

MAKING PUBLIC POLICY: WHERE DOES HISTORY FIT?

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Introduction

I approach this topic as a former public servant, a current trainer in effective writing within government, a public member of the Press Council, disillusioned citizen and aspiring working historian.

My preferred field of study is late nineteenth early twentieth century Russia and the role of history in contemporary Russia, not particularly fertile fields in Australia but ones that do prompt consideration of today's theme, especially as there are disturbing parallels when it comes to what our respective leaders want of history.

I have also written a commissioned history of the Department of Health and Ageing – *Putting Life Into Years*. This was a remarkably enjoyable endeavour thanks to the leadership of Andrew Podger, then Secretary of the Department, who supported my goal of producing a history that highlighted institution building as a human endeavour, not merely one of impersonal, bureaucratic processes.

Trying to illuminating the human face of public service is a motivation that threads itself through my eclectic working life, for I am dismayed at how easily that face is erased from discussion about policy. I tell those public servants who come to my courses they are partly to blame for their image as bloodless bureaucrats, because their language is devoid of people; the passive their default voice.

I encourage them to use the active voice not only to improve their writing, or indeed to fulfil their obligation to be accountable, but for posterity, knowing that without identities lurking in the written record, our job as historians will become even more difficult.

Not that it has ever been easy to cast light on the personality of the bureaucracy. It was one of Keith Hancock's laments, when he worked as supervisor of the British civil histories of World War II, that he encountered such objections to identifying people with policies and to exposing the conflicts of personalities that coloured the decision-making process.¹

I fear, however, that this and future generations of historians will face even greater obstacles as the documentary record becomes ever more captive to the sanitising mindset of governments and the cleansing capacity of technology.

We shouldn't be surprised that it is Dick Cheney who has demonstrated most egregiously such a mindset by suggesting the abolition of a unit in the United States National Archives because it persisted in enforcing its routine oversight of how his office handled classified information. But don't be fooled: this is not just a neo-con attitude.

Particularly since the introduction of the Freedom of Information Act in 1982, Australian public servants have been censoring their working documents, helped enormously by the invention of the Post-It Note, the passive voice and the abstract noun. Before that, at least in my experience in Foreign Affairs, the marginal note was cultivated as an art form, each person in the clearance hierarchy keen to be more witty or acerbic in their commentary than the last.

I have chosen a life outside the bureaucracy and outside the academy and outside the fourth estate, yet am always trying to find ways to bring each into more constructive conversations with the other. It is this experience that I bring to this talk and with it some ideas about how history best fits into policy.

I will conclude this paper with a couple of suggestions about how we, as members of the PHA, might assert history's rightful place in the public domain. I do so tentatively, being a silent member of the association, partly I can say as justification because of distance. And on that matter, I must thank Peter Tyler and Pauline Curby for suggesting and pursuing the idea of this conference. I am sure I speak for all Canberra members in applauding them for trekking up the highway, and in welcoming our other Sydney colleagues.

Phil Graham of *The Washington Post* once said journalism was the first draft of history. Inge Clendinnen has said you can't do history on the opinion pages.² Both would say that to have maximum effect you must use words well. Communicating history will be a strong theme of my talk today, although I want to start with an exploration of the boundaries of history and the tracks through the fences between it and the policy arena.

When I mentioned to various people that I was grappling with writing a paper on the subject of history and public policy the usual response was 'Of course history is relevant. Of course it has something to offer'. But as Mel Porter, External Relations Officer of the History and Policy Network in Britain has observed³, despite claims – in this case by the UK government - that policymaking is 'evidence based' and 'learns the lessons' of past mistakes, rarely does this involve consulting a historian. More often than not, history's relevance is rhetorical rather than substantive.

I am not here to rehearse the debate about history teaching made prominent by the Prime Minister's History Summit and again in late June by controversy about the high school curriculum but do need to register a regret at the narrowness of that debate. Here was a policy discussion of a kind, and one about history. I should have been happy. At least the subject was being aired. But was it really

about history or was it about shaping nationalist sentiment? Would he endorse President Putin's words to a select group of teachers of modern history on 27 June, when he told them Russia needed textbooks that 'make our citizens, especially the young, proud of their country' and warning that 'no one must be allowed to impose the feeling of guilt on us'.⁴

Does the Prime Minister really want a debate about the interpretation of past events? Does he want to endorse the desirability of a long-term view of nation-building? Does he want a new generation of historians to enter the policy arena with skills to assess the possibilities and limitations of human endeavour? Or does he want them to share a list of values deemed to be Australian? Has this discussion placed too much emphasis on continuity? Has it removed the mystery and intrigue of the past?

