



Trust is a Two-Way Street

Cool Democracy and the Self-reliant Australian

"The problem is not that the people don't trust Australia's governments. It's that governments periodically show insufficient trust in the people"

**Submission to The Senate Legal and Constitutional
Affairs References Committee *Inquiry into Nationhood,
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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Ken Phillips

Self Employed Australia is interested in and seeks to defend the right of people to earn their living through being self-employed.

Somewhere around 18 percent of Australia's workforce are self-employed, a percentage that has been roughly stable for about two decades. (Note variances occur in reported percentages due to differences in statistical methodology)

These people fall into two broad groups:

- (a) micro-businesses of one, and
- (b) small business employers.

The primary motivation of self-employed people is that they seek to control their work circumstances as opposed to employed people who have others control their work circumstances. That is, self-employed people seek to be independent, to be self-reliant and are prepared to confront the challenges of a market economy boldly and personally. By comparison employed persons are personally removed and protected from direct interface with the market, at least that's the theory.

We believe that over the last few decades there has been a steady, strong social trend towards people feeling a greater independence and greater confidence in being independent. People seek to express their own identity. They are not prepared to be controlled by others or have others even to attempt to control them. This social refusal to be 'controlled' is what self-employed people do in their work environment.

In 'employment-managed' organisations, management processes have had to change to accommodate the social and personal demands of people not wanting to be 'controlled.' In effect 'command and control' is confronted by 'independence.' What has happened is that 'employment organisations' have had to take on board many of the features of the way self-employed people operate. 'Employment' is progressively looking like 'self-employment.'

In 2008, as detailed in *Independence and the Death of Employment*, this process was underway even then.¹ It's not that 'employment' as a term is dying, rather that the nature of employment as a command and control process is dying. Even more, the legal core of the employment contract as a command system is under challenge from independence.

The rise in 'independence' as an aspirational movement is a domineering trend in the Australian national identity we believe. It can be identified in the trend toward the idea and aspiration for independence in the work environment. It can be identified in the apparent disrespect for, ambivalence towards and distrust of traditional authoritarian institutions such as churches, big business, unions and yes government. In the political environment it appears as a fracturing of certainty.

Is this bad or is this the inevitable outcome of a maturing democracy? We think the latter. In fact, we think that 'independence' is something to be understood, embraced and even welcomed.

For those in the community who seek to be authoritarian, the psychology and aspiration of independence is a direct threat to their desire for power and control. Self Employed Australia welcomes this threat to authoritarianism.

Since 2000 Self Employed Australia has been highly active in promoting independence in the work situation. We have had a strong focus on promoting how work independence needs to and can be accommodated within the necessary regulatory frameworks required by responsible government. We've expressed these views in submissions to reviews into Work Safety, Workers Compensation, tax law (state and federal), industrial relations, contracting, competition law, and policies impacting small business. We observe that many of our views have been incorporated into many laws to varying degrees.

In this submission to this very broad inquiry by the Senate into *Nationhood, National Identity and Democracy* we draw on a selection of our historical submissions along with other data to demonstrate one central theme, the issue of aspirational independence within the Australian national psyche.

TRUST IS A TWO-WAY STREET

Peter Murphy

1. Considering some core statistics – what is the national psyche?

At the core of the Senate Inquiry referenced in the Inquiry's *Discussion Paper* is a 'worrying decline in the level of public trust' in government.

Persons expressing 'trust in politicians' has eroded sharply in the last decade:

- from a high of 85 percent in 2007 to 40 percent in 2018.

By comparison

- 71 to 85 percent in the period 1996-2007 expressed 'trust in politicians'.

[Source 2018 report *Democracy 2025 Report No. 1: Trust and Democracy in Australia: Democratic decline and renewal*. Figure 3]²

The Senate Inquiry would like to know what happened in the last decade.

1a. Concern for the political centre

The interest of the Senate Inquiry is rooted in the broader concern of Australia's political class that 'the weight of political opinion has shifted away from the political centre'.

