“Bridging the parallel universe: making research matter in public policy”

3rd IEA GHG Social Research Network Meeting
Noosa, Australia
13 April 2012
Today

• Politics and policy
• Politics and science
• Media, science and policy
• Bridging the divide
Integrating ‘world pictures’

• “We find ourselves in a bewildering world. We want to make sense of what we see around us and to ask: What is the nature of the universe? What is our place in it and where did it and we come from? Why is it the way it is?

• To try to answer these questions we adopt some “world picture”. P 181
We have the capacity to think great things: Looking Back from the Future

• “The emergence of a new suite of values is the foundation of the entire edifice of our planetary society. Consumerism, individualism and domination of nature -the dominant values of yesteryear – have given way to a new triad: quality of life, human solidarity, and ecological sensibility”

Dr Paul Raskin, founder of the Tellus Institute, USA
Too hard

• “I’ve never seen an environmental issue mature so quickly, shifting from science to the policy realm almost overnight” – Michael Oppenheimer, Environmental Defense Fund 1988
The human dilemma...

“Acceptable ideas are competent no more and competent ideas are not yet acceptable”

Stafford Beer, Platforms of Change, New York, John Wiley and Sons: 1975
Why won’t they listen?

“human nature is not just intrinsically moral, it’s also intrinsically moralistic, critical, and judgmental”.

“Politics and religion are both expressions of our underlying moral psychology, and an understanding of that psychology can help to bring people together”.

“intuitions come first, strategic reasoning second”

“there’s more to morality than harm and fairness”.

“morality binds and blinds”
The academic world – we do not use what we know

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<th>Your Estimated Personal Acceptance Rate</th>
<th>Goal: 1 Publication Per Year</th>
<th>Goal: 2 Publications Per Year</th>
<th>Goal: 3 Publications Per Year</th>
<th>Goal: 4 Publications Per Year</th>
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As this table shows, for low acceptance rates, if you fall into this category, you would need to publish at least 10 papers per year to meet the goal of 5 publications. If your acceptance rate is higher, you may need fewer papers to meet the goal. The Australian Research Council (ARC) is responsible for administering the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative, which aims to identify and promote excellence across the full spectrum of research activity in Australia’s higher education institutions.
Public Service
Modern trends

• Confusing science with activism
• Matters empirical now a matter of belief
• Risk communication becomes spin
• Public perceptions divergent
• Complexity pervades, simplicity prevails
• Isolation and irrelevance of the Academy
• Minimalist Government – more with less
• Public understanding is confused and volatile
• Alienation from politics, distrust of science
Our focus and feedback is very much short term

The four horizons of effective leadership

- **Legacy / generational time:** (CO2, pensions...)
- **Long (3-20 years+):** radical innovation necessary and likely
- **Medium (1-3 years):** incremental innovation, efficiency and performance
- **Short (days, weeks, months):** fire-fighting

Who Knows
Conceivable
Doable
Fixable

Extracted from Geoff Mulgan (2007)” Ready or not: taking innovation in the public sector serious” NESTA: UK
Oh, if it was only so straightforward...

Peter Bridgman and Glyn Davis
You are meeting the Minister: what do you want me to do?
Tips from Yes Minister: “the Civil Service 12-stage delaying process”

1. Informal discussions
2. Draft proposal
3. Preliminary study
4. Discussion document
5. In-depth study
6. Revised proposal
7. Policy statement
8. Strategy proposal
9. Discussion of strategy
10. Implementation plan circulated
11. Revised implementation plans
12. Cabinet agreement

If the bureaucracy does not like the idea or the proponent, things become very difficult

Tips from yes Minister: Discrediting an unwelcome report

• “Stage One: Refuse to publish in the public interest saying
  1. There are security considerations.
  2. The findings could be misinterpreted.
  3. You are waiting for the results of a wider and more detailed report which is still in preparation. (If there isn't one, commission it; this gives you even more time).

Stage Two: Discredit the evidence you are not publishing, saying
  1. It leaves important questions unanswered.
  2. Much of the evidence is inconclusive.
  3. The figures are open to other interpretations.
  4. Certain findings are contradictory.
  5. Some of the main conclusions have been questioned. (If they haven't, question them yourself; then they have).

Stage Three: Undermine the recommendations. Suggested phrases:
  1. 'Not really a basis for long term decisions'.
  2. 'Not sufficient information on which to base a valid assessment'.
  3. 'No reason for any fundamental rethink of existing policy'.
  4. 'Broadly speaking, it endorses current practice'.

Stage Four: Discredit the person who produced the report. Explain (off the record) that
  1. He is harbouring a grudge against the Department.
  2. He is a publicity seeker.
  3. He is trying to get a Knighthood/Chair/Vice Chancellorship.
  4. He used to be a consultant to a multinational.
  5. He wants to be a consultant to a multinational."

