

Is a fair society a happy society?

Australia Fair – advance or retreat?
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Presented by
Michele Levine, Chief Executive
Roy Morgan Research

Today I want to make three points:

- It's all about perception – how people think and feel about events is often more important than the event itself.
- If we want to change perception – listening and understanding is crucial.
- The fundamentals of communication still apply and involvement is key.

But first, some **data**.

Even before that – let me pose the question to you – “*Has Australia become a fairer place, yes or no?*”

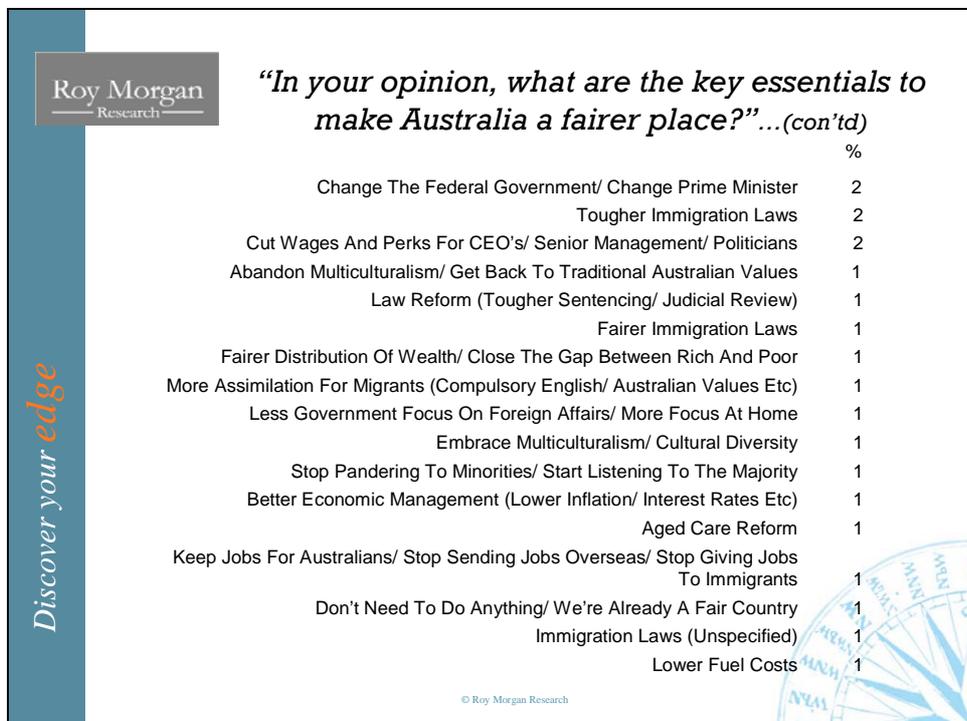
(No one in the audience said “Yes”.)

When we ask Australians whether they believe Australia has become a fairer place or not, 50% say yes, it has; 45% say no, 5% can't say.

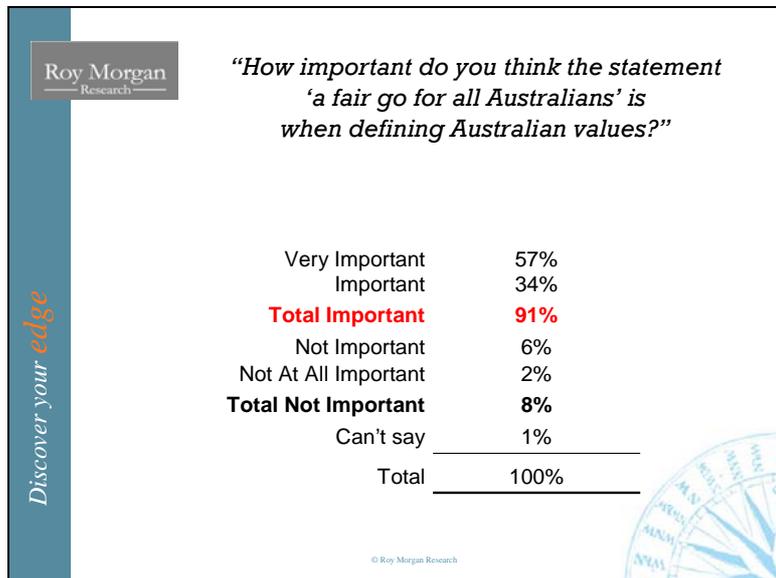
When we ask them (the same folk) whether they think the gap between the rich and the poor is widening, 77% say yes it is widening; 17% say no; 6% can't say.

