[title to be confirmed]

A trial study to explore Australian values

Background paper

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Note:

This background paper, a working document drafted at the Brotherhood of St Laurence between late 2001 and early 2002, is for internal reference only.

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PART I - BACKGROUND

Purpose

This draft literature review has been prepared for consideration by the Research Advisory Group which has been formed to supervise *The Trial Study to Explore Australian Values*. It provides a summary of relevant values-related research from Australia and around the world.

Once finalised, the literature review will form part of the final report of the Trial Study. The other component is a substantial qualitative study of Australian values which will draw upon data gathered from a series of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

There are likely to be as many differences in the values that pervade Australian life as there will be views about how those values should be operationalised. It is the task of the *Trial Study to Explore Australian Values* to examine values within the broader context of Australians' visions for the future of this country, and also to inquire into the public policies that people believe may be effective in attaining their preferred futures.

Relevance

Like other western industrialised countries, Australia faces a future of change and adjustment. There are various ways of responding to this challenge. One will be to shape and sustain a society which is based upon and guided by values which are broadly acceptable to the community as a whole and reflect its hopes and aspirations.

But it is not always easy to pin down people's values. All too often there is dissonance between stated values and actions, which has been called 'that uncomfortable gap between what we say we believe in – what our values are – and how we actually lead our lives.' (Mackay, 1999). At the level of our society, another gap is relevant to this Trial Study - the gap that seems to be opening between mounting numbers of the concerned and of the resolutely or anxiously indifferent.

Scope of this review

This literature review aims to introduce research which: defines and explains values; examines Australian values; looks at ethics in the context of common values; and examines the operation of values in the public sphere.

Why is the BSL interested in values?

In general, a better understanding of Australians' values will place the BSL in a stronger position to exercise moral leadership, in the sense of positively influencing the thoughts, feelings and behaviour of Australians.

A values-based discourse also seems to offer the potential to connect the conversations of the elite groups who shape policies with the popular conversations of the community. The BSL may attain a position of substantial influence if it is able to play a role in 'mediating' these two conversations. A better understanding of values thus offers the potential to improve the 'targeting' of the BSL's own policy and communication activities, and thus move towards a higher public profile for the organisation.

PART 2 - A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A. An introduction to values

In general, values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others. The value concept gives access to two useful levels of thinking: human actuality and human potentiality. As a result, values are a particularly useful way to examine individuals' sense of being part of a community. They determine how we get along together and manage our affairs; they shape our identities, beliefs and goals.

As one of the deepest manifestations of a culture, values are one of a handful of constructs that bridge the social sciences. The values concept is used in sociology, psychology, political science and ethics. For example, a values typology drawn from inter-cultural studies is: evil versus good; dirty versus clean; ugly versus beautiful; unnatural versus natural; abnormal versus normal; paradoxical versus logical; and irrational versus rational (Hofstede, 1991).

This paper conceives of values as abstract principles (e.g. equality, human dignity) which apply equally well as criteria that frame individual decision-making and shape institutional practices such as policy making.

Definitions of values

There are two important strands to recognise at the level of the individual. Values are 'enduring prescriptive or proscriptive beliefs that a specific mode of conduct (instrumental value) or end state of existence (terminal value) is preferred to another mode of conduct or end state' (Rokeach, 1974). Terminal values, such as a sense of accomplishment, a world at peace, and social recognition may be viewed as *ends* toward which one is striving. Instrumental values such as ambition, broadmindedness, and competence may be viewed as *means* that one will employ to achieve the ends. In a unified value system, these ends and means will be mutually reinforcing (Rokeach, 1974).

An individual's *value system* is an enduring organisation of beliefs concerning preferable modes of conduct or end-states of existence along a continuum of relative importance (Rokeach, 1974).

We each carry within us two sets of values: espoused values and operational values. Espoused values are those we say are important to us. Operational values are those we put into practice, those that we actually live by. Inevitably there will be some discrepancies between these espoused and operational values.

