

THIS SUBMISSION HAS ATTACHED

A COPY OF HIS NOVEL

“STATE OF PLAY”

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The Secretary
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Productivity Commission
Level 28, 35 Collins Street
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The dystopian novel herewith a less-than-usual submission? *STATE OF PLAY*, written in AD 1988, is the Sydney I didn't want to see in AD 2015. Amongst the lowlights:

1 Acute minds paid generously by the citizenry to do the work of maximising the gambling take from the citizenry.

2 Covert alliance between government and industry. (I'm not anti-privatisation, just the covert bit.) Gambling revenues fully replace company taxes.

3 A new casino, though known in advance to be alarmingly dangerous, is yet built. I really hope you can see this then-non-existent casino. Hint for the literal-minded: it is called an Alkem.

4 The football field as a gambling arena.

5 Highly accessible gambling on myriad events worldwide.

6 An official, permanent under-class, South Africa-style.

7 Rejecting Oz values, Sydney has seceded from Australia.

Though the mind snaps back of course to the Charles Dickenses and Harriet Beecher Stowes, don't ask me to respond analytically to questions of fiction's relationship to life, art's to policy, my book to your inquiry. But I got it right last time. Saw the present mess coming. Gave it my best shot, a couple of years of life trying to say so through fiction.

So here are some ideas:

a Ferret out a few of the people actually doing today the work of our hero of #1 above. Quiz them. Expose - though kindly I guess - the blackness of their labour.

b Calculate the government take, then divide it by an estimate of the increment of problem gamblers attributable to collecting that take, maybe including families. Perhaps for the country as a whole, or state by state, or casino by casino, or gambling medium by medium. Nail down individuals responsible in the past for initiating or colluding in

changing the status quo in the direction of thus increasing community suffering. Don't spare treasury heads.

c Large-scale gambling tends to attract criminals. The creation and introduction of innumerable preventive measures emphatically proves this point. Survey preventive measures worldwide, hence infer the scope of the danger.

d Ask for estimates of ten-year future amount and proportion of government income from gambling.

e Quiz key past decision-makers who actually planned and budgeted in advance for problem gamblers. That is, they were conscious it would cause social problems, actually anticipated and understood this well enough to quantifying it in terms of budgets for remedial counselling and the like, yet went ahead! Include the culpable street inquiry.

f To what extent does widespread gambling on a sport introduce result-fixing?

At a different level, why not put together a list of the half-dozen wisest people in history, people whose wisdom is more-or-less universally acknowledged or conceded. Summarise what they say about the love of money. Ask why this is ignored and rejected. (A desire for significance? security? excitement? something to look forward to?) Think up appropriate measures. Yes, work at it.

Also survey the basic basics. To what extent are policies driven by our unconscious thought-worlds, in particular, deep, unscientific (that is counter-empirical), probably unthinking optimism about human nature. (Pessimism is just as bad. I'm in the middle.) Governments can't fix this but if policies could help a little surely it's up to you to explore them.

A few further remarks: If I got it right in the mid-80s, maybe there exist creative people getting it right right now. Who? And what is it that they're brooding on, trying to say somehow somewhere? I'm suggesting a place for a touch of creative thinking to supplement the doubtless rational competence of your staff and most submission-writers. Isn't this too important to sequester in one part of the brain? A survey of fiction? A short story competition? Other? Australians are capable of risking something a bit different.

Faithfully



Doug Buckley