

Au revoir event for Andrew Pickford – Tuesday 17th September, 2013

After almost five years, Mannkal Senior Scholar Andrew Pickford said goodbye to Mannkal friends and former interns at a special function on September 17, 2013. Originally joining to help Ron put together an early Freedom Factory event, Andrew helped grow and administer student internships which became Mannkal's flagship program. Mannkal's international internship program is now sought out by some of the top students in the Western Australia.

Looking back at his time at Mannkal, Andrew said: "Ron's passion for providing opportunities for students and young Western Australians made my job a simple case of connecting top students with internship opportunities. We do not seek out to convert, preach or push a particular world view, but by exposing the next generation to free market thinking, we have given them the tools to improve Australia and the lives of all of its citizens."

Below are extracts from speeches made and Andrew Pickford's farewell function from Ron Manners, Alex McVey and Andrew Pickford.

Comments by Ron Manners, Chairman

At Mannkal Foundation we think of ourselves as Idea Entrepreneurs and we are often asked how we 'got started'.

The short answer is that many years ago I was fortunate enough to be introduced to the wonderful world of ideas, through two short, sharp experiences which have made all the difference to my life.

I will not expand on these experiences as they were covered in my recent book *Heroic Misadventures* (to save me telling those stories again).

Those two experiences that helped me, have guided us in creating the Mannkal scholarship experience, which ranges from spending a few days at a conference, to overseas internships of up to eight weeks.

Each year we have expanded the general experience with many add-ons which have been suggested by some of the 480 international think tanks in the Atlas Network.

So far we have sent 640 young Western Australians to such events, and we are certainly encouraged by the positive feedback we get from them.

Our aim is to give good value for this experience and the returning scholars certainly give good value in their debriefing presentations.

I find the world of ideas is a little like my earlier experiences with mining & exploration. When you go out and drill a few holes, you are often pleasantly surprised at what you discover.

So it is with the world of intelligent thought.

Are any of you familiar with the term 'grubstake'?

It's a prospecting term when anyone with a few dollars can 'grubstake' a prospector to go out and see what they can find, often with surprising results.

So we look forward with optimism to continuing our theme of 'intellectual grubstaking'.

Let me give you an example of how it happens in the world of ideas.

Back in 2005, Linda Whetstone, from the U.K., contacted me to see if I would 'grubstake' an idea she had of producing a CD on which contained the text of 100 classic economic books.

Linda's aim was to produce 5,000 of these and distribute them to under-privileged schools, mainly throughout Africa where they not only didn't have a library but they didn't even have a single book.

I asked Linda to keep me informed of the outcome of her project. She has just replied this week with the latest update as follows:

"Regarding the number of CDs we have produced and distributed to our partners:-

5,000 of the first edition mostly went to Kenya, Ghana, India, Pakistan and Nigeria.

100,000 of the 2nd edition have gone to our partners in 70 countries including Iraq, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Sudan, Nepal, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Pakistan etc. etc.

5,000 at least, of the edition in Turkish but it could be many more because there is no copyright on these so any can be copied for free.

5,000 at least of the Chinese edition but could be many more as above.

5,000 of the Russian edition but as above.

Thousands of the Portuguese edition and, again, they could be copied.

Thousands of the Kyrgyz edition and, again, these could be copied.

So, probably in total 120,000 plus, with most having over 100 texts on them.

Every CD goes to a network partner who works to promote freedom in their country and they will hand each one to someone who has already shown an interest. So although there will be many that I think have been little used, most will, provided access to texts that otherwise would simply not have been available to that person.

Another interesting statistic is that for the 2nd edition, because of the large numbers we produced, the cost per CD delivered, in say Afghanistan, was under US\$1 per CD. This included the costs of the copyrights that we bought for that edition, costs of production and shipping costs. We never lost one consignment in the shipping. Every one arrived, even to most challenging places, always within a week and not one was damaged either.

If anything is a tribute to free markets it is the international shipping industry. Before I started shipping them I thought this would be my biggest problem but it turned out to be no problem at all. I packed and shipped the best part of 100,000 from my kitchen table, they were collected from my front door in the middle of the countryside and within four days were with a thank tank partner in Malaysia or Indonesia or even with you in Australia.

No government could have ever done that!!!”

Just like the world of mining, investment and life itself, it’s all about leverage.

That relatively small amount of money from me enabled Linda to go out and raise considerably more to complete the project and now it has a life of its own. There is no way of knowing how long this growth pattern will continue.

