

The Second Annual



2010 Conference Theme:

Where to From Here?

Economic Survival post-GFC: The Individual, the State and the Nation

Program

April 9, 2010
UWA Club

Conference Series Rationale

Contemporary society is confronted by many great challenges. One only has to turn on the television or flick through a newspaper to be reminded of all the problems we face that need to be overcome if we are to create a more prosperous and better world for tomorrow. Yet, it seems that no matter which political party gains power, or how much money governments spend on addressing social issues, regrettably, things all too often remain largely the same. Where have we gone wrong? Is it that we're yet to find the right people for the job? Do better days lie over the horizon if only "our" leaders were elected or "our" policies enacted? Is there any real alternative to the status quo?

The Mannkal Foundation believes there is which is why *Freedom Factory* was established in 2009 as a forum for those interested in discussing and learning about the ideas and principles that underpin a free society. We aim to give tomorrow's future leaders a clearer understanding of personal and economic freedom by highlighting the importance of individual liberty and how this relates to the free market economy and the role and nature of government. *Freedom Factory* will allow students and young professionals to hear from a number of leading thinkers, political leaders, commentators and academics, with opportunities given to ask questions and to interact with conference participants.

This event is not about political slogans or partisan positioning. Attendees are from all walks of life and fall on differing points on the political spectrum. We recognise that for many people this will be their first exposure to the political philosophy of *libertarianism* but our hope is that, with an open and inquisitive mind, you'll find *Freedom Factory* informative, provocative, challenging, and fun!

The 2010 Conference

The theme of the 2010 conference is: *Where to From Here?: Economic Survival post-GFC: The Individual, the State and the Nation.*

Governments the world over reacted to the Global Financial Crisis by enacting Keynesian policies: increasing government spending, encouraging consumption, cutting interest rates and printing more and more money. Many believe Australia is now on the road to recovery but what are the implications of all this government intervention for us as individuals and as a society? Should we be seeking to have more laws passed and more regulation enacted – or should we instead be moving in the opposite direction of reducing the government's role in the economy? The answers to these questions concern us all because, as the eminent Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises wrote in 1922:

Everyone carries a part of society on his shoulders; no one is relieved of his share of responsibility by others...Everyone, in his own interests, must thrust himself vigorously into the intellectual battle. None can stand aside with unconcern; the interests of everyone hang on the result.

First Session: The Individual

One of the fundamental justifications for the creation of the state was to preserve and protect our freedom but we see today that the role of government has greatly expanded. The government determines how much of our own money we can keep, who we can trade with and on what terms, what we can ingest, when we can buy food and go shopping, what we can read and watch on television, the list goes on and on and it is expanding. All this government power has come at the expense of our freedom as individuals to make our own life choices. As Thomas Jefferson noted, "the natural progress of things is for liberty to yield and government to gain ground." If we are to reverse this trend there needs to be a change in the general attitude toward individual rights. This requires that we take a step back from the day-to-day world of politics to have an honest discussion about what it means to be free. What is the free market and how does it differ to the government? What role do they both play in our society and what role *should* they play?

Second Session: Western Australian Challenges

Libertarians argue that, for us to have more freedom as individuals requires that we move away from greater government control of society and instead towards a more liberty-oriented approach to dealing with today's social issues. This means strengthening civil liberties and the free market system, not subjecting them to more regulation and legislation. But how difficult is this for us to achieve here in Western Australia? What are some of the challenges we must face if we want to realise this goal and what are some of the practicalities we must overcome? How difficult is it to actually change government policy?

Third Session: The Future Direction of Australia

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd claimed the Global Financial Crisis came about because of an "anti-regulation agenda" and that it was "yet another example of capitalism cannibalising itself." If the PM's critique is correct then surely our salvation lies in an even greater role for the state. But was the GFC caused by too little government – or too much? What lessons should we draw from the GFC and what can we expect in the future? Government spending has remained at an average level of 25.25 per cent of GDP for the last 35 years irrespective of which party has been in power. Are we ever offered a 'real' choice in the political arena or should we expect more of the same?

Dinner: Where to From Here?

