

The Don Chipp Foundation

Newsletter , October 2007

The Don Chipp Foundation is an independent research body affiliated with the Australian Democrats. Don Chipp, as the founder of the Australian Democrats, vowed to 'keep the bastards honest'. The Foundation aims to retain that basic premise through the promotion of fiercely independent research and public debate.

Welcome From the Chair

An election year brings on challenges and opportunities for a foundation such as ours. In these times the public becomes far more aware of policy issues that impact on their lives and there is a greater sense of urgency in the beat of everyday politics. This is fertile ground for discussion and debate on matters of national importance. The Foundation's role is to assist these dialogues.

Since the last newsletter the Foundation has been very busy with two major forums and the processing of the largest number of small grants applications since we started such a program.

The **Fair Go Forum** was a full day event in June organised in conjunction with the Edmund Rice Centre and the Australian Islamic Friendship Association. A line-up of excellent speakers, including Pat Dodson, former chair of the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, and panel sessions with well known academics such as Andrew Jakubowicz, a group of active young campaigners and Andrew Bartlett (Australian Democrats Senator for Queensland), ensured that the day was well attended. The transcripts from each of the sessions are available on our website.

The **Silencing Dissent Forum** was an evening forum again with an excellent line-up of speakers including Sarah Maddison, academic and co-author of a book by the

same title, journalist David Marr, David Bernie from the NSW Council for Civil Liberties, and Senator Lyn Allison from the Australian Democrats. This forum provided an interesting and timely analysis of the threats to our democratic processes posed by government legislation designed to curb the independence of the media and basic civic rights of individuals.

Our small grants program allows us to fund small but important projects – often put forward by community groups that may not get funding from other organisations. This is one of the most popular DCF activities and provides us with publicity amongst universities and NGOs. Reports from previous successful applications have been shared in a forum at which several researchers presented the outcome of the small grants they have received.

Finally, I must thank the never ending efforts of Siobhan O'Sullivan, Co-ordinator of the Don Chipp Foundation, who is paid a minimal sum for a great amount of work. Thanks also to the Board of the DCF for their commitment to the Foundation and its efforts to make a difference to the level of public debate on important national issues in Australia.

Best regards,

Dr Nina Burridge
Chairperson
Don Chipp Foundation

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INTERVIEW: Senator Lyn Allison

Senator Lyn Allison is a member of the Don Chipp Foundation Board and the Leader of the Australian Democrats. In the lead up to the election the Don Chipp Foundation caught up with her to get her thoughts on the upcoming campaign.

DCF: The Australian Democrats have voiced strong opposition to the Federal Government's approach to indigenous issues in the Northern Territory. What is it that is problematic about current policy and in which direction would you like to see indigenous policy move?



LA: The Democrats, like the Government, saw the need for urgent action on the abuse of Aboriginal children and indeed, we have been calling for this for many years.

However, we are concerned that the Government's response is short-term, ignores the 97 recommendations in the report that triggered it and takes away Native Title, the permit system and CDEP, all of which appear unrelated to the problem being confronted. We also disagree with the exemption from the Racial Discrimination Act that allows the government agencies to quarantine benefits across the board, whether abuse is present or not.

We also do not consider that banning alcohol will have the desired effect for those who have an alcohol addiction – unless there are detox and rehab supports in place. Above all, we are convinced that reform must be done with the involvement of Indigenous people, that the causes of social and economic disadvantage must be addressed, and that this must include a great improvement in education, housing and health services.

DCF: Australian Democrats recently celebrated its 30 years' celebration. What do you personally see as the Democrats' greatest achievement?

LA: I think our greatest achievement is in fact the depth and consistency of our achievements over 30 years. In pulling together the booklet I was struck by the extent of our effectiveness, particularly in balance of power. There are some standouts like saving the Franklin River, but there are others with greater long-term effects like the work which led to the overhaul of Federal environment laws and our 400 amendments won to improve them. Equally important has been our consistent balancing of employer and employee interests on industrial relations.

DCF: Looking ahead to the election, what issues would you like to see put on the federal election agenda, that are not currently receiving adequate attention?

LA: Greenhouse, water and Indigenous disadvantage are at last mainstream, although the responses to them are far from adequate from either of the contenders for government. I would like to see a serious examination of the Government's record on human rights and freedoms. I also have doubts that education will receive the attention it needs or that major structural reform will be forthcoming in our health system.

DCF: What are your hopes for the future of the Australian Senate?

LA: For the sake of the country and for democracy, control must be wrested from the Coalition in the Senate. We've seen what happens when the Executive runs the country and the parliament is reduced to a rubber stamp. Of course I want to see the Democrats returned with increased numbers, exercising balance of power on contentious issues, pursuing their policies and influencing the parliament to improve accountability and governance. ◀ **END**

"I would like to see a serious examination of the Government's record on human rights and freedoms."

Jason Grossman has been a member of the Don Chipp Foundation Board since the Foundation's inception. He is also a member of the Australian Democrats National Executive. In this interview the Don Chipp Foundation asks Jason about the motivation behind his continued community work .

