

# **Everyone Knows The Difference Between Right And Wrong**

**Gary Morgan**

**Address to the Rotary Club of Melbourne**

**March 1, 2006**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, distinguished Guests – friends, friends of my Father, friends of Roy Morgan Research, Friends of Melbourne.**

**Yesterday Crikey reported *The Times* of London report:**

***For the first time MPs, ministers and civil servants will have to agree to a code of conduct which binds them to the truth as part of a package of measures proposed to combat the low level of public trust in Government.***

***Sir Alistair Graham, head of the powerful sleaze watchdog, is driving through the first major changes to the Seven Principles of Public Life since their introduction in 1995.***

***The Chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life said that he believed that trust in Government had declined further over the last two years.***

***He will start by proposing overhauling the code's definition of "honesty" – at present a technical definition focusing on conflicts of interest – after focus groups said this missed the central point.***

***The final wording of the new definition has yet to be agreed, but Sir Alistair said that it must revolve around the notion of truth.***

*At present, MPs are prohibited from lying in the House of Commons, but there is no specific stipulation that they must tell the truth outside the chamber.*

From a young age everyone knows the difference between right and wrong regarding the truth!

I learnt it at Preshill from 1943-1947.

It became clear to me, during my first weeks at Melbourne Grammar in 1948, how few people care about what is right and wrong. Boy after boy would lie to the teacher in front of the whole class, everyone knew of the lies however since it was to the teacher, nobody cared – a very different culture than Preshill!! We've all made mistakes, hopefully we've all said sorry.

Today we see in the media, sanitised concerns for what is right and wrong – this worries me deeply!

**The Commonwealth Games**

The Queen is coming to Melbourne for about a day to open the Commonwealth Games, before visiting Canberra twice and Sydney once.

It is obviously wrong for the Queen to spend only a day at the Commonwealth Games where 71 of the Queen's Commonwealth Nations are participating. The Queen's Nations have invested considerable effort to make the Games a success – apart from the many millions of dollars.

**It is also wrong for the organisers not to play 'God Save the Queen'. We all learnt at a young age that two wrongs don't make a right.**

**Surely the Queen knows that her short visit undermines the importance of the many representatives from many walks of life meeting at the Commonwealth Games every four years.**

**A short time spent with each Nation would guarantee the Commonwealth lasts for another 100 years. Leaving after about a day is the beginning of the end for the Games and the Commonwealth – the Queen decides the Games' future and the future of the Commonwealth - nobody else.**

**I am a Royalist - up until now with no clear alternative – the Queen, not God, will save the Queen!**

### **The Olympic Games**

**Phil Coles – Australia's delegate to the International Olympic Committee - was wrong when he lobbied for Atlanta against Melbourne for the 1996 Olympic Games.**

**Ron Walker was right to criticise Phil Coles, but wrong not to invite all of Australia's representatives of the Olympic Games to the Opening Ceremony. Two wrongs don't make a right.**

## **A Democratic Society**

**All of us today value a democratic society. Just as it is important to separate the Church and the State, it is critical that media is independent of politicians and business. It is imperative that media owners throughout the world are not beholden to politicians and that politicians are not beholden to the media.**

**Anything else is corrupt and threatens democracy. It is just as important for Directors and other people running companies to abide by these same rules.**

**I knew Kerry Packer well. Over the past 30 years there were many ups and downs. To his credit in his lifetime he achieved a lot by building a large successful and important media business. Independence from political interference was key. When we ran the Morgan-Gallup Poll in The Bulletin we decided what questions would be asked – Kerry never interfered.**

**While Kerry was the leader, many were involved in building his business, particularly Harry Chester, John Fink, Trevor Kennedy, Ita Buttrose, Sam Chisolm, Gerald Stone, John Sorrell, David Evans etc. to name but a few. It was a team effort.**

**However it was obvious to all that for John Howard to offer the Packer family a taxpayer-funded State Memorial Service for Kerry Packer was wrong. Surely John Howard understands his error. Don't blame James Packer for accepting - he had no alternative. Even in democratic Australia James Packer could not snub the Prime Minister like that?**

## **Qantas**

Recently we published a [Roy Morgan Survey](#) conducted for the AWU which showed the majority of Australians wanting Qantas long-haul maintenance kept in Australia and more competition on the Australia-US route.

While the poll was published in The Australian, ABC, Channel 7 and The Age online, I saw no mention of this poll on Channel Nine. Does James Packer's position on the Qantas Board, prevent the Nine Network from criticising Qantas?

## **Treasurer and Share Buybacks**

Peter Costello is right to hold an inquiry into our tax system. There are some obvious wrongs which just need to be fixed quickly irrespective of the inquiry.

Recently BHP Billiton announced a share buy back from franked dividends. The consequence of this may not be understood by many people: what it is doing is disadvantaging small shareholders who should be receiving the franked dividends at the expense of Institutional Investors who are judged by short term share price gain.

