

**REVIEW OF DAVID DENEMARK, GABRIELLE MEAGHER, SHAUN WILSON,  
MARK WESTERN AND TIMOTHY PHILLIPS (EDS), *AUSTRALIAN SOCIAL  
ATTITUDES 2: CITIZENSHIP, WORK AND ASPIRATIONS***

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This is a comprehensive, clearly written sequel to *Australian Social Attitudes: The First Report*.<sup>1</sup> Like the earlier volume, it is based on the *Australian Survey of Social Attitudes*, this time the one fielded in 2005 (the previous one was in 2003). The 2005 survey focused on the themes of citizenship and community life, law and authority, work, attitudes to globalisation, taxation and social services. The current volume concentrates on citizenship, work and the aspirational voter. But the book's overall purpose is to enhance democratic policy making by increasing Australia's knowledge of itself.

How do Australians understand the concept of citizenship? Do they believe they can participate in political decision-making effectively and do they trust their political institutions, including political parties? Clive Bean and David Denmark find that many Australians lack a sense of political efficacy and trust, possibly because they think the major parties do not offer them a real choice (73). Tod Donovan and others compare Australians' attitudes with those of citizens in other democracies and find that Australians trust their political systems more than do most others.

Timothy Phillips and Robert Holton then explore support for globalisation. Here they seem handicapped by a lack of good measures. They approach the problem at two levels, taking support for ties with Asia as support for globalisation at the public level and a willingness to show respect and tolerance when 'you meet people for the first time' as support for globalisation at the interpersonal level. This allows them

to find three groups: cosmopolitans who score highly on both dimensions; 'steadfast nationalists' who are wary on both; and 'cautious inter-nationalists' who are low on the former and high on the latter (120–122). This third group is predominately female, older, religious, less likely to use the internet and more likely to live outside metropolitan areas. It does seem possible that the second set of questions measures norms of interpersonal politeness rather than attitudes to globalisation.

What about work? Bill Martin finds that Australians value the extrinsic rewards of work: job security, high income, and possibilities for advancement, but most especially job security. This was rated very important by 58 per cent, as opposed to 24 per cent who said opportunities for advancement were very important and 15 per cent who said high income was very important (127). But respondents also value a job's intrinsic rewards: interesting work, the sense that their work helps others, and the sense that their work is useful to society. Indeed all of these intrinsic rewards are more likely to be rated very important than are high income or opportunities for advancement (127). Job security, however, trumps all the rewards. While most do feel secure in their job, Australians tend to say that their work delivers more on the intrinsic reward than on the extrinsic ones, and perhaps because of this most are happy in their work. Sixty per cent are willing to work harder than they have to in order to help their firm or organisation and 70 per cent are proud to work for their firm or organisation (128–130).

But this does not mean that work is an unalloyed blessing. Brigid van Wanrooy finds that a substantial minority always or often come home from work exhausted (45 per cent), find work stressful (35 per cent), and find that work demands interfere with family life (22 per cent). She reports considerable anxiety about the Howard Government's Work Choices legislation (which was in the planning stage in 2005), especially the changes to unfair dismissal laws making it easier for some employers to fire workers (186). Given the high value respondents place on job security, this anxiety is not surprising. Gabrielle Meagher and Shaun Wilson go on to argue that unions are gaining greater support, and point to a new phenomenon: the unrepresented worker. These are people who would like to join a union but appear to lack the opportunity to do so.

What about working longer, a policy that is gaining favour among policy makers as the population ages? Christine Milward and Libby Brooke report that more than half of respondents, regardless of age, think that there is no ideal age to retire. Around 70 per cent of those aged 18 to 64 think that it better to retire gradually via reduced hours or part-time work. This could be taken as evidence for a welcome preference for paid work over early and final retirement, were it not for the fact that the authors also uncover a surprising lack of trust in superannuation funds. Forty per cent of respondents say superannuation funds cannot be trusted to look after their money safely and a further 36 per cent are undecided on this question. Thus less than a quarter trust the superannuation funds. This attitude is more common among older respondents and among those with more education (169).

Aspirational voters prove hard to define but, whether they are taken as working-class respondents who are self employed or as those who say they want to get ahead,

there is little that is distinctive in the way they vote. Many commentators believe that aspirational voters have been important in recent elections but the evidence here does not support this belief.

Other topics analysed include attitudes to defence, the Iraq war, the welfare state, and to financial investment. All of the chapters are written by experts and each one offers a clearly presented, often fascinating, introduction to a distinct field of social and political study.

The project of increasing Australia's knowledge of itself is broad. Readers will inevitably find gaps in this particular sketch; an entire polity and culture cannot be surveyed in 320 pages. But it is possible to remedy many lacunae. This can be done by repairing to the Australian Social Sciences Data Archives <<http://assda.anu.edu.au/>>, downloading the file and exploring one's own questions for oneself.

Copies of the present volume can be obtained for A\$59.95 from the University of New South Wales press at <<http://www.unswpress.com.au/>>.

## Reference

- <sup>1</sup> S. Wilson, G. Meagher, R. Gibson, D. Denmark and M. Western (Eds), *Australian Social Attitudes: The First Report*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2005 (reviewed *People and Place*, vol. 14 no. 2, 2006, pp. 66–67)