DCF: In addition to being on the Board of the Don Chipp Foundation you are also a member of the Australian Democrats National Executive. What motivates you to stay involved in public life?

JG: My parents were both talking about politics all the time when I was growing up. I don't know exactly where they got it from, but they met through politics when they were in their teens, so they'd had a lot of practice by the time they had me, and they'd both been involved in quite a variety of campaigns. My dad also taught political theory for a living. With a background like that I couldn't avoid thinking about political issues. And once you're thinking about them, you really have to do something about at least some of them. There's so much that needs to be done, you can't leave it all to someone else.

I'd make a really bad candidate for political office, though. I leave THAT to someone else, and I try to help with organisational things.

DCF: Is there a particular political issue that is close to your heart? If there is, what is it and why do you feel particularly concerned for that issue?



JG: The thing I care most about is animal welfare, for a very mundane reason: I care about suffering, and there are a lot more (non-human) animals suffering, mainly because of factory farming, than

there are humans suffering. Another reason to be interested in animal welfare is that some of the biggest issues in animal welfare could be relatively easily solved if people only knew about them.

At the moment we don't seem to be getting very far on factory farming, but if more people find out about it then I expect there will be real progress very fast.

I guess this point about the rate of progress is related to the previous question too.

Around 1900, nobody anywhere in the world (pretty much, apart from a few places in the South Pacific) thought women should or would ever get the vote. By 1920, not only did it not seem such a silly idea, but lots of women actually had the vote. It's amazing how fast political progress can happen sometimes. That helps me to stay motivated.

Animal welfare is also the reason I first joined the Democrats. The Humane Society International published a table of the various parties' animal welfare policies, and the Democrats came out top.

DCF: The Australian Democrats recently celebrated their 30 year anniversary. What do you see as the Democrats' greatest achievement?

JG: There are lots of aspects to the Democrats, but I think above all else they've been particularly great at legislation. It's hard to pick just one piece of legislation. Maybe the World Heritage Properties Protection Bill (1982) which saved the Franklin River (with the help of the 1983 Labor government of course). It was before my time, but I believe it also did a lot to launch federal environmental protection more generally.

◀ END

“Some of the biggest issues in animal welfare could be relatively easily solved if people only knew about them.”

Dr Harris, of the School of Social Work and Community Welfare at James Cook University in Townsville, was a DCF grant recipient in 2006. Here she talks about her research into the impact of corporatisation on the Australian childcare sector.

The Rise of the For-Profit Child Care Sector: Implications for Choosing Quality Child Care in a Regional Community

Australian parents are grappling with what to many experts in early childhood education is a fundamental paradox – quality child care and corporate profit (Goodfellow, 2005)⁵. In the national media parents question the quality of care in corporate child care centres (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2006). In 2005 Lynne Wannan, the Convenor of the National Assn of Community-based Services, asserted that child care quality has become a secondary consideration and, further, that “opening up the market has not led to increased competition, lower prices and improved quality” (p.2)⁷.

According to Elliott (2006)⁴, the number of private for-profit child care centres more than tripled between 1991 and 2004. In contrast, the number of not-for-profit community-based child care centres grew by 35% in the same period. In regional Australia the changes to the child care landscape have been just as dramatic.

In the Townsville region in 2000, there were 12 community-based centres and 28 independently owned centres, and corporate child care chains owned 7% of these (Townsville and District Early Childhood Association, 2000)⁶. In 2007 in the Townsville region there are still 12 community-based centres, but now there are 50 independently owned centres and 62% of these centres are owned by corporate child care chains.

I was concerned about what these changes to the child care landscape might mean for regional women’s choice of quality long day care services.

Specifically, the objective of my research was to qualitatively explore women’s experiences of choosing quality long day care in a child care landscape that privileges for-profit child care solutions.

The regional context of women’s experiences was emphasised. The women who participated in my study were profoundly committed to their children’s right to a high quality long day care environment.

They had a strong vision of what high quality child care is – a community centred service where children’s needs are the priority. Of particular interest was the link made between child care quality experiences and the rise of the corporate child care sector. This link was made without specific mention of the corporate sector during the research process.

The majority of women believed that quality child care and the pursuit of profits are incompatible goals and, further, as the corporate sector has expanded, opportunities to choose quality child care have diminished.

Currently the Commonwealth Government continues to reassert its commitment to the ‘market rules’ approach to child care. They maintain that current child care delivery mechanisms, largely financed through the CCB, are designed to “give people choice” (Brough, 2007, p.1)³.

For the women in this study, however, the ‘market’ did not provide them with a range of quality child care providers to choose from, nor empower them to contribute to child care quality by selecting centres that provided best quality care. Rather, the Townsville women claimed that the government used the ‘market’ as a mechanism, under the guise of consumer choice, for supporting the unaccountable growth of the corporate child care sector and, also, to avoid funding community-based child care services.

continued ►

◀ continued **The Rise of the For-Profit Child Care Sector**

Further, I argue that regional context uniquely shapes women's child care quality experiences. The Townsville region is a prosperous service-based and advantaged centre, with high population growth and high levels of residential mobility. This regional profile has created a high demand for child care that could not easily be met by established community-based child care infrastructure.