From an individual perspective, values do seem to explain the differences in peoples' evaluation of actions or outcomes – as positive or negative or as good or bad. Values in this sense may be understood as:

> General beliefs about desirable or undesirable ways of behaving and about desirable or undesirable end-states. They are assumed to be core aspects of the self-concept and to influence thought and action in many ways. Values are assumed to transcend more specific attitudes towards objects and situations but they influence the forms that those attitudes take. They provide standards or criteria that people can use to evaluate actions or outcomes, to justify opinions and conduct, to plan and guide behaviour, to decide between alternatives, to compare self with others, to engage in social influence, and to present self to others. Values influence the way we construe events and situations and they are linked to our basic emotions. One would expect them to affect people's emotional attachment to the groups to which they belong and their evaluation of the products and achievements of these groups (Feather, 1999).

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The different dimensions of values

In looking at people's statements about their values, it is important to distinguish between the *desirable* and the *desired*: how people think the world ought to be versus what people want for themselves. [And the links to Thursday's readings??]

Questions about the desirable refer to people in general and are worded as right/wrong, agree/disagree. For Hofstede, 'in the abstract, everybody is in favour of virtue and opposed to sin, and answers about the desirable express people's views about what represents virtue and what corresponds to sin (Hofstede, 1991).The desired is far more personal, however, and focuses on what we want for ourselves, including our less virtuous desires. The desirable bares only a faint resemblance to actual behaviour, and even statements about the desired, although closer to actual behaviour, will not necessarily reflect how people will behave when they have to choose.

The desirable and the desired are distinguishable by the norms which are in operation. Norms are the standards for values that exist within a group or category of people. In the case of the desirable, the norm is absolute, pertaining to what is ethically right. In the case of the desired, the norm is statistical: it indicates the choices actually made by the majority. The desirable relates more to ideology, the desired to practical matters.

How do values develop in individuals?

Values are among the first things children learn – not consciously, but implicitly. The consensus from developmental psychology seems to be that most children have their values firmly in place by the age of 10, and after that changes are hard to make. And because they are acquired so early in life, many values remain unconscious to those who hold them. Thus they cannot be discussed, nor can they be directly observed by outsiders. They can only be inferred from the way people act under various circumstances (Hofstede, 1991).

Values develop by example; they are not spelled out. Personal relationships are the medium through which ethics, ideals, values and virtues are transmitted and shared (Mackay, 1993).

B. Australian values

Can we talk about 'Australian values'?

The concept of 'Australian values' is highly contested, particularly as the current debate rages about the meaning and content of Australian national identity. Competing values are implicit in debates on identity questions such as immigration, Aboriginal rights and conservation.

Egalitarianism, mateship and the 'fair go' have traditionally been viewed as 'uniquely Australian values'. A strong argument has also been put for 'civility' as a central Australian value, with the experiences of pre and post-war migrants given as examples of an underlying tolerance and decency in Australian culture (Krygier, 1997).

Since we are making observations at the level of our culture, we must expect to identify what seem to be contradictions. Historically, Australians clearly valued liberty, in the sense of freedom of choice of everyday life. Looking to the behaviour of the nation, we should recall that during the First World War, the people twice voted against conscription. Yet compulsory voting has been one of the pillars of our political system (Carroll, 2001). On the other side of the equation, some observers see it as disappointing that many Australians are incapable of simultaneously feeling pride in Australia – in our institutions and our way of life – while recognising and feeling shame at the way we have treated our indigenous population (Krygier, 1997).

Horne's classic 1964 study of Australian identity, *The Lucky Country*, talked of suburbanism, mediocrity, 'give it a go' and 'have a good time' as important elements in distinguishing what is an Australian (Phillips et al, 2000).

A recent study suggests that conceptions of 'Australianness' have changed little for ordinary Australians in the past 35 years. Mateship (e.g. volunteering, pulling together, helping others) and an easy-going orientation to life remain core Australian values, as do 'the fair go', 'giving it a go' (confronting adversity, being robust), owning your own home and having a family. Abstract political ideals no not feature nearly so strongly, although there are popular conceptions of freedom and tolerance. But people find it difficult to explain why they support these values, beyond the fact that they foster solidarity and a sense of community (Phillips et al, 2000).

The Federal Government suggests that core Australian principles and values include: commitment to Australia, freedom, a fair go, democracy, rule of law, tolerance, mutual respect, political equality, equal opportunity, and non-discrimination (National Multicultural Advisory Council, 1999).

The realities of Aboriginal dispossession and Australians' persistent racist attitudes toward our first nations do run contrary to an argument about 'universally Australian' values. The recent debate around asylum seekers seems to expose a similar dynamic, and perhaps also a 'hardening of our hearts' (Manne, 2001). This evidence seems to suggest that the reality of cultural and intellectual pluralism in Australia may render any search for *the values* fruitless. Rather, the question should be cast as – on what can we all agree and how should our institutions reflect this fragile consensus? (Gascoigne, 2001).