Where was the case being made to teachers and students and employers that historians are needed just as IT specialists, environmental engineers and lawyers are to build our modern economy and social fabric? What for? Well in the vernacular of the Democrats, to keep the bastards honest, to make sure the national story is not distorted; to offer the best possible advice about ways to take the country forward.

I hesitate now. Is this too definitive an answer? Does it put too much emphasis on history as the solution to present problems?

Here I am falling into the trap of the historian's method: to ask questions and in seeking to answer them to pose more. Does a policy maker want more questions? No, he or she wants the answers, as soon as possible, in briefs containing succinct argument and clear recommendations. So can we really help? Should we?

Definition

Before I explore this question, let me offer a definition of public history from Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada⁵:

When most people think about public history they think it refers to historians who work outside academia, in museums or archives, in television and film, or who are engaged in digitizing history on the web, carrying out research for companies or legal firms or writing historical fiction or popular history. All of this is true, but public history is also much more.

Public History certainly deals with the ways in which history is created and presented in the public arena, but it also refers to the place of history in shaping collective memory, often in media other than traditional print scholarship. To study public history is to come to terms with the contested nature of history itself, and to situate narratives of history within a broader field of public memory, identity, and political/institutional interests. Additionally, the subject often implies a degree of interdisciplinarity that emphasizes collaborative over individualized scholarly production.

The blurb on the Carleton website goes on to describe what its graduate program aims to do:

Our concentration has been designed to equip historians with an enhanced awareness of the specific challenges of applying historical knowledge and methodologies in the public sphere.

I will return to this issue of the application of historical method, for I think it is this way of thinking that we need to emphasise in promoting the worth of history, not only as tool to bring perspective on past events – slavery, the fate of Tasmanian aboriginals – but also to current issues -- the Iraq war, relations with Indonesia, the use of water. To draw again on the ideas of the US historian of modern Japan, Carol Gluck, history that illuminates the context and connections of human actions and personalities should sensitise us to present trends we might otherwise not notice.⁶

My talk concentrates on history and policy but I hope that during the course of the day we will consider other aspects of public history, including:

- history on TV, is it an amusement, infotainment or the new mode for serious history? Does popular history increase the public's ability to think **with** history, to be able to question sources and interpretation, even while being entertained?
- the role of historical fiction: still a hot topic as we see from this year's Sydney Writers Festival when Kate Grenville opted out of session called 'Making a Fiction of History'.
- the place of memoirs in the historical record and their increasing importance given that public servants are annotating their papers less. This is something the British Parliament looked into last year, considering it necessary to examine the principles which should govern the publication of memoirs and diaries by politicians, public servants and former advisers, who have been producing books at quite a rate in the last few years. Its report concluded that such documents:
tell us a great deal about the workings of government. They are a source of interest to the general reader, valuable for the citizen, and a resource for future historians. They may not prevent our repeating the mistakes of the past, but can put events into perspective. Their publication is to be encouraged.⁷

This conclusion notwithstanding, I think we can expect governments to do their utmost to exercise their right to clear such memoirs and to remove material they deem might harm the national interest.

Of course, all these topics do impinge on the realm of policy, particularly as these other forms of public history offer a way to shed light on the human face of the policy-making process. By telling the stories of the people involved, historians can connect big picture themes with the complexity of the historical process.

History and policy

I wish now to give you some illustrations, drawing on international relations, of how history and policy can intersect. In so doing, I will also be pointing to some of the mechanics involved in fostering the collaboration of historians, public servants and the media. Those of you who have been attending the medical history conference will have further examples. Indeed it seems to me that both here and the United Kingdom it is in the arena of public health that history has been able to play a more assertive role. I venture to say that this is because of the greater familiarity with evidence-based policy making in the field of health.

