

Identity, giving a shit and the upcoming federal election

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Dear friends,

Today I have some whinges about poverty, ‘Australian’ culture, and some of the deeper socioeconomic possibilities we face in the coming election. This is based on an ongoing stressed ponderance of Australia’s contemporary cultural milieux and the politicisation of identity. There are some myths to dispel here.

Australia has a culture. In fact, we are a deeply multicultural country. Prior to British invasion, Australia was made up of more than 250 cultures and unique languages, expressing thousands of different sociocultural patterns and behaviours passed generationally for more than 60,000 years. The arrival of Britain added 10-20 more cultures, and since we’ve had an exponent of different cultures coming and growing, largely while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have continued to be suppressed and obliterated by genocidal and neocolonial practices. But, all the while, there has been an enduring commitment to the rhetoric of a “fair go”. A way of being and understanding that at surface level is about equality.

As we can observe, the “fair go” certainly hasn’t been for us First Peoples, nor has the fair go really applied to the “average” Australian –the white, middle class, heterosexual, cisgender, professional class. In fact, so rarely has the reality reflected a “fair go” that I have genuinely wondered how this slogan got such a good run –everyone from politicians to tourism agencies making use of it for upwards of 160 years. Yet the lived reality, particularly for the working class –and then any doubly marginalised folks within this have suffered in this country for the most recent 250 years of our long history. We’ve discussed at length on mind reader the amplification of exploitation and extraction through colonial capitalist frames. So, in reality we have a “fair go” for next to no one –great.

Moreover, in recent years we’ve drifted extremely, particularly on poverty –with the poverty line at 50% of the median household income and almost 16% of the population living on or below this. In addition, more than two million are experiencing food insecurity [1]. We’re also facing increasingly conservative times, which further undermines and exploits those living at the fringes and struggling with the extreme cost of living in this country.

Our allyship with the United States is a particular danger here. Over the last hundred or more years, Australia has built an increasingly interdependent economy, social climate, military, and geopolitical relationship with the imperial giant. Partially for protection reasons, using schoolyard logic of: “I’m less likely to be picked on if I’m friends with the bully”. And partially because one colonial nation befriending another allows the amplification of that expropriative DNA throughout the execution of societal landscapes. After all, as Britain moves towards decolonial futures, the colonies are left to be racist on own [2]. And racist to the extreme with folks like Trump and Musk driving hatred and division on identity categories that are literally nonsensical. But hey, we might get some obsolete submarines in 30 years.

Back here, we are facing an election between major parties who can be essentialised to “Trump Lite™” or “neofascism: a for you page”. Here, rather than housing and education as a provision for all, access to and equality of rights, and a growth in socially supported services and we are seeing two parties vie over the lightest form of oppression in the hope that this lands with the Australian people. Meanwhile, ‘Teals’ and the Greens offer alternative visions for the future which are disconnected from the realities of the working people –partially because the Liberals and Labor have shifted the Overton window to such a place that

discourse about anything vaguely humanitarian is immediately dismissed as utopianism.

Other major social forces such as students being saddled with debt and provided a less-than-quality education remain niche issues that even the ministry responsible could not care less about. We have a HECS system so ravaged by successive years of Liberal governments, and Labor ‘endurance’ (rather than even reverting Liberal changes like they promised) that it saddles students with exorbitant debt –debt so large that the “indexation” on it is enough to prevent Labor from wiping indexation accrued debt because of the useful ‘profit’ it generates for them.

The point I’m striving towards is that Australian ‘culture’, in the mainstream, is so utterly political that the people have been successfully cleaved from any recognition of its politics. So, let’s do an experiment, answer me these questions:

1. Are there specific cultural, economic, or social structures in Australia that you feel have shaped your life *without your input*?
2. How has your geographic location within Australia influenced your sense of belonging or displacement?
3. What generational experiences define your relationship with Australian society?
4. Are there tensions between your personal values and ‘mainstream’ Australian cultural values?
5. How have recent political changes, or lack thereof, in Australia affected your sense of *identity*?
6. Are there spaces or communities within Australia where you feel most authentic versus places where you feel you’re performing an identity?
7. What Australian narratives do you find yourself both part of and resistant to?
8. How do intersections of your identity (gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, ability, etc.) position you uniquely within Australian society?

If there’s nothing political in your answers, or rather nothing that has been politicised, then congratulations you are the bourgeois man. In all other cases, the politicisation of identity is simply fodder for the perpetually turning mill grinding human flesh for the advancement of the economy (noting the latter is only the economy for the 1% –and if you’re one of those people sacrificing themselves “for the economy” think about how much you’re giving up, your family, your friends are giving up so Gina can have yet another cattle farm).

So what does voting for the “extreme left” (as Dutton puts it) actually do? Because, yes, some of the critique lobbed at the Greens is deserved, but never for the reasons they state on the tin.

First, let’s clarify –in Australia our voting system is preferential. If you vote 1 the Greens, and vote 2 Labor. This does not mean that your vote is discarded if the Greens are not elected –rather, your vote has flowed to Labor, and subsequently if you, for some asinine reason, 3 the Shooters and Fishers, well if the Labor candidate were unsuccessful in your electorate, your vote would flow to them, and so on ad infinitum. It’s easy to be swayed by the USA’s “only vote for the major parties” system, so don’t buy it.

Second, the actual platform speaks for itself, and it speaks volumes that this is what is considered “extreme left” by a party named after a progressive moderate philosophy. But let’s rehash the platform because no one can be bothered clicking a link in 2025:

The Greens are, and always have, advocating for affordability of basic necessities in our extremely wealthy country by implementing several key policies: incorporating dental care into Medicare and providing free GP visits; addressing the housing crisis through rent control, mortgage regulation, affordable housing construction, and negative gearing reform; combating climate change with public renewable energy, subsidised solar power, ending fossil fuel expansion and native forest logging; tackling cost of living by regulating supermarket

prices and improving public services; and funding these initiatives by taxing big corporations and billionaires, noting that currently one-third of large corporations pay no tax [3].

By voting for this platform, by voting Green at the upcoming federal election, you are not “radically” modifying the status quo –it is unlikely that a Green candidate will even be successful in your electorate. Rather, what you are doing, is signalling with your preferential vote –your preference –is that we give a shit about each other, rather than giving old mate Gina and unkie Rupe another tax cut and continue careening towards climate death. That’s all.

It’s a bleak world out there –so maybe you should consider voting Green (or Teal, I’m not your boss),

Aidan

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1. <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/ending-homelessness/what-is-poverty-and-does-it-exist-in-australia>
 2. <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/britain-and-decolonisation-in-south-east-and-south-asia-1945-1948> https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Empire <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/abroad/module-options/britain-and-decolonisation-1> (I was almost joking, but they do seem to think they’re doing repatriation and undoing the damage of spreading the global cancer that is capitalism)
 3. <https://greens.org.au>