



# ANNUAL Report 2014 - 2015

WE CHANGE MINDS

The **Australia Institute**  
Research that matters.

# COMPANY Overview

## The Australia Institute

Research that matters.

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The Australia Institute Limited presents its Annual Report for the financial year 2014–15

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### CORPORATE INFORMATION

#### DIRECTORS

Lin Hatfield-Dodds (Chair)  
National Director, UnitingCare Australia

Professor Barbara Pocock (Deputy Chair)  
Work and Employment Researcher  
Founder, Centre for Work and Life, University  
of South Australia

Elizabeth Cham  
Former CEO, Philanthropy Australia

Dr Samantha Hardy  
Advisor, Callum Hardy Consulting

John McKinnon  
NGO Director and philanthropist

David Morawetz  
Clinical/Counselling Psychologist  
Economist  
Founder/Director, Social Justice Fund

Andrew Dettmer  
National President,  
Australian Manufacturing Workers Union

Professor Spencer Zifcak  
Allan Myers Professor of Law, ACU  
Barrister & Solicitor,  
Supreme Court of Victoria

Lee Thomas  
Federal Secretary  
Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation

#### REGISTERED OFFICES

Level 5, 131 City Walk Centre,  
Canberra ACT 2601

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#### AUDITORS

PKF Di Bartolo Diamond & Mihailaros

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#### BANKERS

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[www.facebook.com/TheAustraliaInstitute](https://www.facebook.com/TheAustraliaInstitute)

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# ABOUT THE Institute



## The Australia Institute is the country's most influential progressive think tank.

We conduct research on a broad range of economic, social and environmental issues.

Our work moves the public debate beyond set-piece assertions of whether markets or governments have all the answers. We're interested in far more important questions: when and how can governments usefully intervene in the market? If regulation is required, what form ought it take?

The Institute does more than just attract media attention; we help shape national political debates. We change minds.

For two decades, the Institute has been at the centre of many of the biggest public policy debates in the country. Our research has helped spark new debates,

and recast the terms of old debates that have become locked in by partisan battlelines or corporate self-interest.

By determining a relevant research agenda, delivered with a sharply focussed political engagement and communications strategy, we maximise our impact.

Our research informs and drives public debate in this country, bringing greater accountability to the democratic process.

The Institute is funded by donations from philanthropic trusts and individuals, and commissioned research. With no formal political or commercial ties, the Institute is in a position to maintain our independence while advancing a vision for a fairer and more progressive Australia.

## The Australia Institute

The Institute does more than just attract media attention; we help shape national political debates. We change minds.





# Highlights



## 2014 Highlights

### ➔ JULY

As the federal government blamed rising electricity prices on the Renewable Energy Target (RET), our report *Fighting Dirty on Clean Energy* showed the RET in fact puts downwards pressure on electricity prices for consumers – even the government's own modelling said so!

### ➔ AUGUST

Building on our pioneering research into the impacts of the mining expansion on Australia's non-mining businesses and industries, we put on a workshop in Sydney to explain how to challenge the industry's misleading economic and jobs claims.

### ➔ SEPTEMBER

Amidst increasingly shrill rhetoric of a "Budget emergency", we coordinated an open letter signed by 63 leading economists to inject some common sense into the discussion. Their letter argued a surplus shouldn't be the government's chief aim, and that large tax cuts established during the early stages of the mining boom were the cause of the revenue shortfall.

### ➔ OCTOBER

The ANU's divestment announcement sent the Coalition front bench into meltdown – even the PM was moved to comment, calling the decision 'stupid'. We organised an open letter from leading investors, business people and members of the public to back ANU's right to invest or divest as it saw fit. We ran the letter as a full-page ad in both *The Canberra Times* and *The Australian Financial Review*.

### ➔ NOVEMBER

When the NSW Minerals Council's chief spin-doctor challenged Richard to tour regional coal towns and repeat what he had said during their joint appearance on ABC730, Richard happily accepted. Our supporters chipped \$10, \$20 and \$50 to send Richard on tour with Stephen Galilee, but when Richard got to the public meetings in Newcastle, Gloucester and Muswellbrook – Stephen was nowhere to be seen.

### ➔ DECEMBER

The Institute has collaborated a lot with Catalyst over the past five years, so we were delighted when the opportunity came to merge together. Catalyst has a strong track record of research about the behaviour of Australian companies that rely on imports from countries with poor labour and environmental standards.