Back to foreign policy...Marc Susser, The Historian in the US State Department -- argues that the publication of official documentary histories can help smooth bilateral relations by dispelling suspicions and undermining myths that have built up over time.

One example Susser cites is an examination of the Johnson Administration's policy towards Greece, Cyprus, and Turkey. Initially, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) opposed this history project and lobbied the US ambassador in Athens to do the same. Nevertheless, it went ahead and the volume was published. Its effect turned the ambassador around, for, as he recorded in a telegram to Washington, publishing the history had cleared the air: '...it showed the Greek leftists and the university students that the CIA was not really as efficient, or as malevolent, during that era as they had long assumed'.⁸

The publication of document volumes is the main task of the historical section in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. They are a marvellous resource and, according to Dr Moreen Dee, one of the historians working there, it is these that have an impact on the thinking of senior officials and academics.⁹ The volume on relations with Malaysia during Confrontation even attracted considerable (and favourable) public attention when it was launched in Kuala Lumpur. Unfortunately, in my view, the one on Timor – which inter alia revealed much about the inner workings of Australian diplomacy in dealing with such a fraught problem – was received with scepticism by those who prefer to stick to the mythology generated, primarily by the Australian media, on the subject. To reach a wider audience, the Department has begun to produce monographs based on the official documents. The first came out of the Malaysia volume; the next will deal with PNG. This is a great initiative and one, I hope, which will encourage greater scrutiny of the official record.

It must also be said that the Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, takes an interest in history. He has fostered projects like the *Facing North* volumes on engagement with Asia and has appointed an historian to the Foreign Affairs advisory council, but no longer does the head of the historical documents area sit in on the weekly Secretary's meetings as did Bill Hudson.

In a speech in 1998, *Reshaping Australia's Institutions of Diplomacy*, Downer declared: 'The choice for any government must be whether its diplomacy harnesses the flow of history and innovation, or attempts to resist it.' He pointed to the 'special responsibility which academic and other public and private institutions have in educating and informing the public about Australia's national interests and our international engagement' saying there 'needs to be a wider understanding in the community about how international developments affect Australia, and about the complexities of managing Australia's external relations in ways that advance Australia's security and economic well-being.' I couldn't agree more but would add this means hearing things that don't fit with current policy settings or the dominant ideology. It also calls on governments to be open and to facilitate the exchange of ideas. That obligation has gone by the wayside, for reasons of national security the officials would now say.

As we have seen with the Iraq War, history is not routinely used to inform foreign policy decisions or to assist in building good relations. Mostly it is cited to justify mistakes or to endorse policy positions first conjured in historical vacuums. Apart from the deep concerns about the manipulation of intelligence to suit politics highlighted during the Iraq debacle¹⁰ -- not to mention the nature of the sources officials chose to consult, or not to -- many have asked whether the Americans or British bothered to look back, for example to the Mandate period of the 1920s to gain insight into the country they were about to 'liberate'. It would appear not.

Here in Australia, Gary Woodard has pointed to the parallels in conservative policy mindsets that governed Australia's entry into the Vietnam and Iraq wars. His historical investigation has led him to conclude that not only did the policy makers ignore a lesson of history about the extent to which Australia's alliance with the United States rather than its own national interest should inform decisions to go to war, but that in 2002 the public servants remained silent, not even trying as their predecessors had done to get ministers to listen to their advice.¹¹

I suspect that few in Foreign Affairs dare delve into this sort of analytical history, preferring just to use the occasional anecdote provided by the historical documents section to bolster a present policy position or to add colour to a speech. Certainly, when I did a short-lived consultancy in that section, I had a strong sense that no self-respecting foreign affairs officer would wish to work in such a 'backwater'.

There were no foreign affairs officers present at a recent conference on the role of history in the burgeoning field of so-called terrorism studies.¹² The audience was made up of academics, a couple of practitioners in counter-terrorism -- a dismantler of bombs turned physical security advisor and a former intelligence analyst turned consultant. Then there were representatives from the police, customs, the Departments of Defence and Prime Minister and Cabinet, Office of

Transport Security and Attorney General's. In other words a majority from the enforcement agencies. And not one journalist.