The fear is that 'populist, conservative nationalist, and nativist', 'eco-fundamentalist and postmodernist', 'identity politics' and anti-free speech political opinion is eating away at the support for the major centre-right and centre-left parties.

But there is little evidence in Australia that fringe candidates or minor parties (representing various 'post-modern' views on the political left and right) are to blame for anything like a major shift in levels of public trust.

- The combined vote of *all* of the minor parties and independents at the 2019 federal election was only 21.1 percent of the total vote.
- And most of these votes went back to the major parties in any event (due to Australia's system of preferential voting).

It is true that minor parties or independents and their 'post-modern' politics typically attract support from persons who have low trust in politics.

- minor party voters and independent voters exhibit a very low level of trust in the federal government.
- Coalition supporters have considerably higher trust in the federal government
- Labor Party voters are somewhere in-between.

[Source *Democracy 2025 Report No. 1* (Figure 10)]

Minor parties and independents with their constituency of very low-trust voters, though, only represent a fifth of the Australian electorate.

By comparison an average of thirty percent of the electorate in a modern democracy with a major economy is dissatisfied. For example the *World Values Survey 2010-2014* asked respondents to rate their satisfaction/dissatisfaction 'with your life' on a 1-10 scale. Of those from the ten 'big economy' democracies who were surveyed,

- an average of 29.2 percent rated their life in varying degrees negatively (1-6 on a scale of 1-10).³
- Dissatisfied Australian respondents were modestly under-average at 27.5 percent.

The *Democracy 2025 Report No. 1* (Figures 6 and 8) bears this out.

- With the exception of the unhappier 'builder generation' (born 1925-1945), a quite modest 26-30 percent of each generation surveyed for that *Report* indicated being either 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied'.
- When broken down by income, Australia's major middle income groups reflect the same.
- Only the small top and bottom income groups exhibited either lesser or greater dissatisfaction respectively.

What is most striking about these figures is the large number of persons who in 2014 and then again in 2018 said they were neither 'satisfied' nor 'not satisfied'. What explains this large lump—26-38 percent depending on income or age group—in the middle? Their ambivalence (they are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied) is the most interesting data to come out of the *Democracy 2025 Report No. 1* (Figures 6 and 8).

1b. Concern about 'post-modernism'

It is clear that overt 'satisfaction' with 'the way democracy works in Australia' along with trust in politicians has declined since 2007. Both dropped from around 85 percent to 41 percent (*Democracy 2025 Report No. 1* Figures 2 and 3). Superficially that might suggest an unhappy nation. But if that was true we would also have seen more votes going to minor, single-issue, grievance and protest parties.

In fact the most notable thing about the current state of trust in Australian politics, as we leave the 2010s, is not the residual effects caused by the modest rise of 'post-modern' parties and candidates. That cohort is stuck on 20 percent of the nation's votes. Though this group are a funnel for explicit dissatisfaction nevertheless they have not managed to corral even the 30 percent pool of the 'explicitly dissatisfied' that we typically find in a 'big economy' modern democracy.

The Senate Inquiry's *Discussion Paper* seems overly concerned about 'post-modern' parties and candidates. Arguably, the *Discussion Paper* pays too much attention to the noise in the political system rather than its important signals. If noise was the true measure of political behaviour then 'post-modern' politics would indeed be the dominant phenomenon we need to pay attention to today. But it's not.

It is true that the various 'post-modern' parties and candidates in the last decade have made a lot of noise. They are attractive to news and media outlets because often their views make good headlines. A common mistake of the political class would be to equate this with public opinion.

In a media-saturated democracy it is easy to think that the opinions that one hears daily in the press, on TV or on social media is public opinion. In fact only a tiny percentage of the population express political opinions or participate in politics on a regular basis.

- 1.9 percent of Australians are active members of a political party.⁴
- Only about 2 percent of the populations of the major democracies regularly state an opinion in public.⁵

Accordingly, most Australians belong to the quiet majority of non-participants who do not often publicly express political views and who are coy about politics. For most people, politics means voting once every two years or so and paying a little bit of attention during election campaigns. Most Australians belong to a silent majority. Their politics is quiet. Even opinion polls often struggle to capture accurately what this quiet electorate thinks.