Alan Kohler clearly pointed out this wrong in [The Age](#) on February 17:

*“Last year more than \$500 million was lost to Commonwealth revenue through these plainly artificial schemes, and this year we're up to \$500 million and it's not even the end of February.”*

## Children Overboard

All Australians know that it was wrong for those politicians and Government officials to lie for months that the photos published during the Children Overboard Affair hid the truth. Irrespective of whether John Howard knew of this lie or not, he is now wrong to [say](#):

*“the refugees he falsely accused of throwing their children in the sea deserve no personal apology because they did the next worst thing – ‘they irresponsibly sank the damn boat, which put their children in the water’.”*

Surely John Howard, like the rest of us, learnt at a young age that two wrongs don't make a right.

We now know that 96.5% of those on that very same boat were found to be Iraqi refugees. We also now know that at the same time the Australian Wheat Board was paying kickbacks to Saddam Hussein's regime. This makes John Howard's "Children Overboard" explanation even more inappropriate.

Roy Morgan has now published [two polls](#) about whether the Federal Government acted ethically on the AWB issue or not. There was little reference to those polls made in the mainstream media.

However the most recent Morgan Poll, on February 22-23, showed that 56% of Australians believed that the Federal Government did not act ethically, while 16% said they did –the public's opinion is right!

**We all know what is right and wrong about paying bribes and kickbacks to the Saddam Hussein regime. At the time it was already under UN embargo and trade sanctions for refusing to allow independent inspectors to verify whether it had chemical, biological and nuclear weapons programmes.**

**There are many other rights and wrongs which I could mention today, for instance: newspapers and magazines claim that increases in circulation figures mean more readers.**

**In fact the circulations have been boosted by mass dumping of free papers at sporting events, hotels, airports and on the back of giveaways with papers of free movie tickets, CD's, DVD's and even recently loaves of bread! Obviously these giveaways do not translate into lasting increases in readers.**

**In 2004 I ran for Lord Mayor of Melbourne. John So was elected and according to a [Morgan Poll released today](#), the Melbourne Council is held in high esteem and John So has a high approval rating –well done John So, but!**

**Before the 2004 Federal election I met with John So and said there were three issues he needed to address –one State, one Federal and one for East Melbourne**

- 1. Local Government in Victoria and the Melbourne City Council in particular must reclaim responsibility for town planning from the State Government. Today there are too many planning decisions that are made for political reasons. A recent [Roy Morgan Survey](#) found that 56% of Australians**

believe Local Government will be more important over the next five years.

In Sydney the exact opposite is happening. Frank Sartor, former Sydney Lord Mayor and property developer is now the NSW Planning Minister. He has [just announced](#) that he is to take more planning decision - taking powers from NSW Local Governments.

While 26% of Sydneysiders disapprove of the way Sydney Lord Mayor, Clover Moore, is handling her job and only 38% approve, there is no reason for any Government to take away the powers of democratically elected Councils. To do so is wrong

2. Secondly, I told John So before 2004 that he needed to actively criticise Qantas before the Federal Election for not allowing more airlines to fly directly from Melbourne to the US.

Only with more airlines will Australia get competitive fares and more tourists from the US.

It is wrong to spend \$70 million on “Bloody Hell” when our surveys show that [20% of Americans](#) would like to come to Australia but believe it is too expensive to travel here. [Australia is in the top 4 preferred travel destinations](#) for Americans but they are being put off by the high airfares.

The Roy Morgan Survey conducted last week for the AWU showed Australians wanted more airlines to compete on the

**Australia-United States air route. The results were eye-opening: 68% of people wanted airlines other than Qantas and United included on the route and only 23% were opposed to opening the Australian-US route to more competition. John So however remains silent on the matter.**

**Melbourne is Australia's premier city. We are both the industrial and cultural centre of Australia not Canberra, Sydney or Brisbane, need I explain! But our popular Lord Mayor needs to use his position to bring to task those people who artificially disadvantage Melbourne.**

- 3. Thirdly, I told John So it was time to redevelop the Hilton site in East Melbourne, not to support the building of unattractive buildings around it. The Hilton remains both an eyesore and an embarrassment to Melbourne architecture.**

**Recently the wife of one of Melbourne's leading politicians put the Hilton situation succinctly "*the Hilton is Melbourne's monument to the Gas and Fuel buildings*"! Millions will see what I mean with the Commonwealth Games.**

**There are many more issues; today I read the Victorian Government is to implement new workplace agreements with State Public Sector unions 18 months early to circumvent the Federal Government's IR laws. And today we discover that Foreign Minister Downer had information given to him regarding the Australian Wheat Board six years earlier. He was wrong not to bring this information to the public's attention months ago when the Cole inquiry began.**

**Melbourne Rotary is an important institution. Those who belong understand the difference between right and wrong. It is imperative that Melbourne Rotary continues; particularly as in Australia today there are many who do not want to uphold this virtue.**

**Gary Morgan**

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