In the case of DFAT, the excuse may simply be busyness. Let us hope that is all. There are, however, hints in the Department's utterances that it does not think history has anything to teach us about this new wave of transnational terrorism. Take the introduction to a publication written in 2004, *Facing The Changing Nature Of Modern Terrorism*:

Australians are confronted as never before by terrorism. Our sense of vulnerability to attack is new. So are the force, global reach and ambition of the distinctive threat from transnational terrorism now perpetrated in the name of a Muslim extremist cause. Understanding these changes is the first challenge. That is not easy for a nation neither expecting nor used to being targeted like this. But it is essential to maintaining an effective national response.¹³

An historian of Australia and the world might beg to differ with this analysis. Take David Walker, for example, whose book, *Anxious Nation*, details the sense of vulnerability that has so coloured Australians' perceptions of their place in Asia from 1850 to 1939.¹⁴ It was not just the Yellow Peril we have been frightened of. Not so long ago, it was the reds under the beds. Surely someone in Foreign Affairs remembers them.

In fact, the terrorism in history conference did offer those present concrete examples of how historical thinking and research could help them better understand the challenge of terrorism, for example by explaining the mentality of certain groups, such as the IRA or Jemaah Islamiyah, based on long memories of exclusion or injustice, and rooted in particular cultural contexts and habits of government, with sensitivities to particular words, phrases and actions. As the bomb defuser reminded us, it is useful to know what the villain is thinking. Yet, in my experience of teaching public servants how to draft possible parliamentary questions, they find it really difficult to put themselves in the shoes of the Opposition and think up a hostile question about their area of work.

This brings me back to the notion of thinking with history, using history not as a fact finder but as a way of getting analysts to scrutinise their own assumptions and how these have evolved. Another presenter at the terrorism conference, Associate Professor Andrew Moore, illustrated this point with his research into the New Guard. His examination of the documents has prompted him to suggest that federal intelligence officers in the 1930s were so steeped in the notion that Bolsheviks were the threat that they tended to ignore right-wing activity, especially as this had been incubated within the establishment.

What history has to offer

The examples I have quoted suggest history has two sorts of things to offer policymakers:

- an antidote to short-term thinking and the loss of institutional memory. ¹⁵ What historians can ‘value add’ is the ability to see problems in a continuum rather than as a crisis which started today or yesterday. Their instinct is to ask what the story is, what patterns are emerging, how things today are different or similar. This does not mean they will always have an answer. They may conclude that the present circumstance has no precedent. But even then they might be able to suggest alternative ways of responding to a problem, something in my experience politicians would welcome their public servants doing. And of course they can remind people working in bureaucracies that fundamentally theirs is a human endeavour, characterised by all the foibles men and women bring to all their decision making
- a different way of thinking, for in the words of Inga Clendinnen, history is ‘the discipline that best teaches the individual how to assess the possibilities and limitations of particular situations, and the possibilities and limitations of the human will’¹⁶. With this mode of thinking policy makers might avoid the danger of ignoring what does not seem to fit or of defining a problem in terms of a desired solution. They might also be more cautious in their use of analogy, using this not only to justify actions but also as a signpost of difference.

What is to be done?

John Tosh, Professor of History at Roehampton in the UK, delivered the Kathleen Fitzpatrick lecture at the University of Melbourne in May 2006. He urged historians to bring insights into the public arena that throw new light on the present and interrogate the current wisdom.

There are obstacles to doing this. Some stem from either reluctance among historians to engage with the crude, real-time world of the media, or at least perplexity as to how to enter the fray. Other barriers come from the suspicion within the public service to bringing outsiders in, this despite the notion of the contestability of ideas bandied about in the Howard Government, but which seems to be more about quashing the frank and fearless advice of public servants than fostering open debate.

While, as I mentioned earlier, Clendinnen makes the point that you can’t do history on the opinion pages, she is a good example of how historians can adopt a public profile and become advocates for the cause. I expect she is liked by the media partly because of her own story of facing illness but mostly because of her facility with words, a facility shared by many other historians, who thankfully are less trapped in academic jargon than are the social scientists.

Instead, historians have to battle the tendency of the media to prefer strong opinions, black and white arguments, definitive conclusions, things we know rarely reflect reality. Yet, if we are clever, we can offer them the sort of copy they

might publish, the type of thing the overtly campaign-oriented History News Network¹⁷ at George Mason University sets out to do:

- exposing politicians who misrepresent history
- pointing out bogus analogies
- deflating beguiling myths
- reminding...of the ironies and complexities of history.