1c. Not post-modernism... but something else?

What is interesting about the 2010s in Australia was not the relatively modest level of 'post-modern' disquiet. Rather it was the size of the cohort of voters who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with 'the way democracy works in Australia'.

- Explicit 'satisfaction' with 'the way democracy works in Australia' dropped from 85 percent in 2007 to 41 percent in 2018.
- But the less visible corollary of that is the large number of satisfaction-agnostic Australians—a solid third plus of adults—who are neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (*Democracy 2025 Report No. 1* Figures 6 and 8).

Something similar is indicated by *World Values Survey 2010-2014* data.

- The later reports that 27.5 percent of Australians are significantly 'dissatisfied' with their life.
- Yet the *World Values Survey* also reports that a remarkably tiny percentage of Australians (6.7 percent) feel unhappy or very unhappy.⁶

How did large numbers of Australians through the 2010s end up in a state where they were (a) happy and (b) agnostic when asked about being satisfied?

This points to a distinctive attitude among many Australian voters over the past decade. What it suggests is that many Australians make subtle dual judgments about life.

- They can be agnostic about whether they are 'satisfied' with politics and yet happy (in a deeper way) with it.
- Their sense of immediate satisfaction and their underlying happiness move closer and further apart over time.

- They like the big-picture Australia—its economy and lifestyle, the fairness, freedom and stability of its political system, and its record of providing good education, health, welfare and public services (*Democracy 2025 Report No. 1* Figure 18).
- They don't like the inability of politicians to keep their promises and deal with the issues that matter, and they are sceptical about certain big institutions—big business and media notably (*Democracy 2025 Report No. 1* Figure 19).

2. The independent Australians

Why then in the 2010s was there such a gap between being explicitly 'satisfied' with politics and being 'happy' with it?

The explanation of Australia's political class, at least as hinted at in the Senate Inquiry's *Discussion Paper*, is that disruptive minor parties and independent candidates fed dissatisfaction. This caused voters to withdraw their trust in established or centre parties and mainstream policy options.

But this explanation, arguably, looks at causality the wrong way round. It relies too much on the assumption that trust is a one-way street. But in fact trust is a two-way street.

- I (the voter) trust the one (the party or government) which trusts me.
- People can express trust *in* politics yet not receive trust back *from* politics.

Thus, on the one hand, the political system is supported by mainstream voters. On the other hand, those same voters are dissatisfied that the system's actors (the members of the political class) are not sufficiently ready to support them. Trust is not reciprocated.

If this reciprocity is reduced or damaged in some way then the gap between underlying happiness and surface dissatisfaction may widen.

2a. Case study of the self-employed

The case of Australians who are self-employed and self-reliant illustrates neatly the kinds of factors that drive a wedge between happiness with political system and dissatisfaction with political class.

The self-employed and self-reliant cohort includes:

1. ABS says: According to the 2016 Australian Census, fourteen percent (1,531,161) of all employed persons in Australia identified their 'main job' as the self-employed 'owner manager' of a business.⁷
2. ATO says: According to the Australian Tax Office de-identified tax statistics,⁸ micro and small businesses represent 77.2 percent and 6.8 percent of Australian companies respectively.⁹ They generate 12.7 percent and 11.6 percent (a total of 24.3 percent) of net company tax revenue.
3. Tax statistics ratio: As to individual (unincorporated) taxpayers: there are 10,469,919 wage-and-salary taxpayers, 1,786,937 partnership and trust taxpayers and 1,122,260 business income taxpayers.¹⁰ That is, for every 3.5 wage-and-salary Australian taxpayers there is one independent business taxpayer.