# 2015 Highlights

## ➔ JANUARY

This was supposed to be our quiet month, but Campbell Newman put paid to that by announcing an early election. We worked behind the scenes with veteran corruption fighter, the Honourable Tony Fitzgerald AC QC to ask all parties to commit to "The Fitzgerald Principles" of transparency and accountability.

## ➔ FEBRUARY

Just days after the historic first-term defeat of the Newman government, the former head of NSW ICAC, the Hon David Ipp AO QC, gave the keynote speech at our *Accountability and the Law* conference in Brisbane.

## ➔ MARCH

Our *Everyday Sexism* report revealed that 9 in 10 Australian women have experienced verbal or physical street harassment. Alarming, our survey showed that men are primarily targeting young women, while they're alone.

## ➔ APRIL

Our *Top Gears* report made the front page of *The Australian*, two days in a row. The rest of the media followed, which put negative gearing front and centre in the housing affordability and fair Budget debates.

## ➔ MAY

Starting a conversation about introducing new taxes, or increasing existing ones has become virtually impossible in Australian politics, so we teamed up with GetUp! to put fair tax reform back on the agenda. Our report *A Brighter Budget* outlined a range of costed progressive tax policies - from a 'Buffet Rule', to restricting super tax concessions. We now know our super suggestions were debated in the Liberal Cabinet. Our report also gave a platform to ALP, Greens and Independent MPs to canvas these elements of their established policy platforms, or in some cases, to adopt them as policy for the first time.

## ➔ JUNE

Just ahead of the Queensland Budget, our report *Outclassed* revealed Queensland spends less on social services than the Australian average, yet leads the country in state fossil fuel subsidies - \$9.5 billion over six years.

*"The final question of the night was to do with a letter from think-tank The Australia Institute...*

*Mr Newman tried for several minutes not to answer why his Liberal National Party didn't respond to the letter, instead trying to spruik his government's achievements in the area.*

*...An agitated Mr Newman finally relented and said he would support the content of the letter, which had been signed by about 50 prominent Queenslanders."*

AAP, 23 Jan 2015 Bikie 'cheap shot' defines Qld debate

# LETTER FROM The Chair

Lin Hatfield Dodds



**In this, my fourth year as Chair of The Australia Institute, I've never been prouder of our work.**

We often hear political leaders talk about the need to 'have a conversation' about a given policy challenge. The trouble is, instead of a conversation, we too often get an echo chamber.

More than ever, the Institute's research throughout 2014-15 has given a much needed framework to change the conversation around key public policy issues: the Renewable Energy Target, superannuation reform, real and imagined Budget emergencies, population growth, the mining industry, and fossil fuel divestment.

That's why I'm so proud of the Institute's work – not only do we help spark public debate, we change the ground those debates are held on.

By changing the conversation, our work helps change minds.

The impact of the Institute belies the fact that we're a very small team. Every piece of research we produce needs to make a difference. 'Research that matters' is our organisational credo, and the benchmark against which we measure our success. It actually sets a very high bar – not only for the calibre of the research, but how well we take this work off the shelf and out into the world.

The Institute is committed to a more just and equal society. Our research tackles many and varied vested interests, on terms progressives rarely challenge them: economics.

The Board and Research Committee determine a relentlessly relevant research agenda. The Institute's researchers do an incredible job to bring insight to emerging issues, and to shed new light on seemingly intractable public policy challenges.

I'd like also to recognise the Institute's leadership team: Richard Denniss for his razor -sharp focus on our organisational purpose; our new Deputy Director Ebony Bennett for her great work managing the staff and building the organisation, and of course Ben Oquist for his extraordinary skill in navigating the political landscape. Ben has played a transformative role at the Institute and I'm thrilled that he will continue as Executive Director.

Finally, my sincere thanks to all who support the important work of the Institute – your donations large and small make our work to change minds possible.

That's why I'm so proud of the Institute's work – not only do we help spark public debate, we change the ground those debates are held on.



