to 20 per cent more in total compensation than women working in other firms. Women-led firms also hire proportionately more top women executives.

Secondly, we should be encouraging the formation of networks. This is best done at the higher levels of an institution or organisation.

Finally, we need to make use of quotas to ensure increased female representation at the higher levels of companies and organisations. We need a critical mass of women in high positions in the public and private sectors, not just a few token women. And the more women we have in leadership roles, the more likely there will be role model effects, network formation and mentoring.

Norway is a beacon here. In 2008 it enforced mandatory 40 per cent quotas on corporate board membership at all publicly listed companies, and reached that target in one year.

Perhaps it is time for the Australian Government to follow Norway's example. At the moment our government is implementing an incremental approach through the *Workplace Gender Equality Act*. The Act requires that all companies with 100 employees or more must disclose the gender composition of boards, executives, and at various levels throughout the company. The idea is presumably that if companies have to disclose and explain their proportions, female as well as remuneration, they will be more likely to change.

Is this going far enough? No. The current approach means it will takes years, if not decades, for gender equality to be achieved.

In the meantime, women are still hopefully tapping against a thick slab of glass.

This piece was first published in The Canberra Times.

Learning from the best

The new *Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies* journal will bring together many of the world's leading experts on public policy to tackle the issues facing our region.

From Bangkok to Broken Hill, and Shanghai to Suva, policymakers throughout Asia and the Pacific face many of the same challenges—complex issues like health, education, climate change, food policy and more.

To help the search for solutions, Crawford School of Public Policy will soon launch a new peer-reviewed multidisciplinary journal—*Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies* (APPS).

The journal, which will launch in January 2014, brings together the best and brightest academic minds to tackle the big issues facing the region. Specific themes of interest include migration, public administration, trade, foreign policy, natural resource management, and development policy.

The journal will be published three times a year by Wiley-Blackwell, with all contributions made freely available on the publisher's website without restrictions.

Crawford School of Public Policy Director Tom Kompas will be APPS' founding Editor-in-Chief. He will be supported by a distinguished group of editors drawn from across a range of disciplines and based throughout the world.

Kompas says the journal will play a crucial role in bringing together academics and policymakers from the region.

"The goal of the journal is to break down barriers across disciplines and generate policy impact," he says.

"APPS will bring together the world's best scholars to look at issues that the whole region is wrestling with, and give a platform to share the best ideas so that policymakers have the best possible evidence to draw from.

"It's particularly exciting to be able to launch a new journal which is open access, as this means that the ideas, expertise and research can be freely available to everyone."

The first issue will feature contributions from many of the region's leading scholars, including Professor the Hon Gareth Evans AC QC, Professor Stephan Haggard and Professor Ann Florini.

To whet the appetite ahead of January's launch, Wiley-Blackwell will feature a number of early-release papers on their website from September 2013.

The journal will have a particular focus on issues facing policymakers in the Pacific. It's an area that Kompas says has often been neglected by academic literature until now.

"The islands of the Pacific are many and, in a lot of cases, have small, diverse and geographically scattered populations. That creates some unique challenges for policymakers," he says.

"Those challenges have had an impact on the academic output on Pacific issues. While much of it is excellent, it has

never before had a single platform to bring it all together for the good of policymakers scattered throughout the region.

"APPS changes all that. It brings the best minds together to focus on policy problems every country in the region would recognise. And it puts the problems encountered by policymakers in Port Moresby on an even footing with those being tackled in Phnom Penh. The issues and challenges that we face throughout the region are many, but we are all facing them and we can and should work together to find solutions."

The journal's work will also be supported by the establishment of the Asia and the Pacific Policy Society. The Society aims to create a network of academics and policymakers with a view towards sharing expertise across countries and disciplines. The membership-based association has already signed up more than 40 high-profile Fellows.

The journal and society's work has funding support from AusAID—the Australian Government's development assistance agency. Kompas says this support enabled the journal to aim high.

"Finding solutions to the complex problems policymakers face requires everyone to pull in the same direction—governments, public servants and academics. AusAID's commitment to creating the best possible evidence base for policy decision-making is demonstrated through its support of APPS.

"Through the journal, that commitment is going to offer some exciting opportunities for the region to share the best ideas, form networks of practice and collaborate into the future. It's an exciting development in the field of public policy."

Australian National University

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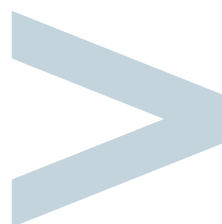
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