It has been argued that the system of liberal democracy in the West has seen us arrive at 'the end of history'. There is no further evolution; this system represents the pinnacle of political achievement and advancement. Is it true there is nothing of substance left to debate? What are some of the key questions we must all ask ourselves regarding our contemporary society? Would our answers surprise us?!

Freedom Factory 2010 Agenda

12.00 Registration

12.30 Lunch on Arrival

- *Official Welcome:* Ron Manners, Chairman, Mannkal

1.15 Lunch Concludes

1.20 Session 1: The Individual

- *Mannkal Overview & Event Introduction:* Andrew Pickford, Senior Fellow, Mannkal
- *What is Liberty and What is a Libertarian:* Luke McGrath, Mannkal Fellow, Mannkal
- *Born to be Free, Learned to be Bonded - How Can the Individual Flourish in Contemporary Australia?:* Leonie Phillips and Parnell McGuinness

(Short break)

2.25 Session 2: Western Australian Challenges

- *Topic Introduction:* Andrew Pickford, Senior Fellow, Mannkal
- *Economic Independence, Governance and the Regions:* Ben Wyatt MLA, Member for Victoria Park, Shadow Treasurer; Shadow Minister for Federal State Relations
- *Taxation and the Size of Government in Australia: Recent Trends and Future Prospects:* Dr. Alex Robson, Australian National University
- *Panel: Question and Answer*

3.25 Afternoon Tea

4.00 Session 3: The Future Direction of Australia

- *Topic Introduction:* Andrew Pickford, Senior Fellow, Mannkal
- *The Challenges of being a Libertarian MP:* Michael Keenan MP, Member for Stirling, Shadow Minister for Justice and Customs
- TBA: Dan Denning, Author & Editor, The Daily Reckoning Australia
- *Panel: Question and Answer*

5.15 Conference Close

- *Formal Close:* John Corser, Board Member, Mannkal

5.30 Sundowner

6.30 Dinner: Where to From Here?

- *Formal Introduction of Keynote Speaker:* Ron Manners, Chairman, Mannkal
- *A Proposal for Electoral Reform:* Benjamin Marks, Author & Comedy Writer
- *Vote of thanks:* John Corser, Board Member, Mannkal

Speaker Biographies

Dan Denning

Dan Denning is the author of 2005's best-selling *The Bull Hunter* (John Wiley & Sons). Dan draws on his network of global contacts from his base in Melbourne. He's the managing editor of resource newsletter *Diggers and Drillers* and the editor of *The Daily Reckoning Australia*.

Michael Keenan MP, Member for Stirling, Shadow Minister for Justice, Customs and Border Protection

Michael was elected to the House of Representatives for Stirling, Western Australia in 2004, during which time he has held the following portfolios:

November 2007 - Shadow Assistant Treasurer and Shadow Minister for Superannuation and Corporate Governance.

October 2008 - Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations.

February 2010 - Shadow Minister for Justice, Customs and Border Protection.

He has degrees from Murdoch University, Charles University in Prague, the Australian National University and Cambridge University. Michael worked in small business before entering politics.

Benjamin Marks

Benjamin Marks (www.comedywriter.com.au) has written comedy for professional speakers, corporate executives and marketing departments in Australia, NZ, the UK and the US. He has also written for TV's *Good News Week* and *The Australian* newspaper, where he managed to get the Austrian School of economics its most prominent coverage in decades. His studies have been aided by three stalwarts of liberty in Australia: Mr John Zube; Mr Ron Kitching, whose library was shipped from Rockhampton to the Marks Office in Sydney's Fox Studios; and Professor Robert Spillane, with whom he is currently writing a corrective dictionary. His most recent libertarian essay is "Grounding Political Debate," *Libertarian Papers* 1, 18 (2009); online at www.libertarianpapers.org.

Parnell McGuinness

Parnell is founding partner of Thought Broker Events and Publicity, organiser of the infamous Shaken and Stirred salons and publisher of Binge Thinking. After five bohemian years in Berlin, she returned to Australia in 2007 and promptly set out to undermine the credibility of its most sacred institutions. She is financed by the advertising industry.