As well as being employed full-time running a business, many Australians draw supplemental income from part-time independent contracting, investment (rental) properties and the self-management of superannuation funds:

4. Secondary occupations: The Australian Census collects data where owner-managing is a person's 'main job'. More detailed American data suggests that owner-managing as a part-time secondary occupation may account for another 2-5 percent of FTE work undertaken. Included among the participants in such secondary occupations are the approximately one-third of one percent of employed persons who are independent contractors (e.g. owner-drivers) in the 'gig economy'.
5. Property Investment: In 2016 15.7 percent of Australian taxpayers had an investment property, with an average of 1.28 rental properties per investor.¹¹ That was up from 7.4 percent in 1989/90. Forty-eight percent of Australia's apartment stock was owned by an investor. Taxpayer gross rental income from investment properties was \$38.778 billion. 2011 Census data showed that 7.9 percent of Australians or 1,764,924 people owned investment property. That's 10 percent of voters. Around 70 percent of these own one property; 20 percent own two properties.
6. Negative gearing: In 2019 1.3 million Australians owned a negatively-geared investment property. Negative gearing means that business income losses incurred by renting such properties is offset by a reduction in capital gains tax. Forty-two percent of those who negatively gear an investment property earn less than \$50,000 p.a.¹²
7. SMSE: At March 2019 there were almost 600,000 self-managed superannuation funds in Australia. These had a total of 1,129,542 members. They accounted for \$747 billion (around 27%) of the \$2.7 trillion invested in superannuation.¹³

2b. Independent Australians under pressure

It is notable the number of times in the past decade when the self-employed and the self-reliant have been under pressure from Australian governments. These episodes include:

1. 2011: Common law definitions: The failed attempt during the Australian Building and Construction Commission inquiry into contracting to introduce the idea of 'the dependent contractor'. This was designed to white-ant the concept of the independent contractor, a legal category with deep and venerable historical roots that reach back into Roman law.¹⁴
2. 2003-2015: OHS law: Attempts in Victoria, nationally and in Western Australia to remove—as the basis of Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) laws—the established principle that any person legally responsible for workplace health and safety must be in a position of 'reasonable and practicable control' of it. This principle is a common sense and eminently practical basis upon which small businesses (in particular) can understand their duty of care.¹⁵

3. 2011-2012: Workers compensation definitions: The proposal by the NSW Review of Workers' Compensation Scheme Inquiry to re-cast the definition of a 'worker' so that, for purposes of workers' compensation coverage, an independent contractor would be 'deemed' to be an employee.¹⁶
4. 2012-2016: Independent trucking industry: Attempts in NSW and federally to introduce 'road safety remuneration' laws to price independent owner-drivers out of the transport industry.¹⁷
5. 2015-2016: Labelling 'independence' as 'insecure': The push in Victoria to label self-employment as 'insecure work' (an emotive and misleading label that misrepresents the experience and nature of self-employment).¹⁸ This led eventually to Victoria's Labour Hire Licensing Act 2018. That Act capriciously redefined agency-provided independent contractors as 'workers' as opposed to commercial 'contractors'.¹⁹
6. 2014-2019: ATO: The Australian Tax Office (ATO) methodology for small business tax assessment and collection has come under increasing scrutiny. Most assessment and collection of tax by the federal government is consensual and Australian taxpayer compliance is high, with relatively little fraud or avoidance behavior occurring—a consequence of the underlying happiness of Australians with their life. But in the case of the minority of contested small business assessments, the ATO lacks objective methods of assessment and collection. In particular its small business assessment and collection system lacks independent oversight and review and has inadequate checks and balances built into it. This has led to problems of organizational confirmation bias and instances of subjective decision making.
7. 2018-2019: Negative labelling of 'gig work': The Victorian government established an Inquiry into the Victorian On-Demand Workforce. Suggesting without compelling evidence that the on-demand cohort was a 'vulnerable' and 'precarious' workforce, the Inquiry set out to investigate what is a very tiny segment of the workforce (one percent of FTE employed persons) who work an average of ten hours a week and report high levels of satisfaction in so doing.²⁰
8. 2018-2019: Anti-negative gearing: In the run-up to the 2019 federal election campaign, a proposal was prominently floated to limit the negative gearing of properties to new residential housing and to halve the capital gains tax discount for business investment in such properties. The proposal was defeated electorally.
9. 2018-2019: Franking credits: In the run-up to the 2019 federal election campaign, a proposal was floated, again prominently, to disallow the established practice of dividend imputation credits being received as cash refunds. The de facto effect of this policy if it had been implemented would have been to discriminate against retiree (pension-phase) self-managed superannuation funds. This proposal was also defeated electorally.

