

## **We need a better model for democracy**

By Greg Rudd, The Australian, 7 July 2015

The model of democracy used to run Australia is outdated and dysfunctional. Most voters know it. No professional would run their business this way.

Democracy is something we're not supposed to question. We're taught to look at the daily political intrigue, hope, disappointment, tension, conflict, character assassination, elections, wannabe messiahs, lies, statistical manipulation and white papers of promise that fill our media and conversation. It's a magician's trick. A distraction, when the real problem is the model that runs these activities. It's outdated and dysfunctional.

Politics is infuriatingly addictive. It's tribal, even if you opt out. We're right, they're wrong. It's Labor's fault, the Greens' fault, the Libs' fault, the Nats' fault, the Senate's fault, the independents' fault, the media's fault, everyone's fault except ours.

### **It's our fault, the people's fault**

Actually it is our fault, the people's fault. We're simply too gutless to demand an improved democratic model.

Show me any democracy in the world currently improving. There are none.

Australia is lucky. Our young federation was born into democracy. We've had no civil, ethnic or religious wars to divide us.

Yet stupidly we create artificial political divides to make it hard to implement vital, long-term economic policy to protect Australia. Bad times are coming unless we fix that.

### **Every business knows they need to keep improving their model**

Every business knows to stay relevant and profitable they need to keep improving their model.

Yet, with our federal government, we don't improve the model. We tinker at the edges and play the blame game.

Australia is young and naive. Ask any of our Asian neighbours when alcohol lets their "face" slip. They say: "Australians won't wake up to the opportunities they are losing until they've suffered more." In short, unlike them, we've had it too good. No one thinks that will last.

Commonsense example: I come to you with a fantastic business plan, great market research, an investor in tow, and I want you to chair my board as we go public. You do your analysis and accept. I say there's only one condition. I want a second board with a second chairman. You ask me, what's the second board do? I say it opposes the policy of the first board and character assassinates all the directors. You think I'm crazy. I am. But that's how we run our country, undermining each other rather than working together.

So how do we improve our outdated democratic model?

## **First, end career politics**

First, you end career politics. That is the root of all evil. Politics must be a service. Politicians should serve no more than two five-year terms. They serve because they have the ability and drive to grow Australia.

Second, none of the major political parties will do this due to self-interest. Thus a new major party must be formed. Not a personality, single-issue or hate party. It will take time to grow, but not as long as you may think, because people are worried. Let's call it the Common Sense Party. It's not ideological. It has two basic rules. Every decision must be made in terms of what's best for Australia long term. And you must add as much value as you can during your five or 10 years to strengthen Australia.

## **Create institutions that force bipartisanship**

Third, you create institutions that force bipartisanship. You create an Australian Long Term Policy Bank owned by the parliament, not political parties. It sits beside the Reserve Bank and houses and executes vital long-term policy such as tax, pensions, superannuation and infrastructure that the present democratic model finds impossible to deliver.

Fourth, parliament commissions a major review, using the best brains in Australia and overseas, as to how to improve Australia's democratic model to protect and grow our standard of living. This happens every 10 years. Major recommendations must be implemented by parliament if they pass the commonsense test.

Five, challenge every politician who opposes the above four points (which will be many) to explain to the people of Australia why the present system of running our country is the best we can hope for.

Six, opposing for opposing's sake has become strategically childish. People are tired of the politics of artificial hate and division. Parliamentarians need to work together on important things. Parties won't do this because it weakens their brand. People power is needed. Politicians respond to people power.

Seven, people who say improving the democratic model is too idealistic should step aside or resign. Let people who want to improve the model get on with their work. What's the point of education if we can't make things work better?

## **Politics is a service, not a career**

Eight, let the media say what it wants. The new "I serve for the country" style of politician won't care if they get re-elected. They'll be too busy doing the right thing because politics is a service, not a career. This will suddenly free up 40 per cent of a politician's time with no need for media stunts.

Nine, let the Australian professional ethics industry write a course with exams and personality tests for those who want to be politicians. It's a vital job. Hire the best people. Political candidates must pass this course. Filter out the crazies and narcissists. It will reduce branch stacking and family dynasties.

Both sides of politics need to commit now to a major improved democratic model review as a policy going into next year's election. More of the dysfunctional same is not an option.

Many people and groups are unwilling to speak out against governments for fear of retribution. It's time to step up, overcome that fear, and stop complaining.

If we don't lift our game we all suffer.

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This comment was posted on The Australian online website by Peter Senior:

*At last! A sensible response to Australia's obviously-failing system of democratic government. It is well known that when a business is clearly failing, tweaking simply delays the inevitable. Fundamental restructuring is the only long-term option unless you want the organisation to collapse. Problem is, almost all the current politicians are mostly interested in one thing: getting re-elected. And that, by definition, is within the existing political system. You are partly right, Greg, but the changes need to be far more fundamental, and are only likely to happen if a new party is elected with a clear mandate to change to an entirely new system of governance. I wrote a long report on the subject 6 years ago, but no one I sent it too was interested. Seems the usual corporate lesson will apply: wait until the system is clearly broken before the main stakeholders will accept major change. How much longer do we, the silent majority, have to wait before the broken and declining-fast status is recognised? Best get the new party and plan for fundamental change prepared.*