Leonie Phillips

Leonie is founding partner of Thought Broker Events and Publicity, organiser of Shaken and Stirred salons and publisher of Binge Thinking. She works for a scientific group at Sydney University and before that spent four years at the Centre for Independent Studies. Leonie has survived obligatory stints in publishing, radio, ideas festivals and corporate life and now distributes her time unevenly among her offspring, bioethical studies and arguments about ideas that matter.

Dr. Alex Robson

Dr Alex Robson is a Director in Deloitte's Economics Practice in Canberra, and lectures in the School of Economics at the Australian National University. He specialises in law and economics, public economics, and applied microeconomics.

Alex holds a MA and PhD in Economics from the University of California, Irvine, USA. He was a Fellow of the Institute for Humane Studies in the US in 2000, and won First Prize in the Mont Pelerin Society's Hayek Essay Contest in 2002, and the Independent Institute's Olive W. Garvey Essay Contest in 2003.

In 2008 Alex worked as Senior Economic Adviser to the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Malcolm Turnbull. He is currently writing a textbook on law and economics, entitled Law and Markets, which is due to be published by Palgrave Macmillan in late 2010.

Ben Wyatt MLA, Member for Victoria Park, Shadow Treasurer; Shadow Minister for Federal State Relations

Ben attended Aquinas College, and, later, the University of Western Australia, where he obtained a Bachelor of Laws in 1996.

Ben was the Town of Victoria Park's Young Australian of the Year in 2001. He received a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship from the Rotary Club of Victoria Park for 2001-2002 and travelled to the UK where he achieved a Masters Degree with distinction from the London School of Economics.

After returning to Perth, Ben worked as a Barrister and Solicitor, and served as Counsel for the Director of Public Prosecutions in Western Australia. He has also served on the National Board of Indigenous Business Australia, and as an officer in the Australian Army graduating from the Royal Military College, Duntroon, in 1996. Ben was awarded the Australian Defence Medal in 2008.

Ben was elected to the Legislative Assembly in a by-election held in March 2006 to fill the vacancy created when the Hon Dr Geoff Gallop resigned.

Ben currently holds the Shadow Portfolios of Treasury and Federal-State Relations.

In addition to this, Ben holds a number of positions in local community groups.

Mannkal Biographies

Ron Manners FAusIMM, FAICD – Chairman

Ron Manners is the Managing Director of the Mannwest Group. He is also Emeritus Chairman of the Australian Mining Hall of Fame Ltd. In 1955 Ron assumed management of the family mining/engineering business, W.G. Manners & Co. (originally established in 1895) which has evolved into the Mannwest Group. Between 1972 and 1995 Ron floated several Australian listed mining companies, before joining the board of a Canadian company with operations in Mexico, Brazil and Turkey. In addition to his mining interests, Ron has pursued an interest in economic education, establishing the Mannkal Economic Education Foundation in 1997. He is an active member of the Mont Pelerin Society and is on the Co-ordinating Committee for the Commonwealth Study Conference. He is the author and editor of four books - So I Headed West, Kanowna's Barrowman - James Balzano, Never a Dull Moment and Heroic Misadventures: Australia; Four Decades - Full Circle - as well as numerous papers and addresses.

John Hyde – Director

John Hyde held the Federal seat of Moore from 1974, when Whitlam was Prime Minister, until he lost the seat with the defeat of the Fraser Government in 1983. He remained on the backbench and was instrumental in the formation of that group of policy advocates that the press named the "Dries". John and his wife, Helen, then formed the Australian Institute of Public Policy, which in 1991 was amalgamated with the Institute of Public Affairs, which he directed until 1995. He was a columnist with the Australian Financial Review, The Australian and the Brisbane Courier-Mail, writing 745 regular articles for these papers, and has had many other articles published elsewhere. John Hyde's recently published book "Dry: In Defense of Economic Freedom" is an account of how the momentary re-application of the proper conduct of public policy in Australia during the 1990s managed to reverse the long downward trend of Australia's relative living standards.