The term 'family values' is a good example of how fraught a values-based discussion can become. There are various ways to look at this: for some, the term is 'loaded and weary…because it is so often used as a political weapon…' (O'Brien, 2001).

Yet the family environment is clearly a source of stability in changing times. The family provides a social context in which 'traditional values' such as loyalty, acceptance, shared responsibility, mutual support are more likely to thrive. One phenomenon which demonstrates people's desire for the 'family' setting is the massive popularity of 'share-houses'. In share-houses, large numbers of people cohabit without familial or sexual connections. This flows from the fact that many young people value their freedom (to do things) above security (in the form of home ownership) and also reflects the practical necessities of the high costs of private rental housing.

Some examples of Australian values in operation

Community sector agencies like the Brotherhood tend to focus on what might be called 'moral values', such as fairness, justice, equity and human dignity, but there are also social, personal and aesthetic values. Some values, like participation, have a policy tone to them.

In a recent research study into health consumers' attitudes to the general practice system the following were revealed as core values:

Social solidarity and cohesion – the notion of a public good, where the welfare of the individual is acknowledged as related to that of society
Human rights – basic needs are human rights (food, shelter, companionship)
Democracy – people view themselves as having a right to direct involvement in the development of policy
Proactivity – there is a widely held belief that positive actions by individuals and communities can create a healthier society
Holistic approach – specific problems should be examined from a broad perspective, including gaining perspectives from a range of different portfolios on specific policy problems

Acceptance of limited resources – people accept that only limited resources are available, but do not believe this is inconsistent with high standards of quality

Community ownership – public infrastructure and assets are valuable, and care should be taken that they are not adversely affected by sudden policy changes. (Boyce, 2001)

Value differences within the Australian population

The evidence is that, on matters of institutional performance, economic management and the causes of unemployment, leaders hold views quite distinct from those of the workforce. For example, while leaders generally recognise structural and economic reasons for unemployment, the workforce attaches greater weight to individualistic explanations (Graetz, 1988).

On other issues, leaders themselves are in disagreement, and trade union leaders are more likely to side with the workforce than with other leaders. At other times - for example, in evaluating mass media – the views of trade union leaders are at odds with those of the workforce they represent. These results reveal no clear or consistent pattern of value cleavages, either between leaders and the workforce, or between business and labour. For the most part, values are pragmatic and ad hoc and reflect self-interest on particular issues rather than a consistent cleavage of sentiment or belief (Graetz, 1988).

A brief comparison of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal values.

The exception to Australian inclusiveness has been treatment of the original inhabitants. This country houses in essence two peoples and two cultures, with problems of coming together that continue to loom as intractable. True, there are emerging signs of fraternity—highlighted in the pride and delight taken in Cathy Freeman as a national ambassador. And there is growing acknowledgment in the white majority that the Aborigines have not, in general, been treated well— and at times shamefully. Yet the distance remains, and with it the most severe challenge to the people's capacity for inclusiveness (Carroll, 2001).

Using broad generalisations, it is possible to compare Aboriginal with non-Aboriginal culture. Within more traditional Aboriginal communities, the original collectivist ethos of Aboriginal cultures is still strongly apparent. White Australians are still a long way from Aboriginal Australians in the extent to which they identify themselves in terms of group membership (Mackay, 1993) Mainstream Australian culture is clearly more individualist. For Aborigines, identity is largely determined by relationships to other people. Having a strong social network is still a safety net in an uncertain world. Non-Aboriginal Australians appear to orient themselves through a range of 'identities', with some of the most powerful being work-related ('what you do'). By contrast, Aboriginal people tend to regard cultural responsibilities as 'business'. (Byrnes, 2000)

Value changes in Australia

A recent study suggests a highly stable value consensus in Australia over time. In 1995, the top ranking values (with over 95% endorsement) were 'human dignity', 'a world at peace', 'the rule of law', 'freedom', 'equal opportunity for all', and 'preserving the natural environment'. The same values were the most widely accepted in 1975, with the addition of 'national security'. Older, less educated and male respondents are more likely to support security values, while women are more likely to support harmony values (Braithwaite, 1998).