2c. The noiseless vote of the independent Australians

Independent Australians are not a vocal political group. They are not organized in large organizations and associations. But they are a significant portion of voters. In elections the silent majority speaks out. While ‘post-modern’ themes have tended to capture a lot of Australia’s daily political discussion over the past decade, the silent majority rarely participates in this. It is too busy with work or family or leisure to bother with politics very often. Even in elections it rarely has much to say. What matters though is its votes. If the major political parties wish to be elected to office they have to run the gauntlet of the independent Australian.

3. The spirit of government – reflections on political trends

3a. Post-modern noise

Worried about their political flanks, Australia’s major parties have been tempted to adopt ‘post-modern’ poses (either of the political left or right). The minor parties and unaligned candidates hope to out-flank the major parties with ‘post-modern’ themes of abjection and disenchantment.

Yet all parties, large or small, face a problem with this kind of strategy: for Australia is fundamentally a happy society. There is a ceiling on the numbers of voters who are unhappy with the fundamentals of ‘Australian democracy’. To be successful in elections or in government—or for that matter in opposition or on the cross-benches—‘post-modern’ poses have limited value.

Such poses might *sound* important. They draw a lot of attention to themselves. But that attention is mostly restricted to the tiny number of persons who regularly engage in or follow political discussion closely. Outside of elections, public attention is normally confined to the small number of persons who are ‘interested in politics’. Most people are not.

The millions of quiet Australians who in varying degrees and in different ways are self-reliant expect government to allow them to make the most of that self-reliance. They hope that government will trust them enough so that they can get on and do so.

3b. The decline of ‘evidence and expertise’

The Senate Inquiry’s *Discussion Paper* suggests that ‘post-modern’ politics is ‘emotive’ while another kind of politics (the putative politics of ‘the centre’) is based on ‘evidence and expertise’. ‘Evidence and expertise’ *sounds* appealing. Yet the track record of Australian governments in this area is somewhat discouraging.

The kind of ‘evidence and expertise’ that makes its way into government reports and inquiries unfortunately too often utilises shallow and slight ‘evidence’. It is intellectually slack even though politically convenient. Evidence implies an authority that comes from knowledge. But often the evidence is thin, poorly reasoned, and statistically naïve. It also often ignores possible unintended consequences of what it proposes, and misunderstands the history (including the legal history) that lies behind public policy.

Similar problems afflict 'expertise'. An 'expert' is someone who is knowledgeable. Such persons exist. But these days it is often difficult to separate 'the expert' from 'the organization' that they work for. Vested interests, bureaucratic self-interest and organizational power cloud knowledge and expertise in the same way that government assessments and audits can suffer from organizational confirmation bias and a lack of objectivity.

Expertise relies on objectivity and objectivity relies on independence. Objectivity generates confidence in results. This inspires trust. We trust what we can rely on. Objectivity is undermined when political or organizational goals over-determine the evidence and interfere with a balanced, sober, open-minded and comprehensive view of it.

4. Overcoming the politics of suspicion – the spirit of government

How might government better act to demonstrate its trust in the large number of Australians who are independent-minded in their work, business, and finances? How can we reduce the incidence of the politics of suspicion? How might we sensibly make government more trusting in the people that it is supposed to serve?

All manner of government instruments can affect independent Australians: legislation, regulation and administration. The Australian Constitution is a procedural document. It does not incorporate statements of 'rights' or 'norms' that might otherwise conceivably ensure government did not smother the fundamental ability of Australians to act independently in their work, business and financial lives. So therefore Australians in this matter are reliant on the spirit of government. The spirit of government is the background ethos of government. It is not necessarily explicitly spelt out anywhere. Rather it is the horizon of expectation against which politicians behave and their actions are judged.