## OUR PEOPLE

## Our Board

**CHAIR**

Lin Hatfield Dodds  
National Director,  
Uniting Care Australia

**DEPUTY CHAIR**

**Professor Barbara Pocock**  
Work and Employment  
Researcher  
Founder, Centre for Work and  
Life, University of South Australia

**Elizabeth Cham**

Former CEO, Philanthropy  
Australia

**Dr Samantha Hardy**

Advisor, Callum Hardy  
Consulting

**John McKinnon**

NGO Director and philanthropist

**David Morawetz**

Clinical/Counselling Psychologist  
Economist  
Founder/Director,  
Social Justice Fund

**Andrew Dettmer**

National President,  
Australian Manufacturing  
Workers Union

**Professor Spencer Zifcak**

Allan Myers Professor of Law, ACU  
Barrister & Solicitor,  
Supreme Court of Victoria

**Lee Thomas**

Federal Secretary  
Australian Nursing  
& Midwifery Association

# CORPORATE Governance

The Australia Institute recognises its responsibility to maintain corporate governance practices that are robust, accountable and of a standard that meets the expectations of its stakeholders. The Institute's board and its staff are committed to implementing high standards of corporate governance and will continue to work towards achieving this.

## Our Corporate Governance Policy

The principles of good corporate governance comprise an effective, accountable and ethical decision-making process focused on meeting the Institute's corporate objectives. These are outlined in the various documents that have been developed to guide the work of the Institute and the operations of its staff.

The Governance Charter outlines the main corporate governance practices that are in place for the Institute, and to which both the Board collectively, and the Directors individually, are committed. The Board's conduct is also governed by the Articles of Association.

The role of the Board is to govern the organisation, rather than to manage its day-to-day activities. The Board is committed to fulfilling its duties to the organisation, observing all relevant laws and regulations, and providing employees with a safe and rewarding place in which to work.

The Institute is committed to promoting ethical and responsible decision-making and procedures in relation to the research it carries out and the reports it publishes. Its activities are governed by the highest standards of reporting, based on exhaustively researched topics and constructive and unbiased conclusions.

## Our Board of Directors

A Board of eight Directors governs the Institute, meeting up to three times a year. All non-executive Directors volunteer their time, and receive no remuneration for serving on the Institute's board. The Executive Director of the Institute serves as an ex-officio member of the Board.



## Meeting of Directors in 2014-15

Our Board met on the following dates:  
23 October 2014 and 25 March 2015.

DIRECTORS	No. Meetings entitled to attend	No. Attended
Lin Hatfield Dodds (Chair)	2	2
Professor Barbara Pocock (Deputy Chair)	2	2
Elizabeth Cham	2	2
Andrew Dettmer	1	1
Dr Samantha Hardy	2	1
John McKinnon	2	2
David Morawetz	2	2
Professor Spencer Zifcak	2	2
Lee Thomas	2	1
Ex-officio		
Dr Richard Denniss	2	2

## Research Committee

The Institute's Research Committee provides quality control for commissioned research projects, and guidance and advice for our self-directed research program. Its members comprise Richard Denniss, Jon Altman, Alastair Greig, Barbara Pocock, Hilary Bambrick, Spencer Zifcak.

## Management

Executive Director Dr Richard Denniss (and very briefly, Ben Oquist) led the day to day operations of the Institute throughout 2014-15. In September 2014, Ebony Bennett joined the Institute as Deputy Director, and Ben Oquist continued as Director of Strategy until stepping into the Executive Director role in late June 2015.

# LETTER FROM Ben Oquist

## Incoming Executive Director

It's an honour to work for one of Australia's most important institutions. I thank Lin and the Board for placing their trust in me to lead the organisation for this next chapter.

The fierce intelligence, energy and unique vision of my colleague and friend, Richard Denniss, has turned The Australia Institute into a powerhouse. He is undoubtedly one of the nation's leading public intellectuals, and as our new Chief Economist, Richard will be writing and speaking more than ever.

The Australia Institute is independent and utterly non-partisan: we barrack for ideas, not political parties. This can frustrate people from time to time. But we call it as we see it, and we always back our position with research of the highest quality.

In order for The Institute's work to make a difference, we need to connect ideas to decision makers, engaging in and helping to shape public debates. I'm proud of our track record over the last year in finding ways to bring fresh ideas to the fore. We have played a key role in a number of significant wins for progressive political thinking – often collaborating with the most unexpected protagonists to secure real outcomes.

Engaging with the new Senate and bringing our research into sharp political focus has been a priority and we've demonstrated a clear impact.

The Australia Institute is the only think tank based in Canberra. We're proud of that. The nation's laws are made here. Most of the Commonwealth public service is here. A critical section of the fourth estate is based here. Being based in Canberra gives us every opportunity to ensure the excellent work of our research team has maximum impact.