The quest for personal values – internal reference points – must clearly be linked to the disappearance or re-definition of many cherished social, cultural and economic icons (Mackay, 1993). Certainly during the past decade in Australia, with the increasing move to individualism, there have been important observable changes in the behaviours which are societally sanctioned. Two developments of note are: the 'respectablisation' of tax avoidance, and conspicuous consumption. It is logical to think that as people engage less in community-focused activities, and

more in self-focused behaviours such as watching TV or spending time with friends and family, that the importance of community-focused activities will lessen over time.

Australians have followed international trends in many areas of personal values, for example a greater stress on individuality has led to a more wary, adversarial relationship between the sexes in recent times (Mackay, 1993).

The Middle Australia Project found that the most common ways in which quality of life was perceived to be falling were: too much greed and consumerism; the breakdown in community and social life; too much pressure on families, parents and marriages; falling living standards; and employers demanding too much. It also found people's positive perceptions of the changes in our society centring around: the more equal relationship between men and women; the sharing of housework; and more freedom. People felt that 'being able to spend more time with family and friends' and 'less stress in life' were very important in improving quality of life (Pusey, 1998).

We can also detect value changes through peoples' stated attitudes, and changes certainly occur here over time. For example, in Australia 46 per cent of adults hold that homosexual behaviour is 'always wrong', whereas fully 30 per cent say it is 'not wrong at all'. There has been a sea-change in opinion since the middle 1980s: in 1984, 64 per cent saw homosexual behaviour as 'always wrong'. By comparison with other nations, Australians have middle-of-the-road attitudes on the morality of homosexual behaviour, and as in other countries the young, women, the well-educated and affluent are more tolerant of homosexuality (Kelly, 2001).

The political correctness phenomenon may be viewed as a reflection of generational change and changing social values. For example, racism is no longer acceptable. Women are no longer regarded as second-class citizens. It is now acceptable to talk openly about sex. So the phenomenon may simply reflect the emergence of these new attitudes, and the battle for national identity which reflects these issues (Tanner, 1999).

C. Related areas of research

How do values develop and change in societies?

Most commentators agree that the twentieth century was characterised by a change in emphasis from communitarian to individualistic values. Certainly there is a strong argument that societies seek a balance between personal autonomy and self-fulfilment on one hand, and social order and cultural harmony on the other.

We can attempt to describe some of the key changes in personal and public behaviour which have accompanied societal changes during the past 50 years as follows: a long-term decline in the importance attached to obligations to others; acceptance of different ethnic groups and diverse lifestyles has increased; censoriousness towards 'incorrect' sexual behaviour has diminished; the importance of self-fulfilment and the expression of one's individualism has increased, especially among women; concern about the environment has increased; the norms for sharing responsibilities among partners have become more egalitarian (Aaron et al, 1994).

Observed trends in the US include a declining emphasis on equality, leading to the conclusion that American society has shifted away from a 'collective morality value consensus' to a 'personal competence value orientation' (Rokeach and Ball, 1989, cited Braithwaite, 1998). Others have argued that the cultural shift in advanced industrial societies is away from materialist goals (sustenance and safety) to postmodernist goals (openness to innovation and self-actualisation) (Braithwaite, 1998).

One argument is that the key factor shaping such changes in values are whether a society is actually becoming more affluent, and whether the members of that society believe that trend will continue.

There is some evidence to suggest that six areas of values change may be influenced by the 'affluence effect': greater acceptance of pluralism; sweeping changes to family-related values; the changing meaning of success; a new relationship between work and leisure; changes in social morality; and new values in relation to health and physical well-being (Aaron et al, 1994).

A countervailing view is based on 'culture-shift' in the US. According to this argument, the American population may be divided into three major cultural groupings which are characterised by quite distinctive values, as follows:

Cultural creatives - whose values are family, community, environment, feminism, diversity, personal growth and spiritual development (26% of their population and growing rapidly)
Moderns - materialism, consumerism, the drive to acquire money and property (48% and steady)
Traditionals - traditional ways of life and gender roles, strong religious beliefs (25% and declining rapidly)

A range of lifestyle preferences & attributes which apply to these groups. For example, he believes *moderns* tend to take a cynical view of idealism and caring relations, and value 'winners', and that *cultural creatives* tend to be activists of one sort or another (Korten, 2000).

