

Report to:



Economic Message Project
Oct 2017 – Jan 2018 Focus Groups



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Research Context

Research Purpose

This research is designed to feed into the Economic Messaging Project which aims to shift the way progressive organisations talk about the economy.

Research Methodology

Qualitative research

This report presents findings from eight focus groups which were conducted in Perth, Brisbane, Melbourne and Parramatta. All groups contained a mix of males and females and a range of ages. Groups were conducted between the 18th October 2017 and 23rd January 2018 and averaged seven participants.

The specifications for each of the focus groups were as follows:

Group	Criteria	Date	Location
1	Mixed - Base	18 th Oct 2017	Perth
2	Mixed - Centre	18 th Oct 2017	Perth
3	Mixed - Base	21 st Nov 2017	Brisbane
4	Mixed - Opponent	21 st Nov 2017	Brisbane
5	Mixed - Centre	23 rd Nov 2017	Melbourne
6	Mixed - Base	23 rd Nov 2017	Melbourne
7	Mixed - Centre	23 rd Jan 2018	Parramatta
8	Mixed - Base	23 rd Jan 2018	Parramatta

Research Findings

Strategic

Change the Economy ... what the heck does that mean...?

Changing the way the economy works is the key concept of what we're on about. But...

When we ask people if the rules of the economy could be changed and improved they don't really know what we mean.

Most people see the economy as out of their control, either as something existing in the background like the weather or as force to which they were subservient or even a beast they need to feed.

"I have an economics degree and I would say the economy has a much bigger say over us than we have over it." (Group 4, Brisbane, Opponents, Male)

"It's a bit too far gone. We have to keep feeding it. In the scheme of things we are all hurtling towards nowhere on a rock. All of us have to turn up to work tomorrow." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Female)

"Like when the industrial revolution started, things change so we had to change to fit the change...in 30 years' time maybe manual labour's not going to be done by people any more what do we do with (these) people." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

"It's awkward because it's linked to other countries. It controls the value of our dollar and interest rates." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Male)

Typically, the vague response is along the lines that the economy could be made better which really just means that it could be growing faster. A few, however, think the government can exert more control over the economy for the good of the people and occasionally, we get something encouraging:

"I think the economy could be better and it's not doing as well because a lot of people don't have full-time jobs they're either on contract or they're casual...my kids they don't know from one week to the next if they're working. I work as a teacher I don't know from term to term if I'm going to be re-contracted." (Group 4, Brisbane, Opponents, Female)

"It can change and be affected." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Female)

"It's a living thing but it is affected by rules." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

"I think in theory they could control things better than they do." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Female)

Initially, this seems to be a disappointing finding. But upon reflection it gives us a significant insight into our objective.

One way of looking at it is that people only see the economy in a vertical way. It is either going up or down. We might add velocity to this. It is going up or down faster or slower.

What we want is for people to know that the economy can be changed horizontally i.e. that we can shift more of the good things in life in their direction instead of these things being hoarded by the super-wealthy and corporate elite.

We can probably be reasonably confident that if people were just aware of the possibility of horizontal adjustments to the economy they would not only support but demand and ultimately get the sort of structural economic changes that we would like to see.

“For a large number of people, yes if wealth is redistributed properly and taxes are put to good use you can have a level playing field, more people will have more opportunities, that’s the role the government should play.” (Group 5, Melbourne, Centre, Male)

This was also evident as some participants embraced ideas such as:

- A Universal Basic Income.

“If we have this universal income you’re making people have what should be right, we should all have food, shelter, transportation and health. (Also) they could definitely be happier, I’ve been unemployed for seven months and it’s terrible. ...if I had that I would be way healthier and happier and would probably be contributing and productive. (Also), people they are going to commit less crime.” (Group 1, Perth, Base, Female)

“When I go to work I see a lot of people who live on the streets and it’s the government’s responsibility, we pay our taxes and all they do every morning is move them, they don’t look after them. It’s awful. If they had that base wage you wouldn’t have that problem, they would have food and water.” (Group 1, Perth, Base, Female)

“If you compare us to other countries that are exploring the new ideas like the Scandinavian countries, they are trying to make it a three day weekend and ... trying the ‘you don’t need a job everyone gets a standard wage’, compared to that kind of thing I would say for over here it’s pretty ordinary.” (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Female)

- A nationalised electricity system.