The Institute has been at the forefront of the debate about Australia's tax and revenue challenges. Australia's economic future and prosperity rest on more than coal as our economic research demonstrates. The economic costs of inequality are a challenge to all nation states, including Australia and bringing Joseph Stiglitz to Australia was a highlight of 2014-15.

It's such a privilege to work with Richard, Ebony, Rod and the whole team here at the Institute. Our small team is smart and incredibly hard working, and our work is made possible by the generous support of our many members and donors.

We have an exciting year ahead planned and a federal election looms. With the Paris summit around the corner, the climate change debate is being renewed and we have new ideas and initiatives planned, including our new initiative [nonewcoalmines.org.au](http://nonewcoalmines.org.au).



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# LETTER FROM Dr Richard Denniss

## Outgoing Executive Director (2007-2015) Chief Economist

After eight years, two books, scores of research papers and countless opinion pieces, I've stepped down as Executive Director. I'm taking on the new role of the Institute's Chief Economist. I couldn't be prouder of how far the Institute has come, nor more excited about where we are headed.

Over the last eight years, the Institute has grown in size, profile and impact. Not long after I took up the role of ED, we changed our motto to *Research that Matters*; there's no doubt we have delivered plenty of that in the years that have followed.

Back in 2008, when we first said tax concessions for superannuation were costing the budget more than they were saving it, people thought we were mad.

Back in 2010, when we first started telling people that the mining industry was in fact a small employer that didn't pay much tax, again people thought we were mad.

But now, both the superannuation and mining industries are increasingly being held to account for their previously unchallenged assertions about jobs, wealth and prosperity in this country. Our research has been central to that shift.

You can't change debates when you are saying things everyone already knows. And you certainly can't change debates from the sidelines – you need to be an active participant. That's why think tanks like the Institute are so very important. We have the research capacity to discover things that others don't know. We bring new ideas to the table and we have the profile and the experience to ensure that the media, and in turn the public, pay attention to our work.

It took me many years to learn that it takes many years to change a public debate. It takes even longer to shift a public policy. It's never achieved through one piece of research, or one interview. It takes insight, effort, collaboration and persistence to shift the way an entire nation views an issue. Precisely because the task of changing minds is so difficult, I'm enormously proud of the successes our small team has been able to chalk up in recent years.



The Australia Institute receives no government funding. We exist and succeed because our supporters want us to. To the thousands of you who have supported the Institute during my time at the helm, thank you. We literally couldn't do what we do without your support. I assure you that in an organisation as small as ours, every donation gets noticed.

Australia is a great country. It's a privilege to live in one of the richest countries in the world at the richest point in world history. I often say that the Australian government can afford to do anything it wants, but it can't afford to do everything it wants. Every billion dollars we give away in mining subsidies is a billion that can't be spent on schools and hospitals. Every billion dollars that sinks down the loopholes in the tax system is a billion dollars we can't invest in renewable energy or use to increase unemployment benefits.

The choices our parliamentary representatives make matter. Politics matter. Policy matters. While charity can shift millions of dollars, policy change can shift billions of dollars. Nihilism and disengagement from politics won't change the country, or save the world, but as we have shown, ideas and evidence sometimes can.

Thanks to your support, I have had the privilege of having my voice heard in many of the big debates about Australian public policy. I am so happy that the Board decided to appoint Ben Oquist as the new ED. I hope that in my new role I will have even more opportunity to engage and speak out on the big issues.

I am sure that, with your support, Ben and the team will continue to take the Australia Institute from strength to strength.

Wish us luck!

Politics matter. Policy matters. While charity can shift millions of dollars, policy change can shift billions of dollars. Nihilism and disengagement from politics won't change the country, or save the world, but ideas and evidence sometimes can.

# OUR PEOPLE

## Our Staff



**Ben Oquist**  
Executive Director (incoming)  
Director of Strategy



**Ebony Bennett**  
Deputy Director



**Dr Richard Denniss**  
Executive Director (outgoing)  
Chief Economist

## Research Staff & Advisors



**Roderick Campbell**  
Research Director



**Matt Grudnoff**  
Senior Economist



**Molly Johnson**  
Researcher



**Mark Ogge**  
Principal Advisor



**David Richardson**  
Senior Research Fellow



**Tom Swann**  
Researcher



## Communications & Administration Staff



**Cameron Amos**  
Communications Advisor



**Tom Burmester**  
Communications Director



**Faith Brown**  
Executive Assistant to Richard  
Denniss & Ben Oquist



**Hannah Brown**  
Administrative Assistant



**Bill Browne**  
Website Assistant



**Barbara Griffiths**  
Office Manager

# INSTITUTE RESEARCH & Publications



In 2014-15, The Australia Institute produced 43 pieces of research and made 17 submissions to government inquiries or project assessment processes.