To examine 'culture shift' in this way in Australia would require some quantitative research, but this is beyond the scope of the current study.

D.   Ethics and common values

Ethics

Ethics is the study of human values and valuation. Once we begin to use the values concept, we are firmly placing the individual within a social group. This is appropriate to the task of this paper, since the concept of morality arises directly from our relationships with each other; the sense of duty and obligation is an inherently social sense. Moral questions arise from relationships between ourselves and others, specifically involving the extent to which we are prepared to take the rights, needs and welfare of others into account. (Mackay, 1993)

Morality is something we have to argue about. In part this is because values are erected in the imperfect conditions of society - by conversation, argument and political negotiation. But more than this, the shared understandings of a people are often expressed in general concepts – in historic ideals, public rhetoric, foundational texts, ceremonies and rituals. It is not only what people do, but how they explain and justify what they do, the stories they tell, the principles they invoke, that constitute a moral culture. As a result, cultures are open to contradictions, between principles and practices, as well as incoherence (Walzer, 1988).

Moral argument may allow some progress in spite of the critical changes that have occurred in Western societies during the past fifty years. For now we may say that the substantive values that seem to be most widespread in Western society are competitiveness, money-making and personal enjoyment. The values that they have displaced seem to be altruism, doing the will of God, and maintaining tradition.

Is there a basis for common values?

Michael Walzer's concept of 'minimal morality' seems to be helpful. He points out that every morality has a dualism embedded in it. He talks about a 'thin' set of universal principles which are adapted 'thickly' to specific historical circumstances. So terms (what we could also call values) like 'truth' and 'justice' and 'freedom' will have both 'thick' and 'thin' accounts given to them. When we hear the word 'justice' in a moral context (e.g. from Deuteronomy – 'Justice, justice, shalt thou pursue' we fill in our own developed understanding of justice, which guides or which we

acknowledge ought to guide our political and legal pursuits. This is one interpretation of values at work.

Walzer continues that, whatever the origins of the idea of justice, whatever the starting point of a discussion about justice in this or that society, people thinking and talking about the idea will range over 'a mostly familiar terrain' and will come upon similar issues, like political tyranny or the oppression of the poor. What they say about the issues will depend on their circumstances, but some aspects of what they say will be immediately accessible to people who don't know anything about those circumstances. Indeed, anyone observing would find something in the discussion they could recognise. As Walzer says 'the sum of these recognitions is what I mean by minimal morality.' (Walzer, 1994)

We may contend that a minimal interpretation of morality, including certain virtues and obligations, is one of the conditions of the existence of a society. But what would comprise this minimal morality? One suggestion is for three categories of moral values – the positive duties of mutual care and reciprocity; the negative injunctions concerning violence, deceit and betrayal; and the norms for certain rudimentary procedures and standards for what is just (Bok, 1995).

Recent international attempts to identify common values

I.   The United Nations World Conference on Human Rights
In 1993 participants from 183 nations convened in Vienna to seek agreement on a Declaration of Human Rights and a Program of Action. Their task was to examine the possibilities for common values within the context of respect for diversity. Important disagreements were unearthed – in particular, what rights are due to individuals and what institutions should enforce such rights.

The *Vienna Declaration of Human Rights* was something of a disappointment, as it failed to distinguish between the most basic human rights and all others. Controversies such as the need to speak out against states resorting to slave labour, torture, and the denial of political liberties in the name of development, were papered over (Bok, 1995).

II.   The World Parliament of Religions
Religious leaders from around the world assembled in Chicago in 1993. Their declaration, *Towards a Global Ethic*, sets forth an often admirable agenda for working towards greater tolerance, mutual trust, and co-operation, within communities as well as between them. But it does not meet the objective the leaders set at the outset, that of singling out a set of values acceptable to all. It fails to provide the position of moral minimalism promised at the outset. Instead, the document states four guidelines for human behaviour, in the form of the following commitments: to a culture of non-violence and respect for life; to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order; to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness; and to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women (Bok, 1995).

III.   Veritatis Splendour, Pope John Paul II's encyclical
The Pope intended to present a maximalist system of absolutely binding values for all humankind. Drawing on Matthew 19, it states five commandments that qualify as minimalist moral requirements: you shall not murder; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honour your father and mother. These are said to constitute the indispensable rules of all social life. However, other maximalist arguments were also invoked to support the prohibitions against homosexuality and abortion (Bok, 1995).