What a conundrum! How do we make sense of it? Welcome to the world of social research. People are not always consistent. The world of people: of asking people what they think about things, what they want, how they choose, etc; is **complex** and nuanced. It is one of tremendous inconsistency (or apparent inconsistency), conflicting perspectives and different contexts producing different answers.

If we look at what people see as the key essentials to making Australia a fairer place, there are a large number of different thoughts. It's not surprising then that this is a complex issue.



But, at the heart of the matter, the research shows that there is a fundamental value that can be tapped into. When we ask people how important “*a fair go for all Australians is, when defining Australian values*”, 91% say it is important.



How people think and feel about events and situations is often more important to the outcome than the event itself.

- Economists look at trends, the value of the \$, interest rates, price of commodities, etc, etc, and this explains/predicts a lot, but much, much more is dependent on how people respond - Consumer Confidence.
- The share market analysts study charts and cycles, etc, etc, but it’s all (mostly) dependent on how people respond. Do they like the stock? Is there a sell down that escalates into a meltdown, or a run on the stock that sends the price way over any real value?
- Major corporations have their technology ready to step up in the case of a pandemic (bird flu or the like) but what actually happens in such an event is more to do with how people respond. And it goes on...

If you are in the business of marketing a new product, or idea, you had better understand your potential consumers, how they think, feel, and act, so you can best shape your product or idea to their ‘world’ view, or at the very least communicate it in a way that resonates with this.

All of us here today are grappling with major issues for the future, we are seeking to identify solutions, strategic intentions, visions. The issues are neither simple (a new car that stops faster) nor trivial (another product package that makes the user feel like new).

The issues are complex, important, and have long-term consequences for many generations to come. And the outcomes will depend so much on how people respond to the many and diverse stimuli that make up the context in which the issues occur and our future evolves – so we had better listen.

People want to be listened to.

All our experience tells us that people want to be listened to. Anyone here who has seen the weekly Roy Morgan Survey questionnaire will likely say “I would never do it”, “I wouldn’t waste my time answering all those questions”. So why are we still in business?

The answer is simple. Generally people aren’t listened to. Few people have an opportunity to give their views to a captive listener for an uninterrupted half an hour. And that’s the point!

Roy Morgan always made this point.

In 1998, I presented a paper to CEDA entitled, *"The Mood of the People and the Election - Listen Carefully"*¹. In 1998, I think the issue was "listening" - or the need to listen. In the aftermath of the June 1998 Queensland election in which Pauline Hanson's One Nation Party was recognised as a growing force, there was much talk of "listening to the people".

I pointed out that One Nation existed in 1998 because those who had lost, or feared loss, had no mechanism by which they could be heard.

"The buggers won't listen to me. You can ring up the radio stations and the politicians won't listen. (You can) write to parliamentarians and they don't reply. I feel left out, unlistened to and ostracised", said a Brisbane man in his late fifties.

"The Mood of the People - Listen Carefully"

Let me make a really important point here. Everyone in this room would agree wholeheartedly that this man deserves to be listened to. **BUT** there are many people in Australia whose views are less palatable to us – they are the ones that matter.

It is easy to say, *"they should listen"*, eg Government or people should listen to the voice of those in **need**. Much harder to say **I** or **we** must listen and understand the people whose support, energy, money, voting power we wish to engage.