This substantial body of new research builds upon areas of longstanding inquiry by the Institute – inequality, mining, renewable energy and corporate welfare, to name a few.

We have also found opportunities to take our research in new directions; including fossil fuel divestment, affordable housing, and public investment in health and education.

The broad brief of our research is anchored by a sharp strategic focus – defining the problems we face, and offering workable solutions.



43  
Research  
Pieces

+



17 Submissions to  
government inquiries  
or project assessments

+



54  
Opinion  
Pieces

+



3  
Surveys

+



1  
Book

## PUBLICATIONS →



All documents and publications (except Richard's book) can be accessed online at [www.tai.org.au/research](http://www.tai.org.au/research)

## BRIEFING NOTES & BACKGROUND BRIEFINGS



- **Banks At Risk Of Losing Customers**  
*Survey: How do bank customers feel about their bank funding coal projects in the Great Barrier Reef?*
- **The RET's Effect On Tasmania**  
*Does the RET cost Tasmanian industrial users \$20 million per year?*
- **Economics, Agriculture And Native Vegetation in NSW**  
*Impacts of native vegetation regulation on agricultural industries*
- **Subsidisation Of Abbot Point Coal Port Expansion**  
*Despite no cost-benefit analysis, Newman Government contributes over \$2b in public money towards Abbot Point*
- **Are There 27,000 Jobs In The Galilee Basin?**  
*Analysis: are state government employment projections for Galilee Basin coal projects accurate?*
- **Distributional Impact Of PUP Savings Measures**
- **Victorian Liberal Party Promises New Trains**  
*Will this election promise meet projected population growth in Melbourne?*
- **Everyday Sexism**  
*Australian women's experiences of street harassment*
- **Coal In The Southern Highlands Economy**
- **Do We Need To Burn Forests To Save The Environment?**  
*RET and biomass*
- **Get Regular Excise**  
*The case to re-index the fuel excise*



## POLICY BRIEFS



- ➔ **Income And Wealth Inequality In Australia**  
*Extent of inequality in Australia; impact of government policies for better or worse.*
- ➔ **Fighting Dirty On Clean Energy**  
*The case for the Renewable Energy Target*
- ➔ **Will We Let The Sun Shine in?**  
*Trends in the Australian solar industry*
- ➔ **Feeling Safe Again**  
*Recovering from property crime.*
- ➔ **Go Home On Time Day**  
*Walking the tightrope: Have Australians achieved work/life balance?*
- ➔ **The Mouse That Roared**  
*Coal in the QLD economy*
- ➔ **All Talk And No Action**  
*The coal industry and energy poverty*
- ➔ **Unlocking Care**  
*Continuing mental health care for prisoners and their families*
- ➔ **How To Extend The GST Without Hurting The Poor**  
*Impacts and gains of extending GST to private schools & private health*
- ➔ **Australia's Housing Crisis – For The Ages**  
*Trends in home ownership rates in Australia*
- ➔ **Population Growth In Australia**
- ➔ **Large Scale Solar And The RET**  
*How potential investment in solar power, not just wind, is dependent on a stable, strong large-scale Renewable Energy Target (LRET)*
- ➔ **Australia's Tobin Tax: Arguments And Evidence**  
*What would a tax on financial transactions mean for the Australian economy?*
- ➔ **Outclassed**  
*How Queensland's schools and social services are affected by mining industry assistance and lobbying*



- ➔ **A Super Waste Of Money**  
*Redesigning superannuation tax concessions*
- ➔ **Any Way The Wind Blows**  
*Power generation in South Australia*
- ➔ **Powers Of Deduction**  
*Tax deductions, environmental organisations and the mining industry*
- ➔ **The Dash from Gas.**  
*Could demand in New South Wales fall to half?*