IV.   The Report of the Commission on Global Governance
In *Our Global Neighbourhood* the commission set a challenge for societies: they must learn to work together by transforming the present conflicted world neighbourhood into a cooperating network of communities. A three-fold approach was proposed: a basis of core values (respect for

life, liberty, justice, equity and mutual respect), a limited set of rights and responsibilities constituting a civic code that builds upon these, and changes in international norms embodying these values. One of the difficulties is that the core values stated are vague, and little guidance is available about how to apply them (Bok, 1995).

E.   Values in the public sphere

Values and policy

During the twentieth century, the search for a consensus on basic societal values, such as priorities for implementing social reform or political change, seemed to become a major priority of many Western societies. It was thought that only some measure of agreement on core values could create the sort of consensus that would produce a stable society (Graetz & McAllister, 1988). There can be little doubt that the legitimacy of government depends in part on the resolution of diverse and often conflicting values through fair and reasonable policy processes.

Today this position is being extended further. There is an argument that by understanding the public's values you can better relate policies to them, and in this way potentially use policy to change the values. But policy issues are inevitably complex, and as a result many public policy experts tend to view appeals to values as simplistic and overly judgmental, and in adopting this type of approach to the examination of public policy we may risk the 'American tendency' to use a values-based discussion to blame the victim and minimise the importance of circumstances and laws (Aaron et al, 1994).

Traditionally, policy analysts have usually treated preferences as givens – values, beliefs and interests – and so as beyond the reach of public policy. But the discourse now seems to be re-stating the proposition in an accountability frame – that the values held by the instigators of public policy should more effectively reflect those of the communities they serve.

Public policies clearly do balance value conflicts. For example, the values of punishment, remediation, and cost effectiveness all seem to pull corrections policy between the polls of conscience and convenience (Fischer et al, 1987).

Social policy formulation requires a range of information, including about the milieu in which policy will operate. Values form part of that milieu. Naturally, any ideas about alternatives to current courses of action will have values implicit in them. Social policy is never value-free: as one example, since the women's movement made public a number of social issues previously understood as personal – such as childcare, rape and violence in families – it has become widely accepted that social policy is about personal, family and community life, as well as wider social arrangements (Dalton et al, 1996).

While there may be some societal consensus about values, individuals and groups will give values private interpretations. For example, there would be widespread support for the social value of a world at peace, but individuals will diverge in the degree to which they see peace as achievable through economic sanctions, military retaliation, negotiation or compromise (Braithwaite et al, 1998).

Links between public sentiment and policy priorities

Recent studies seem to be revealing a growing tension between values and lifestyle, a tension being heightened by the promotion of a fast-paced, high pressure, hyper-consumer lifestyle on which current economic performance seems to depend. Australians seem to be increasingly torn between a sound common sense and a basic decency on the one hand and the appeal of constant distraction and gratification on the other.

Clearly, how people feel about their own lives is different to how they feel about life in general. Most Australians do not believe life is getting better. About a quarter (24%) believe overall quality of life is getting better, 36% think it is getting worse and 38% say it is staying about the same (2% do not know). (Eckersley, 1998). Within this overall picture, there are significant differences between men and women, income and age groups, capital city and other residents, and States. We also appear to be suffering from change fatigue (Tanner, 1999).

In the face of real concerns that public attitudes to poverty to poverty may be hardening, the Understanding Poverty Project provides countervailing evidence of growing unease within the wider community about the social and economic divisions within Australian society. Employment creation and a more equitable distribution of wealth to be important national priorities. The perceived hardening of attitudes was related to perceptions about the causes of poverty, a lack of leadership to eradicate the problem, and feelings of helplessness and powerlessness (Johnson, 2000).

As Australian values have changed, so peoples' priorities for state action have altered too. Table 1 [to be inserted] provides an indication of some of the most critical issues in the minds of Australians, and shows how these public policy priorities have changed over time. It is worth noting that no research has so far been located which explicitly locates Australians' priority areas for policy action within their views about a preferred future for the country.