4a. Trust

Arguably, the premise of the Senate's Inquiry is the wrong way round. The problem is not that the people don't trust Australia's governments. It's that governments periodically show insufficient trust in the people. Trust, as previously noted, is a two-way street. It is not something that one party (the voters or the citizens) gives and that another party (the politicians) receives. Rather trust is a mutual relationship. In order to get it, you must first give it. I trust the person who trusts me.

The experience of self-employed persons and the larger class of self-reliant persons in Australia is that governments from time to time suddenly exhibit attitudes towards them that are unnecessarily suspicious. Trust does not mean naivety. There is a small minority of Australians who behave dishonestly. Governments are right to be sceptical or questioning of deceitful and underhand behaviours. But reasonable doubt is not the same as unreasonable suspiciousness. The latter attitude is filled with a kind of subjective certainty that something is wrong. But what it lacks is a cool objectivity—a dispassionate matter-of-fact outlook.

4b. Is 'evidence and expertise' the answer?

The Senate Inquiry's *Discussion Paper* tacitly endorses 'evidence and expertise' in place of emotive politicking. That is superficially attractive. Yet beneath its impassive exterior, 'evidence and expertise' in its own way can be agenda-ridden, partial, self-righteous, and even zealous. Sometimes, perhaps too often, it lacks the independence of mind and sobriety of outlook that it claims it has. There are many reasons for this.

One of the problems is experience. Take the case of departmental expertise—basically expert knowledge of the rules. Those who administer the laws, especially those in the middle and lower ranks of the public service, are often uncomfortable with the idea of persons being self-employed or otherwise self-reliant and independent. They have no personal experience of it. They belong to an industry (the public sector) that mostly knows only salaried employment. Even in those cases where members of the public service are recruited from the private sector, it is typically from large companies or big organisations.

The well-being of independent Australians requires from government high levels of trust. That does not mean naivety or credulity or gullibility on the part of government. But it does mean toleration, respect and encouragement for myriad self-managed forms of behaviour.

In order for a person to effectively run their own business or carry on their own trade or profession or look after their own finances and welfare, they have to be free of the following: government officiousness and pettiness, attempts to micro manage them, resentful and hostile desires to put them out of business, clumsy, malicious and self-serving efforts to interfere with long-established patterns of business and asset management, pious political bluster, and opportunistic attempts to raise revenue from seeming soft targets that have hard-earned assets and income.

5. What government can do and avoid doing

As well as the many things governments should not do, governments additionally have a facilitating role to play. For example they can outlaw various kinds of 'unfair contracts' ensuring that large organizations including governments do not use their size to impose unreasonable commercial terms on independent contractors. But, so far as the spirit of government is concerned, the most important thing for the large cohort of independent Australians is that governments act in a spirit of trust rather than suspicion.

5a. Assume honesty

Governments and those who administer and regulate on their behalf should assume that most Australians are honest and decent people. There is a small percentage of the population that acts in dishonest or illegal ways. But even in such cases it is important that administrators rely on

objective measures to enforce laws. Mechanisms of independent review are vital. The letter of the law is important. But so also is the spirit and tone of its administration. The laws should be executed in a manner that is straightforward and transparent and that avoids a tenor or atmosphere that is over-bearing and suspicious. The ambience of government is just as important as its goals or policies.

5b. Mistrust

Mistrust—unreasonable doubt—communicates easily both inside and outside government. One of the places where cultures of suspicion breed is in the relatively closed confines of large organizations like government departments. In a parallel vein, the broader ‘climate of opinion’ of the 2010s generally had a bias or lean toward mistrust. This was not unprecedented. Over time modern political opinion—mostly the occupation of a small vocal minority of politically-interested persons—has oscillated between trust and mistrust.

5c. Suspiciousness

Suspiciousness means suspecting ‘something is wrong’ in the absence of adequate proof or plausible—namely, independent—evidence for it. Suspiciousness is a kind of subjective certainty that ‘something is wrong’ without there being any objective evidence of it. Suspiciousness often arises when the surrounding ‘climate of public opinion’ is rambunctious or when the ‘hot-house self-referential cultures’ of large bureaucratic organizations are allowed to metastasize.

