



Council for the National Interest

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN COMMITTEE

Summer Newsletter

AUSTRALIA

FUTURE CHALLENGES - FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

More than 160 concerned Australians gathered at South Perth on December 4 last year to hear respected former Governor of Western Australia, Major General Michael Jeffery, talk about the challenges and opportunities facing Australia. Major General Jeffery is Chairman of Future Directions International, formerly Centre for International Strategic Analysis, a not for profit private think tank.

Major General Jeffery designed his address to

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encourage debate and discussion about a number of policy issues, which CNI had earlier raised in a policy discussion paper, *The Crisis Facing Australia*. This discussion paper foreshadowed the problems and conversely the opportunities, which are inherent *inter alia* in Australia's ageing and ultimately declining population, declining fertility, family disintegration, immigration policies and practice, growing foreign debt and current account deficit, democracy, sovereignty, the Federation, illicit drug use and national infrastructure development.

Major General Jeffery opened his address with "*I want to emphasise that what I will be saying will be speculative and as such should be treated that way, We are out to stretch our minds a little and to encourage further thought, debate and analysis on the issues raised*", and concluded with his remarks "*What I have attempted to suggest tonight, is the importance of developing and articulating workable mid to long term strategies for the major issues of our time*".

In between these opening and closing remarks Major General Jeffery projected an Australia in 2042 and in sketching the kind of performance which had taken place between 2002 and 2042, he Here of course is the rub! Major General Jeffery talked about *mid to long term strategies* whereas Australians could be forgiven for thinking that, for our politicians, the mid to long term is how near or far away is the next election. This highlights the role of CNI and its members - to focus on sustainable long term solutions to today's problems and thus turn them into opportunities.

During 2003 we will be keen to form more discussion groups with the objective of developing the long term solutions and to strongly promote these as widely as possible not only to the politicians but the much wider community.

THE YEAR AHEAD

Of immediate importance are the issues of Electoral Fraud, Family Friendly policies and the direct funding of Local Government by the Federal Government.

ELECTORAL FRAUD

It is not extreme to say that Australia's democracy is threatened by the incidence of electoral fraud which electoral laws allow virtually at will. Rigging of electoral roles and false voting have been shown to occur and arguably have affected the outcome of elections. No! This is not a wild extravagant claim but one backed up by research and evidence and as such is totally alien and repugnant to every decent Australian. THIS ISSUE MUST BE ADDRESSED IN YEAR 2003.

FAMILY FRIENDLY POLICIES

Much has been made in the media of the proposal by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru

speculated about how the problems had been addressed and the opportunities seized and developed. He followed this with a generous response to many questions from those present. Goward, for a government funded 14 week paid maternity leave scheme.

This is a band-aid approach to the major need to provide mothers with true freedom of choice as to whether they stay home to care for their children or whether they return to the workforce. Under Goward's proposal, at the end of the 14 week period mothers are economically conscripted into the workforce. There are much better solutions to be developed and promoted. This is an ideal opportunity to prepare a submission for the Federal Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Family and Community Affairs which is currently holding an inquiry into 'Children's developmental health and well being'.

DIRECT FUNDING OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

In CNI Winter Newsletter, July 2002 attention was drawn to the proposal by Mr Tuckey to hold a Parliamentary inquiry into this issue. CNI still seeks volunteers to form or participate in a discussion group to address this issue.

JOIN THE WEB

Work has virtually been completed on the design and establishment of a website for CNI WA. When you have read this newsletter please try to log on to www.cniwa.com.au and click on to the many submissions which we have made.

CENTRAL DISCUSSION GROUP

The next meeting of this group will be held at 10.00am Wednesday 19 February. New participants welcome; please telephone Anne-Marie on 9321 1925 for details.