

# Eric Kaufmann's new book pillories 'progressive' (woke) extremism – including Albanese Labor

*Stephen Saunders*

*Kaufmann's 'Taboo' argues that 'wokeness' or 'progressive extremism' is no joke, but a dangerous cultural schism between elite governance and ordinary voters.*

Albanese Labor's very first promise was [The Voice](#). In that debacle, [ABC](#) and [Human Rights Commission](#) patronised voters, as ill-informed and racist.

His first 24 months has delivered an extraordinary one-million net migration, [denying](#) responsibility. The gas-cartel price-gouge remains essentially [untouched](#).

The [result](#) is a historic consumer (GDP per capita) recession with all-time rental/housing [crisis](#). Crowning a dismal [decade](#) for real wages and household incomes. Yet the 2024 Budget [rhapsodised](#) cost-of-living 'relief'.

In response, Peter Dutton [advocated 160,000](#) in net migration. Still double the post-1901 average, but a 20-year 'low', excluding COVID 2020-21. ABC Board member [Laura Tingle](#) remonstrated: Dutton (and voters) ought to check their [racism](#). He's 'dark and divisive', the [Treasurer](#) told the ABC.

For Kaufmann however, Albanese's just one more woke leader, pushing unpopular 'cultural socialist' policies. 'Remains to be seen' if he pays the price.

## **Kaufmann and wokeness**

The Canadian-Brit politics prof got noticed with his book *Whiteshift*.

The cultural left, he [claimed](#), is ideologically anti-white. 'Politicians should set [immigration] levels that respect the cultural comfort zone of the median voter.'

Not the view, at Australia's student-migration [addicted](#) universities.

In *Taboo* (\*), woke is no trivial or [right-wing epithet](#), but a now-dominant 'ideology of Western elite culture'.

Kaufmann locates a first 'culture war' in the 1960s - the rise of liberal mores around sex and sexuality. The second, from the 1980s, generated large increases in immigration, 'racist' assimilation yielding to 'virtuous' multiculturalism.

In his third phase, from the mid-2010s, 'identity groups, not class' are the battleground. The 'cultural socialist' blueprint seeks utopian equality along lines of 'race, gender, and sexuality', rather than 'class or wealth'.

Woke then, for Kaufmann, is the 'sacralisation of historically disadvantaged race, gender, and sexual identity groups'.

It's a culture of victimhood not resilience, seeking equal outcomes (not opportunities) for disadvantaged groups, protecting them from 'emotional harm'. In the USA, the corporate mantra is Diversity-Equity-Inclusion, or DEI.

Kaufmann isn't denying societal gains from successive left-liberal cultural offensives. Yet, in his view, woke now threatens 'excellence, freedom, and community'.

He seeks a 'missing optimum' in between the unhappy pre-1965 condition and an overwrought present situation.

For him this means dialling back on 'equity, diversity and harm protection' and retreating from 'national shame' and 'white sin'.

### **Woke across wealthy nations**

Across the Anglosphere, wokeness tends to excise mass migration 'from democratic debate'. [Donald Trump](#) is an exception, though even he has [wobbled](#).

In *Taboo*, woke isn't necessarily propelled by government directly, but by 'mediating institutions' such as 'universities, tech firms, or government agencies'.

The woke 'left' swamps the right, in academia and media, though that 'doesn't reflect' wider society.

In Australia too, voters [don't want](#) mass migration, but Treasury and [federal agencies](#) do. So does the [groupthink](#) of powerful stakeholders.

Patrolling wokeness in academia, are Punishment, Prejudice, and Fear. Kaufmann sprinkles these chapters, with surveys and charts.

Hence his chart of rising 'cancel culture' incidents on US/UK campuses. He offers a table of the UK educated favouring political correctness, more than do the public at large.

He even provides a table of US Democrat students, winnowing Trump supporters from their dating pools.

Kaufmann sees woke overshoot as a form of Deculturation. Losing its historical status as British America, Canada reinvents itself as a 'morally superior left-wing version of America...with an expansionist ethos of mass immigration'.

Similarly, politicians [hype](#) Australia as the 'most successful multicultural society'.

We've the highest proportion of overseas-born anywhere, apart from a few Middle East [autocracies](#). Yet we remain, Tingle or not, a comparatively tolerant nation for [minorities](#).

Albanese's pushing our luck, anointing Modi India as our 'special' immigration and overpopulation partner, with blanket recognition of [Indian qualifications](#).

Kaufmann acknowledges, 2020s conservatives in America have pushed back, against DEI and similar tropes. Outdoing satire, muscular [Bud Light](#) beer utilised a trans activist in their advertisements, only to trash their own brand.

Don't yet think, he warns, that the 'tide is turning'. The conservative side of politics has been too timid. As 'progressive educators...steadily bend' the educational program, they are easily making up for 'yardage' lost under conservative ascendancies.

Florida governor Ron de Santis appears as an isolated 'standard bearer', legislating against woke overreach in schools and universities.

Urged by Kaufmann, Britain's 'liberal Tories' also [legislated](#) for university free-speech. Yet their Brexit has nonetheless broken all [promises](#), [obliterating all](#) previous British immigration records.

He [fears](#) the 2024 re-election of UK Labour unleashing the 'full force of progressive illiberalism'.

In metropolitan France, also Quebec, he discerns more resistance to the woke virus. Quebec just [reminded](#) Justin Trudeau, it's your government not migrants themselves, causing Canada's housing crisis.

