

Democracy under attack

By Bilal Cleland

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The Tamil family (including two Australian-born children) held in detention since 2019 has shone a light on the Federal Government's cruel treatment of asylum seekers and other vulnerable people (Screenshot via YouTube)

Democracy may be under attack but extremism and cruelty do not reflect the majority of Australians' values, writes [Bilal Cleland](#).

WHEN WE ARE confronted with cruel or evil behaviour we need to also consider the lessons it offers and the positive changes it ushers in.

At present in Australia, we are confronted with a Federal Government that [locks up](#) asylum seekers, and Australian born children, indefinitely, on offshore islands, denying them adequate medical protection.

A Government that [denies](#) adequate assistance to its Victorian citizens, who are undergoing unemployment during COVID-19 restrictions.

A Government that permits billionaires to [accept](#)

[JobKeeper](#) despite huge increases in profit, but which hounds welfare recipients on the basis of an algorithm, known as [Robodebt](#), pushing perhaps 2,000 to suicide. It has not yet nobbled the judiciary which accused the government of a “shameful chapter” in public policy.

A Government that is [unable to handle the pandemic](#), which has cost millions of lives worldwide, by providing fit for purpose quarantine facilities for overseas arrivals or adequately managing the purchase, production and distribution of the vaccines which will save the people and the economy.

A Government that threatens the continued functioning of an already [ramshackle NDIS](#) with computer-generated “robo” budgets. A “sustainability action task force” has a goal over the next six months to [dramatically reduce the NDIS budget](#). The robo-calculation will decide the level of care disabled people should receive.

A Government that has [mishandled](#) its privatised residential aged care to the extent that it has not vaccinated the vulnerable residents or their staff despite the fact that most COVID deaths in Australia were in those very Federally controlled facilities. In Victoria, there has not been one COVID death in the state-run aged care residences.

A Government that has so politicised the public service that we have pronouncements from Federal departments which support the politics of the regime rather than the reality. Australia's post-pandemic recovery is behind that of other nations on critical indicators but that is not what is coming from Treasury.

[According](#) to IA's Alan Austin:

'No developed country has tumbled further.'

One of the positive effects of this incompetence and sinister motivation of the Morrison Government has been heightened public awareness of the nature of our mainstream mass media.

The nobbling or outright destruction of major ABC programs like *Lateline*, the downgrading of *QandA*, the Murdochisation of *Insiders*, the making of the 7.30 into a friendly place for those it should hold accountable, under a chairman and board apparently appointed with ideology in mind, have served to reduce investigative reporting from the non-corporate media to almost nil.

Only *Media Watch*, *Foreign Correspondent* and *Four Corners* have survived this far.

The purchase of Fairfax by Nine, headed by Howard's former Treasurer, [Peter Costello](#) has reduced the independent stance once taken by those publications, with the vestiges of independence surviving only to the extent that some journalists are still standing up.

Stokes' [Seven West Media](#), with its advocacy of the Right, support for the Disneylandisation of the Australian War Memorial and other conservative causes, has been well and truly exposed.

The Murdoch stable of dying newspapers and Sky News Australia has certainly shown itself to be tenacious in holding to the policies of the American Republican insurgents but seems to be failing in its job of keeping the Coalition in power. WA and Queensland elections show it is not the power it was back in 1975 when it barracked for Fraser at the time of the coup against Whitlam.

The exposure of the extreme right-wing mainstream Costello, Stokes, Murdoch and partly nobbled ABC media, has fostered the rise of firmly independent media, such as Independent Australia, which needs support from the conscious.

IA, along with a few other notable exceptions, deals with issues avoided or distorted by the corporate media and offers the community a voice.

The corporate media is trying to ensure that dissident voices are muted, including the voice of the Labor Opposition and the Greens, but democracy relies upon faith in the intellectual capabilities of the people to see through lies and obfuscation.

The rise of independent media and the spread of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter means that lies are harder to hide and the corrupt become nervous. Although anti-democratic ideas can be spread on social media, the overwhelming popular voice favours evidence and truth.

Loony conspiracies theories like QAnon might have support from the highest political levels but most people are not stupid and it is hard to brainwash the literate.

Democracy might indeed be under attack and it is unlikely that the Federal Government will be able to deal with the rise of right-wing extremism — especially given that its response has been put in the hands of Senator [James Paterson](#) of IPA fame (replacing Andrew Hastie formerly SAS and part of the rightwing rump of the LNP).

However, the current Federal Government is not Australia, where extremism and cruelty have very little support. The recent [WA State Election](#) showed that.

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