Today, there is much “listening activity” – we have institutionalised “listening” – politicians **listen** to their electorates, companies **listen** to their customers, some Company Boards **listen** to their shareholders – but do they really listen? Do they seek to understand, to make sense of what they are saying²?

¹ Paper, “The Mood of the People & the Election – Listen Carefully”, presented to Committee for Economic Development of Australia, September 1, 1998, by Michele Levine, Chief Executive, Roy Morgan Research. <http://www.roymorgan.com/news/papers/1998/19981001/>

² Paper, “[Only Real Leadership Or A Crisis Can Save The L-NP Coalition](#)”, Presented at the PricewaterhouseCoopers’ Federal Budget Breakfast by Gary Morgan May 23, 2001, and Presented at Committee for Economic Development Budget Night presentation May 22, 2001 by Michele Levine.

While it is relatively easy to listen, if we really want to understand and make sense of what people have to say, and be able to communicate with them and respond responsibly to them, we need to see the world from their perspective.

Somehow we are given the impression that the people that have to be listened to are a somewhat amorphous “mass” out there – people who are unlike “us”, but otherwise relatively indistinguishable from each other.

The reality is of course quite different. There are all sorts of people, in different circumstances, with different backgrounds, beliefs and values. They have very different ways of viewing the world, and everything that goes on in the world.

- For the older “Basic Needs” segment, the concept of technology means medical technology, health monitoring and maintenance, security systems, and person-to-person contact. This is not surprising. From the Roy Morgan Political Issues Survey, health and hospital issues are for these people second in importance only to issues about social welfare and the aged.
- For the young carefree “Look At Me” segment, technology means entertainment, sound systems, leisure, and on-line games. ‘Poverty’ is an interesting concept – many feel they are in poverty – spent their week’s pocket-money and have to wait to spend again.
- For the disenfranchised “A Fairer Deal” segment technology means robotics, and fear of technology taking over jobs and controlling our lives. Poverty has a much ‘darker’ meaning for these people.

If we consider the issue of politics for the two up-market segments:

- For the “Visible Achievement” segment, business is key, Government is too slow for the real world. This is the segment which showed the greatest support for the GST, and indeed most tax reform. They are relatively unsupportive of either Government or wealth redistribution initiatives to support those in need. However, corporate sponsorship is of relevance to this segment.
- For the “Socially Aware” segment, too much power is concentrated in the hands of large companies, global politics are of relevance. Structural solutions to poverty would appeal to these people, and they are 50% more likely than the average Australian to believe “*a percentage of everyone’s income should go to charities*”(21%).

The Values - Life Domain Map in all its richness enables you to know who to listen to, to listen carefully, and to communicate with people, even those who are different from you, about today’s and tomorrow’s issues in a way which resonates with their values.

The fundamentals of communication still apply.

As Benjamin Franklin said:

*“Tell me and I’ll forget,
Show me and I might remember,
Involve me and I’ll understand.”*

Is a fairer society a happier society?

I believe a society where people are engaged and involved in creating fairness – linked to what we see as an Australian value, *“a fair go for all Australians”*, and where there is room for celebration of progress – will be a **happier society**.

Row 1, Top Left: A photograph of a large, modern house with a black metal gate and a paved driveway.

Row 1, Top Right: Roy Morgan Research logo. Text: "Some Aussies can't afford any roof over their heads. So is Australia fair?" Below: "Please encourage our nation's leaders to always make decisions that take into consideration disadvantaged Australians and to ensure that they have the opportunity to live a decent life. www.AustraliaFair.org.au" Australia Fair logo: "A fair go for all Australians."

Row 2, Middle Left: Roy Morgan Research logo. Text: "If some people, try as they might, can't make enough to feed and clothe the family ... is Australia fair?" Below: "Please encourage our nation's leaders to always make decisions that take into consideration disadvantaged Australians and to ensure that they have the opportunity to live a decent life. www.AustraliaFair.org.au" Australia Fair logo: "A fair go for all Australians."