A recent feature article in *the Age* newspaper (8/10/01) provided support for the following propositions about Australians' views on public policies and contemporary Australian society:

A slender margin of people believe they are better off than they were 10 years ago;
The minority of people who say they would prefer to pay more tax and get more government services primarily want to see the extra money spent on health and education. The rest want it spent on helping people get jobs (14%), welfare (6%), supporting industry (5%), and protecting the environment (4%);
Older Australians tend to prioritise a better health system, whereas younger people (particularly those under 40) believe that the emphasis should be placed on education;
The vast majority believe people should be required to 'work for the dole'; and
Most people have a sense of belonging to the community, and this is more widely felt amongst older people and amongst those who are at home most of the time.

Future visions for Australia

A 1995 study of young Australians' expected and preferred futures for Australia in 2010 found young people's hopes for Australia were not very different to their expectations, but also different from what they are promised under current priorities (Eckersley, 1999). Their dreams for Australia are of a society that places less emphasis on the individual, competition and material wealth, and more on community and family, co-operation and the environment. Some expressed their wishes in terms of a greater recognition of the 'natural', 'human' or 'spiritual' aspects of life.

Asked to nominate which of two positive scenarios for Australia for 2010 came closer to the type of society they both expected and preferred, almost two-thirds of the young people said they expected a 'fast-paced, internationally competitive society, with the emphasis on the individual, wealth generation and enjoying the good life.' However, eight out of ten said they would prefer 'a greener, more stable society, where the emphasis is on co-operation, community and family, more equal distribution of wealth, and greater economic self-sufficiency' (Eckersley, 1999). This mirrors National Social Science Survey findings that Australians see Australian society reversing a historical trend towards greater equality and, contrary to their wishes, becoming more unequal in the future (Kelley et al 1995, cited Eckersley 1999).

Despite the tumultuous changes happening all around us, Australians harbour certain dreams: the 'urban village', where people know and care for each other; 'happy families', because when families are in disarray, society suffers; 'shared values' to help create a more cohesive sense of community; and more jobs, for anyone who wants one (Mackay, 1995).

A 1999 study 'monitoring the mood of the new millennium' found that Australians viewed the late 90s as a time of extreme social change and upheaval, marked by a deterioration of social and family values and personal security. They saw their future lifestyles as relatively unchanged in material terms, even slightly improved, but believed community and family life would continue to deteriorate and that their personal and spiritual lives would be poorer. Frightening, confused, chaotic, traumatic, insular, dangerous, and decadent were among the key words used to describe the future they expected. In contrast the future they wanted was described in terms like: simple, happy, peace, the possible return to religion, community, tolerant, safe and ordered. (Brunton, 1999, cited Eckersley, 1999).

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PART 3 – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This draft literature review has cited a variety of research in response to the following questions:
- What are values?
- What are Australian values?
- Can we hope to achieve a global ethic and common values? and
- How do values operate in the public sphere?

Recommendations for further work

Alternatives to a values-focused are also worth exploring. For example, rights-based frameworks have the advantage that a range of international conventions are in place. These establish objective standards which may be particularly useful in a policy context.
Some interesting work on community values is underway at Swinburne University's Social Research Institute, and linkages should be identified where possible.
The Trial Study's findings on Australian values may be usefully compared with the Organisational Development Unit's work on BSL staff values.

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Table 1 - Australian public policy priorities 1978 and 1999

1978 Single policy issue Australians consider the most important – per cent	1999 The issues Australians consider critical – per cent
A high rate of economic growth - 19	
A stable economy - 18	
Strong defence forces - 14	Ensuring everyone has access to good education - 88
Participation by people in government - 9	Providing a quality life for our children - 85
Fighting rising prices - 8	Providing quality health care for everyone - 84
Maintaining order in the nation - 7	Building self-esteem amongst young people - 83
The fight against crime - 7	Creating work opportunities for all Australians - 81
Participation in work and community decision-making - 6	Building an acceptable society for all Australians - 80
A society where ideas are more important than money – 5	Feeling safe and secure - 76
A less impersonal, more humane society – 4	Protecting our natural environment - 75
Protecting freedom of speech – 4	Solving the drug problem – 72
A more beautiful environment - <1	Preventing the gap widening between rich and poor – 66
	Creating a strong vision for Australia's future - 66
	Keeping a strong Australian identity - 63
	Reforming the tax system - 60
	Having good relations with other countries - 60
	Keeping up with changes in technology - 56
	Maintaining a high standard of living - 55
SOURCE - Herald Survey, SMH, 12 June 1978	SOURCE: Commonwealth Bank survey 1999