## INSTITUTE PAPER



- ➔ **The Budget's Hidden Gender Agenda**  
*How taxation and spending measures are having a disproportionate effect on women*
- ➔ **Tax: The Need For Change**  
*Response to the Financial System Inquiry, National Commission of Audit and Tax Discussion Paper 2015*

## TECHNICAL BRIEF



- ➔ **Australia Post's Operations**  
*Review of Boston Consulting Group's report to the Minister for Communications*
- ➔ **Productivity In The Construction Industry**
- ➔ **Boosting Retirement Incomes The Easy Way**  
*Extending the Pension Loan Scheme to all retirees*
- ➔ **Wind Energy, Climate and Health**  
*Evidence for the impacts of wind generated energy in Australia*

## SUBMISSIONS →



Listed documents can be accessed online.  
Visit [www.tai.org.au/research](http://www.tai.org.au/research)

### Submissions to Parliamentary and Planning Processes

- ➔ **Inquiry Into Galilee Basin State Development Area**  
*Queensland State Government Inquiry*
- ➔ **Warkworth Continuation Project**  
*EIS submission*
- ➔ **Terminal 4: Newcastle Coal Terminal Extension Proposal**  
*Submission to Planning and Assessment Commission*
- ➔ **Review Of Retirement Income Stream Regulation**  
*Submission to the Treasury*
- ➔ **Inquiry Into Unconventional Gas (Fracking)**  
*Submission to South Australian Natural Resources Committee Inquiry*
- ➔ **Certain Aspects of Queensland Government Administration**  
*Commonwealth Government Select Committee*
- ➔ **Abbot Point Port And Wetland Project And Abbot Point Dredging And Onshore Placement of Dredged Material Project**  
*Submission to Queensland Government*
- ➔ **How The Government Loses 48 per cent Of Company Tax**  
*Submission to Senate Community Affairs References Committee*
- ➔ **Draft Industry Action Plan**  
*NSW Minerals Industry*
- ➔ **Mt Owen Continued Operations Project**  
*EIS submission*
- ➔ **Inquiry Into Health Impacts Of Wind Turbines**  
*Senate Select Committee*
- ➔ **Springvale Colliery Extension Proposal**  
*Submission to the NSW Government Planning Assessment Commission*
- ➔ **Corporations Legislation Amendment (Deregulatory And Other Measures) Bill 2014**  
*Senate Economics Legislation Committee*
- ➔ **Corporate Tax Avoidance**  
*Submission to Senate Economics Reference Committee*
- ➔ **NSW Electricity Leasing Inquiry**  
*Verbal Submission to Select Committee on the Leasing of Electricity Infrastructure*
- ➔ **Tax Discussion Paper**  
*Commonwealth Government Tax White Paper*
- ➔ **Home Ownership Inquiry**  
*Standing Committee into Economics*

## SURVEYS &amp; COMMISSIONED RESEARCH



➔ **Top Gears**

*How negative gearing and the capital gains tax discount benefit drive up house prices*

Commissioned for GetUp!

➔ **Leading by Degrees: Universities And Fossil Fuel Divestment**

*National poll to assess public attitudes towards universities' ethics and investments*

➔ **Closing The Tax Loopholes**

*A Buffett rule for Australia*  
Commissioned for GetUp!

➔ **Who's Getting Negative?**

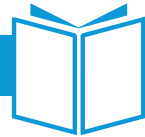
*The benefits of negative gearing by federal electorate*  
Commissioned for GetUp!

➔ **It's The Revenue Stupid**

*Ideas for a brighter budget*

Commissioned for GetUp! and Social Justice Fund

## BOOKS



**Minority Policy:**

**Rethinking governance when parliament matters**

*Brenton Prosser and Richard Denniss*

Melbourne University Press

OPINION  
PIECES

In addition to publishing formal research, Richard Denniss and our research staff penned over 50 opinion pieces throughout 2014-15. These pieces amplify the impact of our research and introduce our work to new audiences. This year, we've written for national broadsheets like *The Australian*, well-read online news-media outlets like *The Guardian* and *The Drum* and trusted local papers like *The Newcastle Herald* and *The Mercury*.

Reflecting the broader range of research topics over the past year, opinion pieces from Institute staff cover a wide range of subject matter. Analysis of state and federal budgets are also a regular focus of these pieces.

Richard's regular contributions to *The Australian Financial Review* and *The Canberra Times* provide an opportunity to insert timely progressive commentary into live political debates.