John Corser – Director

John earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Murdoch University in 1993 (majoring in history and sociology with minors in politics and public policy) and has pursued a range of business and economic interests since then. He is currently the Managing Director of a private investment company, SDC Pty Ltd and is a fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. John has worked in the home building, land development and funds management industries and was also an intern at the Institute of Public Affairs, States' Policy Unit. He is a member of the Liberal Party, considers himself a small "l" liberal and is a keen supporter of the IPA. John's Mannkal Foundation involvement was a logical follow-on from his earlier involvement with the Australian Institute of Public Policy and the Institute of Public Affairs. He is a keen supporter of the work of the Mannkal Economic Education Foundation and considers himself fortunate to be able to work with fellow Directors Ron Manners and John Hyde.

Judy Carroll – Executive Assistant

Before working for several private enterprise and publicly listed companies, Judy commenced her career in the public service where she worked for some 18 years. In 1994 she joined the staff at the Ministry of Premier and Cabinet where she was Executive Assistant to the Chief of Staff in the Office of the Premier - Western Australia. It was here that she realized her passion for politics and the outcomes it can have on our community. She believes it was a privilege to have been so involved with the running of the State and still maintains a great interest in current affairs and believes in the ideals of Mannkal. Judy has worked with Ron since 2001 where she has witnessed, and enjoyed, being part of the expansion of Mannkal's activities and believes her breadth of experience in different workplaces gives her the ability to understand the free market system.

Melissa Rasmussen – Education Co-ordinator

Melissa is a secondary and tertiary economics educator who comes to us with a wealth of experience in the education sector specialising in curriculum instruction and implementation. She is currently completing a masters in curriculum at UND. As a former Mannkal scholar Melissa shares the Libertarian vision.

Jessica Pental – Research Assistant

Jess is currently studying at the University of Western Australia where she has commenced her final year of a Law and Commerce degree. She has an active interest in economics, business and public policy and aspires to pursue these in her career on the completion of her degree. Jess was made a Mannkal Scholar in 2008.

Andrew Pickford – Senior Fellow

Andrew Pickford is based in Perth, Western Australia and works in the area of policy and strategy. In January 2010, he was appointed as the inaugural ISSA Indo-Pacific Managing Director to create and lead a strategic think-tank with a focus on the Indian Ocean region. Mr Pickford also holds a number of other positions including Executive Fellow, Mannkal Economic Foundation, Senior Fellow, International Strategic Studies Association and project consultant, Committee for the Economic Development of Australia. Andrew is the Vice President of the Australia-India Business Council (WA Branch). He also sits on the management committee of the Australia Day Council of Western Australia and the Australian Institute of International Affairs (WA Branch), and serves as a councillor for the Royal United Services Institute of WA. He has a Masters of Accounting from Curtin University of Technology, and is completing a Masters of Studies focusing on defence and strategic issues from the Australian National University. In 2007, Mr Pickford completed the Australian Institute of Company Directors' Company Directors Course. Mr Pickford was a co-author of FDI's major 2007 study, *Australia 2050: An Examination of Australia's Condition, Outlook, and Options for the First Half of the 21st Century*, and FDI's 2009 study, *Such a Full Sea: Australia's Options in a Changing Indian Ocean Region*. He also contributed the agricultural research and analysis to the *Defense & Foreign Affairs Handbook on Pakistan* (2008).

Luke McGrath – Mannkal Fellow

Luke is studying at Curtin University where he is completing his final year of a double degree in Politics & International Relations and Economics. Luke was made a Mannkal scholar in 2008. In January, 2009 he travelled to Hong Kong to partake in a month long internship with the Lion Rock Institute as a part of his Mannkal scholarship. While there, Luke explored the Hong Kong Government's plans to amend their internet censorship laws. Luke was awarded the 2009 Kennard Freedom Prize and travelled to Turkey in August 2009 to attend the Property and Freedom Society Conference.

Emma Crisp – Research Assistant

Em is currently studying at the University of Western Australia where she is half way through a Commerce and Arts Degree. She is particularly interested in Political Science and International Relations and hopes to pursue a career in this area when she finishes her studies.