Australia, writes Kaufmann, cleaves 'closer to the Canadian than American model'.

Too right. On the world stage, Trudeau's Canada and Albanese's Australia align, in their historic immigration surges and debilitating [rental/housing](#) crises.

Yet each leader's a [climate-policy](#) champ. Trudeau praised bro Albanese's 'immense' [climate courage](#). Whatever that means.

On Kaufmann's UK and US evidence, young people are trending 'more illiberal' or less tolerant of free speech.

He cites a 2024 [American study](#): 'Each cohort born after the Baby Boom generation has become less tolerant'.

Youth and education, formerly predictive of tolerance, seem less so now. In Australia, Exhibit A is Greens housing spokesperson [Max Chandler-Mather](#). For this [celebrity](#), even net-migration as high as 300,000 would be a 'race to the bottom'.

### **Woke consequences and remedies**

In *Taboo*, woke goes beyond impairing 'freedom and reason'. Kaufmann discerns 'malign impacts' and 'material consequences' for disadvantaged groups.

Cultural socialism can create 'self-fulfilling prophecies' that may perpetuate, rather than remediate, disadvantage.

Claims the author, 'taboos around race and gender' discount the impact of single-parent families on black Americans. Racial over-sensitivities obstruct 'justice for vulnerable women' in indigenous Australian communities. White progressives 'blame African corruption and economic development' on colonialism, not African leaders.

Though wokeness metastasises within 'institutions', remedies can only come from elected government. Hence Kaufmann's '12-Point Plan for Change'.

Notably, his top six, spotlight public agencies and public service:

- Re-legislate **Free Speech**, to protect employees, prioritise speech rights over woke strictures
- **Political Neutrality** is advertised and enforced in public (including educational and media) agencies
- **Equivalent Action**, to make political beliefs a protected characteristic in public agencies, at least as much as race or gender
- **People are the Policy**, to open public bodies up to political appointments
- US-styled '**Federalist Society**' for the **Bureaucracy**, that is, create a lobby to encourage conservatives as public-service applicants
- US-styled '**NRA**' for the **Culture War**, that is, a lobby that would scrutinise and report on the 'woke-ness' of political candidates.

Free speech? Albanese proposed instead a [Misinformation Bill](#). Targeting bogeymen like social media, but fencing off governmental 'jobs and growth' [misinformation](#). Australian versions, of those lobby groups? They'd be busy.

For Kaufmann, public school education is the 'most important lever' influencing future voters' thoughts, therefore this should be the 'top priority' for conservatives.

But, with rare exceptions like de Santis, American conservatives are loath to get involved. Obsessing instead, over 'guns, abortion'. With Australia's [Scott Morrison](#), it was 'religious discrimination'.

John Howard (1996) and [Tony Abbott \(2013\)](#) made a show of sacking departmental chiefs. Morrison [hector](#)ed the public service, yet corrupted it further, via [robodebt](#).

'Progressive' Liberal [Matt Kean](#) scoffed at Morrison, who wouldn't 'commit' to net-zero emissions. Just the man, to chair Labor's [Climate Authority](#). Already [clashing](#) with Dutton, over (unlikely) nuclear power.

### **The wrap – climate woke**

*Taboo* is a stimulating compendium of scholarship and ideas. It is a work in which woke isn't to be taken lightly. It represents, a gulf between elite thought and governance, and the reasonable needs and concerns of voters.

'Outnumbered' as he is, Kaufmann finds allies in UK and US academia, less so here.

There's UK Matt Goodwin's [Values, voice and virtue](#), despairing at the voter-governance [disconnect](#). Culturally left institutions smear ordinary Brits as 'morally inferior'.

In the US, there's black scholar Musa Al-Gharbi's upcoming [We have never been woke](#): 'How a new "woke" elite uses the language of social justice to gain more power and status—without helping the marginalised and disadvantaged.'

The Trudeau-Albanese climate bromance highlights another aspect of wokeness.

For thirty years now, the UN has [sidelined](#) 'active' population policy (aka birth control) for climate policy and [hypothetical](#) net-zero emissions. In woke terms, the former policies are 'racist', the latter 'anti-racist'.

Indeed, the 'guilty' [global North](#) should compensate the South, for climate [loss and damage](#). As if this feelgood would overcome intractable [health](#) and [environmental](#) costs of ever-rising world population.

Every year adds another 75-80 million mouths to feed. Human [emissions](#) (and atmospheric [CO2 levels](#)) keep breaking records.

But in UN (hence Labor) [doctrine](#), 'net' emissions can bend it like Beckham to 'save' the environment. As a bonus, Labor's mystical 'net zero transformation stream' can assure Australia's industrial [future](#).

*Pace* Kaufmann, I'd almost describe wokeness as the 'sacralisation of race and other historically disadvantaged groups, privileging UN climate-population creed'.

In Australia, 'progressive' Labor offers [wellbeing](#) rubrics and climate rainbows. Old wine - [wealth](#) and [inequality](#) - decanted from new bottles. Here and in Canada, the permanent immigration deluge signals a [tough decade](#) ahead, for younger voters.

(\* In the UK/Rest of World, *Taboo: How making race sacred produced a cultural revolution* (Swift Press). In the US/Canada, *The Third Awakening: A 12-point plan for rolling back progressive extremism* (Bombardier Books).