Consequently, in the absence of government support for new community-based programs, opportunities have been created for corporate child care to establish itself in a significant way.

The women in this study had noticed the expansion of corporate providers in Townsville and associated it with lower child care quality & diminished child care choice - particularly in newer suburbs where corporate-run centres dominate.

Townsville's high level of residential mobility and consequent lack of extended family support also meant that many women in this study valued child

care services linked to their regional community.

Their experiences were in many cases, however, of corporate, one-size-fits-all child care services, managed in distant capital cities and unresponsive to the needs of their community.

The experiences and concerns of the Townsville women who participated in this study may not be exclusively linked to their regional location.

However, a regional context, with its associated high levels of growth and mobility, isolation from family support and rapidly expanding corporate child care sector, appears to increase regional women's vulnerability to diminished opportunities to choose quality long day care services.

This finding has highlighted an important area for further research, and I recommend a continued focus on regional women's experiences of choosing quality child care. ◀ **END**

References:

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3. Brough, M. (2007). [Parents feel the pressure](#). The Australian. Retrieved 15 April, 2007.
4. Elliott, A. (2006). Early childhood education: Pathways to quality and equity for all children. Victoria:
5. Goodfellow, J. (2005). Market childcare: Preliminary considerations of a 'property view' of the child. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 6(1), 54-65.
6. Townsville District Early Childhood Association Inc. (2000). *Child care options in Townsville and district*. Townsville: Townsville City Council.
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THE WOMEN BEHIND THE DON CHIPP FOUNDATION



Siobhan O'Sullivan, Nina Burrige, Juliet Chipp, Lyn Allison and Jenny Stock at the 2007 Don Chipp Foundation Community Justice Symposium'

2007 Janine Haines Memorial Lecture

The 2007 Janine Haines Memorial Lecture was hosted by the Western Australian Division of the Australian Democrats. The keynote speaker was Julian Burnside QC. Below, event organiser **Jack Evans** reflects on the night.

Julian Burnside addressed a full house (over 350 guests) at the University of Western Australia on 16th May and enthralled us all.

Julian's articulate explanations of many of the world's troublesome events, places and people left us all gasping at his grip on so many topics.

The audience hung on his every word and when question time came they were keen for Julian to elaborate on some of his more controversial allegations.



Julian Burnside and Jack Evans

He was also very fair and where appropriate gave the alternative cases, making the evening a very "democrat" event.

The range of subjects he tackled included the loss of human rights in many spheres – local, national and international.

He did not stop at introducing the problems but had solutions for many of them and invited his audience to take up a number.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the Don Chipp Foundation and to the WA University Institute of Advanced Studies for sponsoring and financially supporting this wonderful event. ◀ **END**

Dams Forum

In March 2007 the Don Chipp Foundation granted financial support to Senator Andrew Bartlett's office, to host a forum on Queensland's contentious dam issue. Here, **Senator Bartlett** reports on the event.

In March, the Don Chipp Foundation hosted a Brisbane forum on the impacts of the proposed Traveston Dam.

Don't forget to keep an eye on the Don Chipp Foundation website to learn more about upcoming events – www.donchippfoundation.org.au.

I chaired the event that featured a variety of speakers addressing the environmental, social and economical devastation that this ill-conceived project would leave behind.

University of Queensland Zoology **Professor Gordon Grigg** described the biological and ecological importance of some of the Mary River species – particularly the Mary River lungfish – the piscine equivalent of the 'living fossil' Wollemi pines. There are only five species of lungfish in the world, and each provides an invaluable link to the time when our ancestors first climbed out onto land.

Stuart White, who authored the Mary River Council of Mayor's report into sustainable alternatives to the dam, highlighted the expense and inefficiencies of the dam as a supposed solution to the water crisis.

Kate Noble from the Australian Conservation Foundation outlined other approaches to the growing water shortages across Australian, ones that would actually help solve the problem, rather than being costly and time-wasting white elephants.

From the community that will be most affected by the Dam, **Glenda Pickersgill** spoke on behalf of the Save the Mary River campaign, and told of the dread and despair in the area; she also detailed the many steps taken by locals to stop the dam, wake up the government and call for real solutions to what will be one of the most crucial problems for Qld this century. ◀ **END**

Grants Recipients 2007

Jennifer Burn, UTS: Circumstances and Support Needs of Women and Girls Sex Trafficked to Australia

Thalia Anthony, Sydney University: Indigenous Stolen Wages on NT Cattle Stations: testimonies from Wave Hill claimants

Melissa Boyde and Denise Russell, Wollongong University: Replacement of animals in scientific research

Glynn Evans, Adelaide University: A case for the house of review: The role that Senate minor parties play in improving legislation & providing for more open and honest government

Nicola Rivers, Environmental Defender's Office (WA): Empowering community to take action in developing clean energy law in WA

Ian Brown, Wollongong University: Voices of Indigenous Children: a sense of community

◀ **END**

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