That’s the measure of a good idea if it develops a life of its own and the real measurement of a person’s worth is whether they pass a little bit of themselves onto those who follow on.

There is a little bit of Linda Whetstone in every one of these children who now own their own CD reading library.

Closer to home, with our own Andrew Pickford, I see a little bit of Andrew in every returning scholar as he has got to know them and guide them during the interview and selection process. We are also appreciative of Western Australia’s universities who keep sending us their best and brightest.

This is an encouraging sign for the future.

Friends, it’s been a refreshing experience working with Andrew over these years and we are saying au revoir, rather than goodbye as we will certainly be in contact from time to time and I’m meeting up with Andrew at the Atlas Network events in New York City, this November, where we will be spending a few days with other members of the Mannkal team, including our Luke McGrath.

So, Andrew, many thanks for the wonderful relationship we have developed and we wish you every success in Canada.

Comments by Alex McVey – Returning Mannkal Scholar

I have been asked to say a few words on behalf of the Mannkal scholars who have been fortunate enough to work with Andrew Pickford over the years he has been with Mannkal.

I met Andrew around July of last year when Mannkal and Murdoch Law School collaborated on the Threats to Freedom of Speech conference. Once we found out that we had both been involved with the Centre for Independent Studies’ Liberty & Society Programme, we got talking about Mannkal, working in a think-tank environment and the liberty movement in Australia. After applying, I was very fortunate to receive a scholarship to intern at the Atlas Economic Research Foundation in Washington DC. In the lead-up to my internship, during my time in America, and since my return, Andrew has no doubt been a major econo-political mentor. And this is especially important considering that I, like several other scholars, have had no formal education in economics.

Becoming involved in politics can be rather daunting on its own, but travelling around the world as a political intern is more so. Andrew has been there every step of the way and I hope he knows that it has made all the difference to myself, and to all of the scholars

I think Mannkal will be at a loss without having Andrew in Perth, but we are very grateful for all the work he has done whilst here, and look forward to maintaining a long-distance working relationship with him in the future.

Ron has said that he hopes for parts of Andrew to be left in Perth, and I can guarantee that each of the scholars has adopted a part of Andrew already. Whether we have been inspired by his hard work, his dedication, his enthusiasm or his resourcefulness, we are each better off after having had the pleasure of working with him.

On behalf of the Mannkal scholars, I wish to express my most sincere thanks to Andrew Pickford and wish him a safe and happy time in Canada.
Bon voyage et bonne chance, Andrew!

Response by Andrew Pickford

It has truly been a pleasure to be joined by such a wonderful group of Mannkal staff, supporters and, most importantly, former interns.

While I came to Mannkal, after spending time defence and security think-tanks, it was via a Centre for Independent Studies Advanced Liberty and Society conference that I was introduced to Ron Manners and Mannkal.

After initially looking to create a new entity with a focus on student programs, it did not take me long to decide to help Ron with his vision of highlighting the importance of freedom, individual choice and liberty to the next generation of Western Australians.

The primary role of Mannkal is student education.
I have been fortunate to run the student program and see some of our most talented students develop and take responsibility for carrying the torch.

When I talk about interns, this is something that reflects a now unfashionable idea which is an apprenticeship. We think of learning as something that happens in university or classes, but I believe that the best learning is done under the guidance of an experienced leader. I myself am still an intern, having the opportunity to learn from Harold Clough, John Hyde, Gregory Copley and from our own Ron Manners. This is an opportunity not available in any university. It is a lifelong process which never stops. I hope those interns in the audience tonight realise that they are at the beginning of an exciting journey and we have simply opened the window, but there are many more chapters.

In my time at Mannkal, I have been fortunate to have a number of fantastic people helping do all the work, while I simply stand at the front of events and talk. The whole operation would not work without our office manager, Judy Carroll. Judy is a phenomenal person and Mannkal (and Ron) would simply not function without her presence. I am also fortunate to have had a great succession of staff (many who will become CEOs and Managing Partners at professional service firms on day), including Jessica Pandal, Emma Crisp, Felicity Karageorge and not forgetting Hannah Berdal and Genevieve Mitchel who helped put this event together.

None of this is possible without Ron. His enthusiasm and willingness to invest in the future is why we are all here. I have learnt a great deal from Ron and am honoured to be able to assist with this important project.

I wish our next CEO the best of luck for the next phase of Mannkal's development.