What I am proposing here is an advocacy role, one which encourages greater respect for history as a contributor to debate rather than as the purveyor of certainties; or put another way for an appreciation of historical ways of thinking. It is a long-term project of education of the media and its audiences, of the policy makers and their advisors. It demands of historians that they increase their lobbying efforts. It does not, however, call on historians to be advocates of certain policy positions, for this is dangerous territory, as the History Wars have so clearly demonstrated. Instead, I think it is more constructive if they present themselves as what the environmental scientist, Roger A. Pielke Jr. has recently termed 'an honest broker of policy alternatives', as someone who can clarify and expand the scope of choice available to decision makers and, I would go further, voters.

Of course, many in the profession are raising their voices in the media, on committees and elsewhere. Historians were among those who attended this year's Humanities on the Hill, an event during which people from the humanities, arts and social sciences, roam the corridors of Parliament House, to discuss their work directly with politicians.

That event was addressed by Senator George Brandis, whose assertion that 'the future belongs to the intelligent, adaptable generalist, not to the narrow, immobile specialist' should be music to all ears in this room. Brandis went on to challenge interpretations of the twentieth century as a battle between 'right' and 'left', singling out, as many do these days, Eric Hobsbawm for attack, and contending 'there remain echoes of ... naïve, jejeune, historically discredited leftism in the humanities faculties of Australian universities'.¹⁸

Brandis has thrown down the gauntlet to historians to respond. In so doing, it will be important to take account of the audience for such a response. If we want politicians to retreat from their party political or ideological attacks on scholarship, we must talk to them in their language and hold them to account whenever we can. Some historians already do this. I recall, for instance, Les Carlyon pointing out that Brendan Nelson's characterisation of Simpson as an embodiment of true Australian values ignored the fact that John Simpson Kirkpatrick was an illegal immigrant who lied to get into the Australian Army.¹⁹ Brandis concluded by quoting Robert Menzies' defence of pure learning as the means by which to free the mind from ignorance. Oh that the present current funding arrangements for scholarship were infused with that Menzian spirit!

This brings me to the subject of packaging history. Mark Twain wrote to a friend, apologising for having written a long letter: he had not had time to write a short one. To attract the attention of journalists, politicians and busy public servants we have to master the art of brevity. That does not mean fast and flimsy work. It does not mean reactive rather than reflective writing. Nor does it mean producing only executive summaries. These are, however, essential to entice the audience into further investigation.

Here, I think the Internet offers exciting possibilities for historians to start communicating more broadly, particularly to younger audiences attuned to the 30-second grab and to the language of SMS and expectant that they can find all they need through Google. The Internet can offer the teaser and the précis as well as full papers and immediate access to primary documents, though without the crackle and aroma of age. It does call for new skills in writing for web audiences, skills which might also be applied to distilling messages from research for policy makers.

It is the packaging that must change rather than the fundamentals in doing history. Indeed, I have thought hard in the course of preparing this paper about whether my case for greater engagement in policy processes could lead to the hijacking of history. To the contrary: I hope that it would prevent the cavalier use of historical precedent and anecdote or the complete ignoring of the past. That said, there is a tricky line to tread between pure learning and contemporary relevance.

The media responds to events and, as we bemoan on the Press Council, too often to the cues of politicians and their spin doctors. I would like to think that we can persuade them to turn more to historians to help them put their stories in context and encourage more lively thinking and debate. That means having one's antennae tuned to the political wind and being prepared to meet deadlines. It does not mean dropping everything just to have one's voice heard, nor to switch one's research to suit the political agenda. It might mean, however, getting better at arguing the relevance of one's work to contemporary endeavours—especially, as I alluded to before, if you are looking for funding.

For those of you who have worked on commissioned histories, such realities will be familiar. I will be interested to hear how you feel you fit into the public policy process. For this, too, is a question we must consider. Should public policy historians work as permanent public servants or be appointed as official historians or act as consultants for particular projects or remain entirely independent?