Row 2, Middle Right: A photograph of a family (mother, father, and two children) loading groceries into the back of a car.

Row 3, Bottom Left: A photograph of a man with a blue bicycle and a woman with a young child.

Row 3, Bottom Right: Roy Morgan Research logo. Text: "If some people have to wait years for things they need ... like getting their teeth fixed ... is Australia fair?" Below: "Please encourage our nation's leaders to always make decisions that take into consideration disadvantaged Australians and to ensure that they have the opportunity to live a decent life. www.AustraliaFair.org.au" Australia Fair logo: "A fair go for all Australians."

For further details contact:
Michele Levine, Chief Executive, Roy Morgan Research
Office - +61 (0)3 9224 5215 Facsimile - +61 (0)3 9629 1250 Mobile - +61 (0)411 129 093
E-mail: Michele.Levine@roymorgan.com

Australasia 2000

Roy Morgan Values Segments (developed in conjunction with Colin Benjamin of The Horizons Network)

	Basic Needs	A Fairer Deal	Traditional Family Life	Conventional Family Life	Look At Me	Something Better	Real Conservatism	Young Optimism	Visible Achievement	Socially Aware
S <i>social</i>	Ageing/ Illness/Care	Segmentation of lifestyles but increased awareness of gap between rich & poor	Increasing longevity and search for meaning	Educational concerns for their children	Credit access and alcohol/drug escapism increase crime rates at juvenile level	Reduced life satisfaction and increased family demands	Feelings of isolation and insecurity	Internationalised aspirations and religious orientation plus expressive action	Orientation to high degrees of turbulence "See you in Sydney for the Olympics"	Commitment to wide variety of social issues especially the environment
T <i>technology</i>	Medical Technology	Robotics	Health/leisure integration	Home technology, sophistication	Entertainment/leisure systems	CAD/CAM Systems	Technological changes are seen as too much too fast and of doubtful value	Information technology and new generation systems	Management decisions support systems	Global intelligence access and integrated orgware
E <i>economics</i>	Increasing anxiety over social security and transfer payment changes	Improved economic situation through tax, wage deals and productivity gains	Increasing conversion of home equity into cash flow and reinvestment in lifestyle and equities	Two income plus households will rise dramatically. Consumption will focus on price and quality leaders plus feeling of control	High level of commitment to on-job training and promotion opportunities, provided open to the peer group	Strong shift to incentive/reward systems and performance recognition	Increasing investment in property and franked dividend oriented companies	Career focus and willingness to defer consumption for long term benefit	Increased self-employment and entrepreneurial activity plus strong export orientation	Public sector focus on service delivering lead to greater devolution of economic activity through privatisation
P <i>politics</i>	Increasing power as ageing issues become the prime focus of the middle income family	Reduced power of traditional organisations to mobilise an automatised work force	The most rapidly growing force for conservatism and social control issues with strong pressure for government regulation and national security	Taxation levels and house disposable income will shape the direction of all major parties	The big losers in the ageing debate. Personal freedom and rights of the individual will emerge as issues	Freedom and control of big business, freedom to hire/fire will produce organisational tensions	As with TFL, these will be a strong push for greater political powers and law and order sanctions	Increasing emergence of single issue and specialist political concerns that express personal politics against party machines	Corporate power politics will be more significant than electoral concerns. Parliament will decline as a focus for national debate	Issue and media related political concerns will create short term constituencies and network issues