“I like that idea. It sounds fantastic.” (Group 1, Perth, Base, Female)

“They’ve got to be looking at something more sustainable than what it is at the moment.” (Group 2, Perth, Centre, Male)

- A government-owned bank

“When you portrayed that scenario I straight away thought of the health insurance industry where you had Medibank private which was the government-owned business...you’d have a really successful bank, it’d be no frills then it’ll be so successful.” (Group 2, Perth, Centre, Male)

The tricky bit is explaining the concept of horizontal economic change. How do we make that possible?

One idea would be to test some tangible examples leveraging nice homespun logic that everyone can get their heads around. For example:

“If wages for ordinary people went up then we would spend more in shops and the shops would be better off and employ more workers. Everyone wins.”

This isn’t ideal framing so it isn’t a message test (more and better examples would be worth some thought).

The idea is just to get a sense of where and how we might be able to talk about horizontal economic change. How can we make it logically fit that a fairer economy can actually be a safer economy?

(Note: “safer” economy is a deliberate point – Conservatives always use fear to say why the little people can’t get their fair share – “... it will endanger the economy and jobs ...”. Also, we are proposing a big new idea and that means we need to make sure it cannot be characterised as ‘risk’.)

Government as Saviour ... you’re joking right...?

Perhaps the next most important fundamental of our vision is a much greater role for Government. A stronger, more interventionist Government that shapes the economy to fit the needs of people not the other way around. But...

People see Government as in cahoots with the corporations. They are all part of an established system that looks after itself with little regard for us.

"Beyond the government it's the people who are influencing the government...Gina Reinhardt didn't give Barnaby Joyce \$40,000 because he was a nice guy, she gave him \$40,000 because she's a miner and she wants to keep her options open, people like her dictate to the government." (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Male)

"It resembles more of an oligarchy every day...free market capitalism...it's given people more money more power where they can monopolise leaders and influence policy." (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Female)

"I think it's in the business hands at the moment because the government is corrupted by the business anyway." (Group 1, Perth, Base, Male)

For many, 'unions bosses' aren't outside this self-serving clique and even 'the environmental lobby' or 'lobby groups' like *GetUp!* can be part of the problem. Almost by definition if you are a powerful player then you must be in the self-serving clique or you would have effected change by now.

"I used to work in hospitality and I didn't trust the union and I had to belong to the union. But they didn't represent us well at all." (Group 1, Perth, Base, Female)

(Note: Perhaps nothing spells this out more emphatically than the support for Trump and Hanson. They sell the idea that they are outside the self-serving clique and win quite a bit of support despite their vast failings and the obvious fallacy of their central point.)

Democracy

In previous work we have often found that Australians are very confident about the safe functioning of their democracy.

(So much so that this can work against us. People do not believe, for example, that our Government effectively sponsors mistreatment amounting to torture in offshore refugee camps. The reason that they don't believe it is, "...that wouldn't happen in Australia...")

So, if the question is, 'Can an Australian Government constrain corporate predation on the people?' we might get a 'maybe' at best. The corporates are seen as very powerful.

And, if the question is, 'Will and Australian Government constrain corporate predation on the people?' it is even worse. The Government is in cahoots with the corporates after all.

But, if the question is, 'In this country, if the people pretty much all want the same thing, can we change the way the system works?' We may well do a lot better. We would be evoking the one western idea that is even bigger than capitalism. Democracy.

For testing in Parramatta, these ideas were put into bite-sized chunks of homespun logic.

"In this country democracy rules. It is the people who get the final say.

We all want a quality health system for everyone. We all want every child to have access to a good quality public school. We all want the elderly to be properly cared for. We all want the corporations to stop squirming out of doing their fair share. We all want workers to be able to put food on the table and get home in time to eat it with their loved ones. These are our rights.

So let's stop mucking around and just do it."

While there was some disagreement on whether the term 'rights' was appropriate (Base and Centre) and the extent to which government could effect change, people in Parramatta agreed that having good quality health, education and aged care services was fundamental to their values.