Peter Beck, another of those history and policy advocates, has looked into the British Treasury's use of history, when it had a working history policy, between 1957 and 1976. Because senior staff at the time recognised the need for a 'departmental memory' to help them learn from similar situations in the past and to avoid re-inventing the wheel, divisions within Treasury created 'seeded files' of

selected documents to enable the rapid location of key papers. They also commissioned coherent background accounts from information previously scattered across a wide range of files or held in the heads of older individuals. Margaret Gowing, a renowned English historian, was employed at Treasury during this time. She preferred to call her work there 'policy evaluation' rather than 'history'.

Beck's study suggests, however, that the impact of this historical work was limited because it could only be circulated among Treasury officials and because of a tendency among those civil servants to doubt the relevance of history or to be too busy to read additional material and generally not wanting to hear about past failures. As for the historians, their inclination to write careful and comprehensive accounts meant their work could be overtaken by events. These are lessons we can take from the Treasury experience, along with the tactic of getting the top echelons of the organisation on side, for it is more likely to be here that an appreciation of history can be ignited.²⁰

Jeffrey Grey, a military historian at the Australian Defence Force Academy, has edited a book called *The Last Word?*²¹ His aim was to dispel some of the suspicions of official histories as state-sanctioned tomes, prone more to cover up than to illuminate, written by second-rate historians who could not find mainstream jobs. In doing so he argues that official histories 'should be seen not as the last word but the first' and be recognised for their valuable role in organising and preserving the records.

I accept Grey's argument. We must then turn to the question of who should be writing these histories. Zara Steiner, who has examined history in the British Foreign Office, concludes that it is when historians remain outside the system that they are best able to feed their ideas into the system. Their distance from the daily mechanics of policy making is an advantage in their public roles as commentators, critics and Cassandras. On the whole I agree, although I do like the idea of historians being employed as policy evaluators or even as members of policy planning teams.

Steiner does concede that historians should be used for consultative purposes and on specific tasks. ²²Here we have something to learn from the practice in the United States, where there are regular secondments of academics to government agencies and vice versa. Such exchanges would give practising historians much greater insights into the policy processes, which might inform their own analysis and give them ideas for future projects, as well as assisting in spreading the notion of thinking with history. As for public servants, a time to step back and reflect on what they are doing would surely be welcome relief from the administrative hub-bub. And, were they willing to write about their work, we may even be on the way to finding an antidote to the looming problems of changed archival practices.

These are ambitious thoughts. Yet, even so they argue only for a modest role for history in the policy-making process. More than that would be unrealistic, given the constraints placed on modern administrators because of competing work demands, information overload, the electoral cycle, and the need always to weigh the desirable against the feasible or doable.²³ Nor would we want all these people to become historians (!) – just to know that we are out there to help and that our ways of thinking can be useful to their own endeavours.

Let me now offer some ideas about what we might do to insert history into policy.

- It is vital to become smarter about how we engage with the media. As Simon Schama told a conference on television history a few years ago: whether scholars like it or not, the future of history, the survival of history is going to depend at least as much, if not more on the new media and television as on the printed page.²⁴

That does not mean abandoning our fate to be questioners or meticulous standards when working with documents and other archival material. As I said before, it means packaging the results in ways that will entice the audience.

- That applies also to how we engage politicians and public servants, probably by producing short sharp papers, for which they find practical use and for which they might even pay! For those at universities, this would be made so much easier were the DEST points scheme, which encourages publication in refereed journals, also to recognise publication elsewhere, in formats that maintain the rigour of scholarship but also reach new audiences.
- We must also assert history's place in other disciplines and work together to address contemporary problems. Andrew Lynch, Deputy Director of the Gilbert and Tobin Centre of Public Law at the University of New South Wales argued at the terrorism conference that closer collaboration between historians and lawyers could improve debate on new counter-terrorism legislation. For example, those who have studied proscription and the Communist Party Dissolution Act 1950 might be able to bring insights to the current debate about ministerial discretion to outlaw certain groups. And more ominously, he has suggested that we need to join forces to ensure that historians retain the freedom to investigate the past.²⁵
- Such interdisciplinary work does take place, although it is also true that the disciplinary silos remain intact. In my field, historians are resentful of international relations theorists and political scientists don't think to consult historians. Even when there is seepage, I found that history was often more implicit in courses offered in other social science disciplines than formally acknowledged. It would help our cause if potential doctors and diplomats and lawyers and economists knew they were being equipped with history as well as other knowledge and skills. Elsewhere, I am sorry to say the historical method as a useful tool for an administrator

is not included in courses offered on policy development and planning.
Here is a campaign for awareness raising waiting to happen.