	Basic Needs	A Fairer Deal	Traditional Family Life	Conventional Family Life	Look At Me	Something Better	Real Conservatism	Young Optimism	Visible Achievement	Socially Aware
S <i>social</i>	Super-annuation, insurance policy failures and public health provision and community safety concerns	Social equality. Access to Education. Control over immigration and population expansion	Safety Peace Law and Order Decency Self-Respect - oriented care for elderly Lifelong Education	Greater security of Employment Affordable Health, Housing and Education, Personal Safety. More Entertainment	An end to boredom and "schooling" more personal freedom. Greater range of "new" and "exciting" experiences	Conspicuous consumption. Material focus soft on social justice, liberal isolation. Arrogance, better than others. Disharmony, racial tensions	Fear of reduction of barriers. Fear of loss of any control. Maintenance of social stratification as "natural order". Have/Have Not conflict is productive	Safeguard opportunities for self-expression or personal quest. More emphasis on spiritual values. Independence. Choice in their lives	Speed of change. Working too hard. Indifference to social issues like Aboriginality and gender. Multicareer windows. Lifestyle impact of global business. Manage social issues, not solve	True multiculturalism . Frustration with yesterday and today's solution. Greater community rather than business orientation. Greater equity and anti-poverty concerns
T <i>technology</i>	Person to person contact technologies, health monitoring and maintenance technologies and security systems	Fear of technology taking over jobs and controlling our lives. Access to technology. Better sports coverage. Technology doing menial work/drudgery	User supportive and friendly, not designed to trick people. Home delivered. Minimise fuss. Low charge.	Better home appliances and cars. Use of technology in leisure. Faster cheaper transport.	Better sound systems. Virtual reality. Faster cars Free to go. where want to go Online access to games and infomatics	Opportunity to make money, get ahead consumer goods lifestyle and entertainment. Improved productivity. Winners and losers / Capital and Labour	Technology for its own sake has no value. Technology requires evaluation. Only use is to increase comfort and income. Agent of change shouldn't provide the agenda	Mastery of technology essential to control their involvement with society at large and opportunities for earning a living	Business opportunities they represent. Global business. Privacy, security, time. Scepticism about speed of intro. Australia may be left out.	Smart medical solutions. Ownership of implementation of technological solutions. Technology = innovative solutions and expanded creativity supports
E <i>economics</i>	"Silver hair power" focussing on income security and short term community jobs that maintain self-respect	Maintaining a small population to achieve "Australian Dream" "Eat the rich" Provide for the aged	Family needs focus. System doesn't reward bludgers. User pays for everything above the basics	Stable economic conditions. Low prices and taxation. Greater choice in consumables	Everyone has a job and a car. Money for leisure. No menial jobs	Free markets. Survival of the fittest. Reduced redistribution of income. More entrepreneurial support	Asset protection is essential for economic stability. Protection of personal wealth. Fair days work for fair days pay	Self-focussed. Rewards for merit and hard work. The successful will prosper, the others go under. Competence is everything	Travel infrastructure. More entrepreneurial. International finance/or small. Our people can't keep up. Not jobs for all Triad trade blocs	Tendency to cash out. Remove the "hour glass" structure. Learning and earning for everyone. Sustainable environment and controls
P <i>politics</i>	"Grey Power" voting block of babyboomers restructures the political scene by electing networks of minority interests	Provision of medical services and education. Maintain separate entity from rest of world. Give everyone a say through computer polling	Politicians who tell the truth. Parties that represent conservative values. "Fear" driven vision seeking greater security	Stability, minimal change. Reduction of influence of politicians. Indifference to claims for diversity of representatives	Ability to influence local politics and greater freedom from the "Geriatrics" running the country	"Leave me alone to get on with it" "Not in my backyard" Class differences. Winners and Losers OK. Support for powerful leaders	Valueless Government should be entrusted to the few that we can influence. Increased impact of networking	Social order and regulation to preserve gains and protect territory. Strong, clean, non-interventionist politics. Somewhat naive.	Business is key disinterested politically. Government is too slow for real world. Increasing Asian influence in all political decisions	Too much power in the hands of large business. Greater participation. Pluralism. Global politics. Global issues and local service systems management