# Does Australia need branding?

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Is a new logo for the country really worth $20 million? And do we really need it? Trade minister Simon Crean last week announced the Government planned to build a new brand to help Australia sell itself.

What sort of brand should be used? And with all the issues confronting Australia today, is it really something we need? For that matter, is it really worth $20 million? We are who we are, and no marketing campaign can change that.
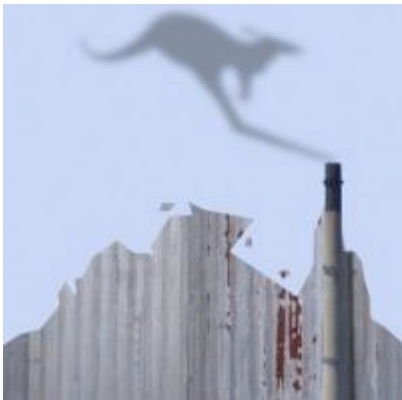
In his speech last week, Crean said there was a strong business case for rebranding. "Building Brand Australia has an unashamedly commercial focus which will help promote Australia as a great place to live, a great country in which to do business and a great place to invest. And not only will it be good for our economy, it will be good for the national spirit because it will reflect the values we all hold dear - integrity, tolerance, inclusion, and a fair go for all. Building Brand Australia is also about Australia reaching out to the world. It is another sign that we are not turning inwards and going down the path of a mandatory Buy Australia campaign. Instead, we are engaging with the world through a new brand that will help sell Australian goods and services to the world." Obviously, it needs to be more than kangaroos, beaches, bikinis and marsupials. "We need a better statement to the rest of the world about the breadth of our comparative advantage - a better way to define our unique brand,'' Crean says.

As pointed out here, the aim is to create something that would rival New Zealand's "100 per cent" campaign which, along with Peter Jackson, has helped put New Zealand on the map. Now the Kiwis are talking about expanding it and turning it into a "master brand" for the entire country.

Manufacturers have welcomed the initiative saying Australia is much more than a tourist destination.

But the problem is that it's hard defining what's Australian. As New South Wales talk back radio man Leon Delaney says in his blog, it's close to mission impossible. "Just what

is the Australian national "identity"? How is it characterised? We have such a diverse range of cultures and ethnic groups intrinsically tied up in the Australian experience that we can't even pick out a national costume for our Miss Universe entrants to wear on the catwalk. Should our new brand image highlight our indigenous heritage, our colonial and convict history, our cultural, sporting, and scientific achievements, or somehow attempt to incorporate them all?"

The whole question of branding this country throws up some difficult problems. First, we would have to fix, or at least be seen to be fixing, issues about Indigenous Australians. That should be an important part of our message overseas and international observers are more sensitive to the problem than we are. Compare it, for example, to the New Zealanders who have managed to deal with that issue and present themselves as leaders in authenticity. Think of the All Blacks, the team that has adopted the Haka as its signature. Yet for the most part, the players are white guys playing the archetypal private school white game of rugby.

Another problem is that the strength of the tourism brand here is seen as detrimental to the business brand. If you're good at beaches, the outback and the "g'day mate" sort of informality, that's seen as being incompatible with having a strong business brand. Nobody here has put together a campaign that links the business and tourism brands.
Then there is the issue of cost. The Baz Luhrman campaign did a great job selling the magical billabong. But it's as hard working out how to get to the Kimberley from Melbourne and Sydney as it is from London. It's bloody expensive.

Then there is the question of the environment. One of the great attractions of Australia is its spectacular landscapes. Yet Australia is not seen as a leader in environmental awareness and we are not regarded highly as an environmentally friendly country, particularly with the Barrier Reef disappearing.

Some would also argue that spending all that money on a logo or brand is just un - Australian. As a kid growing up in a migrant family, I always found the most attractive thing about Australia was that it was not that much into self-promotion and getting into the kind of stuff that causes so much trouble overseas. I have also liked the fact that Australians have never been that nationalistic, at least until recently. It can be unsettling to see people, other than athletes, wrapping themselves in Australian flags.

So what do you think of the branding campaign? Do we need a logo? Is it worth $20 million? And what sort of brand or logo would you suggest?