Government competes with itself

Provide more services, smarter and at less cost, all the time with demand growing

Adapted from Mark Moore
Faculty Chair
Hauser Professor of Nonprofit Organizations
Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations
Technical vs Perceived Risk

Domain of Technical Risk
- Industry
- Independent Researchers
- Expert Sphere

Domain of Perceived Risk
- Mass Media
- Governments
- General Public
- Public Interest Groups
- Public Sphere

NIMTO
NIMBY

**The 10 mysteries of the parallel universes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The scientific universe</th>
<th>The political universe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Uncertainty</td>
<td>1. Surety</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Questions</td>
<td>2. Answers</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Objective</td>
<td>4. Subjective</td>
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<td>5. Consensus</td>
<td>5. Conflict</td>
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<td>6. Proof</td>
<td>6. Extrapolation</td>
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<td>7. Sceptical</td>
<td>7. Critical</td>
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<td>8. Outcome</td>
<td>8. Output</td>
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If it can be personalised its more likely to run

Finding space for an issue is difficult

Ideas happen in a competitive context

Complex issues gasp for oxygen
How the media reports science

Wild weather over ... for now

But we should still fear climate change, say experts

Brian Williams
ENVIRONMENT REPORTER

AFTER flooding rain across much of Queensland, terrifying Category 5 Cyclone Yasi and more than 30 deaths, one of the strongest La Nina events on record has ended.

Although it’s too early for meteorologists to know if next summer will bring another La Nina or drought-bearing El Nino conditions, an International Panel on Climate Change events to come. Chairman Rajendra Pachauri said climate change would see the world face more such extreme events, including cyclones, floods, droughts, heatwaves and fire.

The panel’s fifth report to world governments was assessing the connection between these events and climate change. “We will inform communities and governments about what needs to be done to adapt to these extreme events,” Dr Pachauri said.

Aware of Victoria’s Black Saturday bushfires, in which 173 people died and 414 were injured, but many did not understand that many others — especially elderly — died in a heatwave preceding the fires.

At least 100 people died in Melbourne during the extreme heatwave — a 45 per cent jump in deaths — and more died in other parts of Victoria, SA and northern Tasmania.

Professor Nicholls said Melbourne temperatures exceeded Alex Zadnik said La Ninjas were characterised by colder thanusual sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean (near South America), with warmer than usual waters near Australia.

These sea surface temperatures drive stronger than usual southeast trade winds across the tropical Pacific Ocean, boosting moisture levels across eastern and northern Australia.

A return to near normal sea

“We can safely say the La Nina has concluded, following a once-in-a-lifetime event,” Mr Zadnik said.

Rainfall over the past year was on a par with events in the 1970s and 1990s, but based solely on atmospheric data, this event was stronger.

With La Nina fading and the arrival of the dry season across northern Australia, the likelihood of another event was diminishing.

The weather
Still a fringe dweller

- editors of major news outlets believe science is an important component of the daily news stream
- science is not well represented in general programming - underrepresented in factual and documentary programming and missing-in-action from most Australian drama, comedy and reality TV
- Much science news coverage in Australia is framed in a political context
- Needed transparency and openness in the release of science-based reports commissioned by government departments.
- support for scientists to communicate more effectively with the media and for journalists to report on complex science issues

Science and the media

From ideas to action

Prepared by the Science and Media Expert Working Group as part of the Inspiring Australia initiative

March 2011
Portals

For Media Officers
Why the AusSMC can help you:

Our remit is to better inform public debate on the major issues of the day by improving links between the media and the scientific community and increasing the accuracy of scientific coverage in the news.

The AusSMC has gained a reputation for being independent, fast and accurate, and for delivering good science in the form and time-frame needed for news. We work closely with all the major news outlets in Australia (and many further afield) and are used to dealing with controversial and sensitive topics under tight deadlines.

The AusSMC now has over 900 journalists who have actively registered to receive our alerts. While most of the issues we cover are driven by the level of media interest, the AusSMC also plays a role in providing journalists with heads-up on emerging issues and upcoming stories.

We are not attempting to promote our own name and work constantly with the most-respected scientific journals and institutions to ensure the accuracy of the science and the quality of the story.
Globalising News

http://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2012/03/daily-chart-11
Newspapers in decline

Newspaper growth in developing world

Decline of newspaper in OECD

Scope for detailed treatment of issues diminished

Rise of the “10 second grab” and focus on TV local news and sport
Rise of the internet and sporadic news

TV and internet are where most people get their news

BUT

News sites do not figure high on average visits per month
Life as Story: Novelas

The fertility rate in Brazil fell sharply over the past half-century, from more than six children per family in 1960 to about two by 2000, the study noted. This drop is comparable to that of China, but without any government family-planning measures.

The novelas portrayed the "small, beautiful, white, healthy, urban, middle and upper middle class consumerist family," the study noted. "Novelas have been a powerful medium through which the small family has been idealized."
A leap too far: Toowoomba Recycled Water 2006 Plebiscite

Polling Results 3 months up to Plebiscite

All survey dates

"Fear campaign"
Lessons from water – integrate with dominant “world pictures”

“Restrictions, combined with water use efficiency and conservation measures, have been very effective in reducing demand for water. Total household consumption in Australia has decreased by 22% since 2000-01” - Productivity Commission

“If we are to learn a lesson from the ways the Australian community has reduced water consumption, it would be that policy must be simple, honesty, and grounded in reality” – James Hitchcock, Centre for Environmental Sustainability, UTS
Thank you

john.cole@usq.edu.au