The Australia Institute and its staff have a growing social media profile and these pieces often kickstart vibrant conversations directly between our research staff and the community. These op eds and the conversations that ensue are an important way for us to ensure our research matters.



The **Australia Institute**

Research that matters.

# OUR IMPACT

You can't reframe a debate unless you are in it – and we are always in the debate.

With a conservative government in power, it should come as no surprise that the economy is central to the current political debate.

Few progressive voices take on the conservatives on economics. We do.

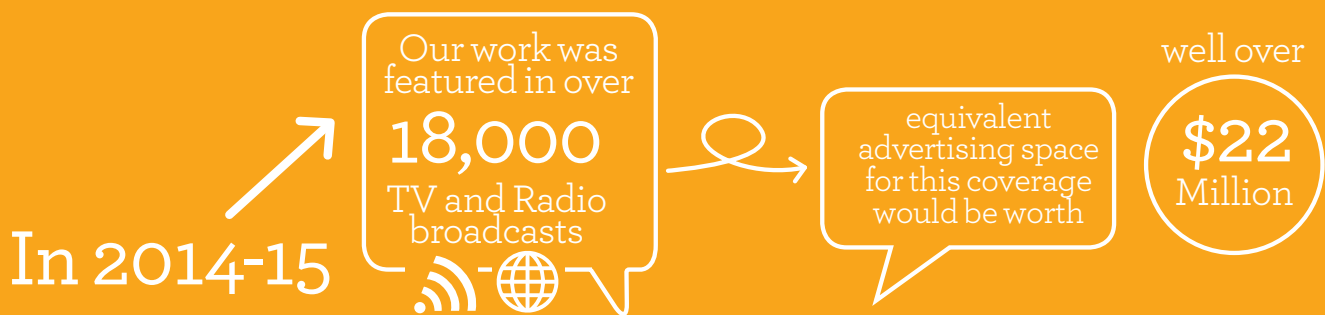
With a diverse cross-bench now sharing balance of power in the Senate since July last year, there have been plenty of opportunities to drive political debates in new directions.

Given this political configuration, we've able to marshal support for good policy outcomes from some surprising quarters:

- The Clean Energy Finance Corporation and ARENA remain in place to support innovation in the renewable energy sector
- \$12b of the most damaging cuts in the Budget was forestalled.
- Despite all efforts to remove them from discussion, we've kept negative gearing and tax concessions to the superannuation industry well and truly on the political agenda.

At the state level, we also made accountability, trust and transparency in government a defining issue in the Queensland election.

Our team is regularly asked to participate on panels at conferences, public debates and community events. These events are another way for us to take our work directly to communities and to shift the ground of debates.



## Media Coverage

We secured strong coverage throughout the year in every state and territory, across a range of issues.

- Mining was our most reported upon topic - our work attracted 1780 TV news and radio stories – worth \$1.82 million in equivalent advertising space.
- Our commentary and analysis on the Budget was also widely reported upon, featuring in 1126 stories, as was our work on renewable energy (439 stories).

## Project Snapshot - QLD Accountability

In the lead-up to the QLD state election, the Institute worked hard to put government accountability on the political agenda, asking all political parties to back the 'Fitzgerald Principles' for good governance. Campbell Newman refused to commit, before being put on the spot at the Leaders' Debate, where he agreed.

Our research had uncovered \$2 billion in state government subsidies towards coal mining in the Galilee Basin – with no public cost-benefit analysis to inform that decision.

The week after the election, we polled Queenslanders to find out to whether the issues we had worked hard to raise in the campaign had informed voters' choice at the ballot box. The results were staggering:

- Nearly three quarters (73%) said accountability, transparency and trust in government had a large impact on how they voted
- Half (51%) of those polled heard or read about Tony Fitzgerald (with whom we developed the 'Fitzgerald Principles') during the campaign.
- Of those that did recall Tony Fitzgerald, nearly two thirds (62%) said his comments prompted them to give more weight to the need for governments to be open and transparent when they voted.

**In other words, Tony Fitzgerald and the 'Fitzgerald Principles' had an impact on one in three (32%) Queensland voters.**

We are enormously proud of our success in getting these important principles firmly in Queensland voters' minds.

## Using Social Media to Build our impact

Our growing social media presence on both Twitter and Facebook helps to amplify the reach and impact of our research.