In the last decade the noisy ‘post-modern’ politics of hot symbols and the more technical ‘evidence and expertise’ model of politics have both clashed and cooperated. Neither has served the quiet constituency of independent Australians very well. Political and social anxieties, bureaucratic resentments, class envy, a dislike of independent behaviour and lazy public policy all play a part in the animus against independence.

Without a doubt the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-2008 was a turning-point in political sentiment. Governments including Australian governments since have faced less-than-stellar global growth combined with self-generated expectations that they can ‘control’ the economy (through monetary or fiscal policy). They’ve been caught between the promise of control (we ‘must do something’) and the evident undistinguished results of this control. The consequence has been governments feeling degrees of powerlessness combined with promises that government is ‘in control’. This dual carriage-way has been a breeding ground for feelings of mistrust of the people by governments. In such double-edged circumstances, largely of their own making, governments in the past decade too often have come to feel that the people are not properly responding to the signals that governments are sending.

Unsurprisingly, given their relative degree of economic and social independence, the self-reliant cohort in Australia has periodically ended up the object of official and political irritation. This irritation is often unconscious. But it is real enough. Many times it arises out of frustration that government plans have not worked the way that governments wished them to work. As much as

anything, the cohort of independent Australians symbolizes the inherent limits of government control.

5d. Striking a new note – It is about trust

Through the course of the 2010s in Australia, we saw a series of government policies, attempted policies and proposed policies that sought to restrict the scope of action of the millions of self-reliant Australians.

Individually these measures often were quite granular and technical in nature in their nature. But collectively over time they represented a trend. It's a trend that is rooted in an irritable politics of suspicion and a niggling lack of trust in the good sense of those whose instinct is to look after their own affairs.

Rather than seeing independent Australians as targets for more control, the proper emphasis should be on finding the best ways for them to flourish. Accordingly, Australian governments, their departments, advisors and parties need to strike a new note and find a new tone.

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Notes

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- ¹ Phillips, 2008.
 - ² Stoker, Evans and Halupka, 2018.
 - ³ World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014, V23 Satisfaction with your life. The big economy democracies included Netherlands, Sweden, New Zealand, United States, Germany, Australia, Singapore, Japan, Spain, Taiwan, and South Korea in order of the least to the most dissatisfied. Netherlands with 16.3 percent dissatisfied was least; South Korea with 45.5 percent was most. <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>
 - ⁴ World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014, V29 Active/Inactive membership of political party. <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>
 - ⁵ A good contemporary indicator of this participation of Twitter. Twenty-two percent of American adults use Twitter. Ten percent of those produce 80 percent of tweets. Eight percent say that what they post is related to politics. Wojcik and Hughes, 2019; Duggan and Smith, 2016.
 - ⁶ World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014, Feeling of happiness.
 - ⁷ ABS, 2071.0 - Census of Population and Housing: Reflecting Australia - Stories from the Census, 2016.
 - ⁸ ATO, Taxation statistics. <https://www.ato.gov.au/About-ATO/Research-and-statistics/In-detail/Taxation-statistics/>
 - ⁹ ATO, Taxation statistics 2015-16, Companies, Chart 13: Number of companies and net tax, by size, 2015–16 income year.
 - ¹⁰ ATO, Taxation statistics 2015-16, Individuals, Table 3: Individuals – selected income items, 2014–15 to 2015–16 income years.
 - ¹¹ Core Logic, p. 8
 - ¹² Mather and Tadros, 2019.
 - ¹³ Super-guide, *SMSF statistics: 1.1 million members with \$747bn in super*. June 14, 2019. Based on Australian Tax Office data. <https://www.superguide.com.au/smsfs/smsfs-lead-the-super-pack-again>
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 - ¹⁶ Independent Contactors Australia, May 2012.
 - ¹⁷ Independent Contactors Australia, January 2012.
 - ¹⁸ Independent Contactors Australia, November 2015.
 - ¹⁹ Labour Hire Licensing Act 2018 section 9.
 - ²⁰ Murphy, 2019; Self-employed Australia, August 2019.