Conclusion

There is much to do to assert the case for history. In concluding I wish to draw on the ideas of three women who collaborated to write a book on history and who ruminated on the future of history²⁶. They pointed out the tensions history-making can produce in a democracy, where history is used to build a sense of national identity but also to ensure that we do not labour under illusions about the past. For this reason it is important that we make sure people understand that history is not a static reflection on the past but a series of 'interim reports' on the results of human endeavour: reports that as well as helping us understand the past can make us smarter in how we deal with the present and the future world around us.

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¹ See Jose Harris, 'Thucydides Amongst the Mandarins: Hancock and the World War II Civil Histories', in *Keith Hancock, The Legacies of an Historian*, ed. D.A. Low, Melbourne University Press, 2001

² Inge Clendinnen, 'Dispatches from the History Wars', *Agamemnon's Kiss, Selected Essays*, Text, Melbourne, 2006, p.153

³ History and the Public Conference in Swansea, April, 2007

<http://www.swansea.ac.uk/history/publichistory/index.htm> (accessed June 2007)

⁴ 'Kremlin Rejects "Foreign" Approach To Russian History' by Pavel Felgenhauer, Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor, June 27, 2007

⁵ <http://www.carleton.ca/history/graduate/public%20history.html> (accessed June 2007)

⁶ Talk at Asia Bookroom, Canberra, 4 July 2007

⁷ House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee, *Whitehall Confidential? The Publication of Political Memoirs*, July 2006, p.1

⁸ Quotation provided by Dr Moreen Dee, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra

⁹ Exchange with the author, June 2007

¹⁰ See, for example, the Robin Cook's speech when he resigned as Leader of the House of Commons in March 2003 over Iraq: 'Instead of using intelligence as evidence on which to base a decision about policy, we used intelligence as the basis on which to justify a policy on which we had already settled. Intelligence became a resource supporting the information needs of decision makers, helping to characterise risks, uncertainties and options.' Quoted in Roger A. Pielke, Jr, *The Honest Broker: Making Sense of Science in Policy and Politics*, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p.108

¹¹ Gary Woodard, 'Going To War: Penetrating The Veil On Iraq', 2006 <http://web.mup.unimelb.edu.au>

¹² Lessons of the Past: Applications of History for Today's Threats Conference

http://www.homelandsecurity.org.au/past_events.html#rnsa

¹³ <http://www.dfat.gov.au/publications/terrorism/chapter1.html> (accessed June 2007)

¹⁴ David Walker, *Anxious Nation : Australia and the Rise and Fall of Asia 1850-1939*, University of Queensland Press, 1999

¹⁵ Zara Steiner, 'The historian and the Foreign Office', *Two Worlds of International Relations: Academics, practitioners and the trade in ideas*, (eds) Christopher Hill and Pamela Beshoff, Routledge, London and New York, 1994 (44-45)

¹⁶ Clendinnen, 'Agamemnon's Kiss', op.cit., p. 226

¹⁷ <http://hnn.us/>

¹⁸ George Brandis, 'Learning is its own reward', Higher Education Supplement, *The Australian*, 27 June 2007

¹⁹ ABC Radio National, The World Today, 25 August, 2005, <http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2005/s1445968.htm>

²⁰ Peter Beck, *Using History, Making British Policy: the Treasury and Foreign Office, 1950-1976*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006

²¹ *The Last Word? Essays on Official History in the US and British Commonwealth*, Ed. Jeffrey Grey, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, 2003

²² Steiner, op.cit., p.51

²³ Virginia Berridge, 'Public or Policy Understanding of History?' *Social History of Medicine*, vol.16 no. 3, 2003

²⁴ Simon Schama, 'The Burden of Television History', Keynote speech for Banff Festival World Congress of History Producers) <http://www.history2001.com/pdf/history.keynote.doc>

²⁵ http://www.homelandsecurity.org.au/past_events.html#rsa

²⁶ Appelby, Hunt and Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History*, WW Norton and Co, New York 1994, p.289