Our Facebook posts routinely reach an audience of 100,000 or more, while the number of people who like our page has grown by 24% in the past year. We now have well over 15,000 people liking our Facebook page.

We've had even stronger growth on Twitter, with nearly 3,000 new followers in the past year, amounting to growth of 57% in that time. Twitter is a great platform to insert our analysis directly into political commentary. It also gives us another channel to have a conversation with the community about our work.



With a conservative government in power, it should come as no surprise that the economy is central to the current political debate.

Few progressive voices take on the conservatives on economics. We do.

The **Australia Institute**

Research that matters.

# SUPPORTING Our Work

For over two decades, the independent thinking of the Australia Institute has been powered by the support of individuals and philanthropic trusts.

That support has allowed us to confront some of the greatest public policy challenges this country faces, without prejudice. We've been able to cast fresh light on old problems, and to take on some public policy dilemmas that vested interests had for too long held beyond the reach of political debate.

Our supporters understand the power of ideas; donors large and small make each and every piece of research possible.

This financial year, for the first time, we raised significant donations from individual donors backing crowd-funded projects.

The number of individual supporters making a monthly, tax-deductible donation to the Institute is steadily growing. Building the number of people making a monthly donation is a critical part of securing organisational funding for the Institute.

**Over 2000 people donated to the Institute in the 2014-15 year, with the average donation around \$50.**

Australia needs The Australia Institute. Please consider supporting our work program through a donation, however large or small. Every donation over \$2 is tax-deductible.

With your support, we will be able to expand our influential program of research that matters.

## Crowd Funding

The success of crowd-funding a number of individual projects has been one of the most exciting developments for the Institute. While our work program is the result of a rigorous process of planning and research; crowd-funding allows us to respond quickly to unexpected opportunities to promote that work. Here are two examples:

### RESPONSE TO ANU DIVESTMENT PROJECT

Last October, nearly 800 individual donors contributed funds to place two full-page ads in *The Canberra Times* and *The Australian Financial Review* in response to the divestment decisions of the ANU Board. Donations large and small poured in, and for 610 of those donors, it was the very first ever time they'd donated to the Institute. These ads followed on from our divestment research and our petition in support of the ANU Board being free to make their own decisions to invest or divest as they saw fit - which nearly 10,000 people signed.



## RICHARD'S HUNTER VALLEY COAL TOUR

In November, around 500 individual donors supported our Hunter Valley Coal Tour. We organised the tour in response to Stephen Galilee (Minerals Council spin doctor) challenging Richard to repeat the comments he had made about the coal mining industry on ABC 7:30, directly to coal communities. In just a few days, we raised over \$24,000, making Richard's community tour possible – though it was a shame Stephen didn't turn up to any of the events we put on. Significantly, many of these donors have chosen to stay on as regular donors to the Institute.



500 individual donors



supported our Hunter Valley Coal Tour



In just a few days, we raised \$24,000+



to organise 3 regional events for Richard to talk directly with coal communities in NSW

## Why support the Institute?

Being an independent think tank means that we rely entirely on the support of individuals and philanthropic organisations.

Our independence is our currency, and we invest that currency carefully - by producing high quality research to move public policy debates towards a fairer, more progressive Australia. It's no small task, and we couldn't do it without your support.

We are working hard to make sure every part of the Institute's work matters. Here's why two of our donors choose to support our work:

"I donate because the Australia Institute shifts the public debate, and that is the most powerful way to get lasting change. Much of my philanthropic giving has been reactive until now; but now I want it to be proactive, and capable of creating big changes - not just mopping up the mess. The Australia Institute seemed the best way to achieve that.

Richard and his team take on some of the biggest economic myths and bust them wide open. They follow through with media and publicity, that sows a seed of change, that grows into a tree of truth. The Australia Institute has shone a powerful light on the big issues that will make or break our economy – mining, superannuation, tax structures".



Naomi Edwards  
Actuary and  
Company Director

"The Australia Institute contributes to the national economic debate at just the right level. It demonstrates, in sufficient detail to satisfy readers who want to really understand, just how misguided and self-serving are many of the government's utterances, and of course those of big business. And it does so without assuming a level of expertise in economics that readers such as myself do not have. The Australia Institute is performing the same function at the local level that Nobel-prize winning economist Paul Krugman performs on the international stage."



Andrew Hopkins  
Emeritus Professor of Sociology Australian National University

[www.tai.org.au](http://www.tai.org.au)



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