A more tangible idea worth checking again (tested very well in the Perth groups) might be the nationalisation of the electricity industry (and perhaps all things in the essential services category). Again, not necessarily as a message or policy that we would run with but as a way to find out where bigger Government can have a legitimate role.

If we really want to put the acid on **Democracy Rules** maybe we should try something like this...

“You don’t hear about many strikes these days. That’s because workers no longer have the right to strike for better pay and conditions or even better safety in just about every situation. The bosses have now have the whip hand.

No wonder the wages of working people have been the same for years as the cost of living goes up and up.

If we had the right to strike you can bet the corporations would take a bit more interest in fair pay and conditions for working people.”

Tactical

1. Australia is a country that rewards hard work and people who give things a go. But too many people today believe that if they have a problem, someone else will take care of it. We all know that you can’t spend more than you earn without getting into trouble pretty quickly. And the same rules apply to government. We have to live within our means. We can be fair without being too generous. And we can only afford to help people who genuinely need it if we also support the businesses who create the jobs that pay for everything. Everyone is better off if we reduce taxes and government spending, and support businesses to create jobs. That is the best way to make sure Australia remains a country where everyone can enjoy their life.

Advice on this message:

This is the opponent message. The only reason we’d tweak it is if we thought it was failing for lack of a reasonable representation of their actual message. It is fine to leave as is for the quant testing.

“I’m happy with it ...certainly we have to live within our meansthe way our politics work now, they want to do the popular thing and what they give out and people vote for that but sooner or later that can’t continue it’s either something we’ve got to face now or it’s something we’re going to have to face because we run out of money.” (Group 4, Brisbane, Opponents, Male)

“It’s both the idea of trying to rely on hard work, equality, mateship, Australian values which don’t really exist anymore but at the same time going ‘poor businesses, why are we taxing them so much they’re the backbone of our economy’. It’s like a right wing manifesto.” (Group 3, Brisbane, Base, Female)

“We can only afford to help people who genuinely need it if we also support businesses’ that straight away flagged that those people who do require assistance with Job Start and disability payments who genuinely need it, that’s having a crack at them.” (Group 5, Melbourne, Centre, Male)

"it's like they're telling you off and saying everything you've done is your fault... 'you're spending more than you earn, that's up to you and you're trying to put the blame on someone else'...(because) it's a country that rewards hard work." (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Male)

"I feel that it's picking on the less fortunate." (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Female)

"There are some values like living within your means but it seems very pro-business...it seems like letting the private sector take more control of things...reducing taxes, government spending, cutting services, they're justifying by saying that'll create more jobs." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

Some participants agreed with the economic rationalist sentiments in the first part of the message while others felt this was just designed to soften up the reader.

"The first half ... okay, the second half just started to scare me." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Female)

"It does make sense. It's logical." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Female)

"I agree with it and I actually love that sentence that says we can only afford to help people who genuinely need it. I reckon forget about 'only afford', it's not about affording. We need to do that. Get rid of dole bludgers." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Male)

"If we don't spend, those businesses don't exist...it tries to gloss over it by saying give everyone a fair go and it's all built on hard work." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

"It sounds like something you would say when you are taking something away from someone." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Male)

The good news about this tried and true right wing narrative is that our base can feel in their bones that this is right wing spin and even some of the centre can feel the predatory tone. But we'd still have to say, from a right wing perspective, that it's an oldie but a goodie.

2. Our economy is not delivering for many Australians. Growth is fragile, investment and wages are flat-lining and living standards are in decline. We need to build a stronger, fairer economy that will support the economy today while driving productivity and living standards into the future. When middle and working class families prosper, when small businesses prosper, Australia prospers. We should protect penalty rates for low paid workers. We should force electricity prices down. We should not give tax cuts to big business. We need budget repair that's fair. We should cut taxes for small businesses while putting them on an even playing field. We need nation building infrastructure. We need responsible savings and fair tax reform to balance the budget. We can build a stronger and more productive economy – without hurting the things that help it grow.

The sections in blue were removed for the Parramatta groups while the sections in green were added.

Advice on this message:

This is the ALP message. Arguably it is a bit of an unfair representation of their message as it's a bit of a shopping list, perhaps repetitive too and for some a little 'wishy-washy'. But it does represent the 'values neutral' / 'please all' nature of their overall positioning.

For our internal purposes it is fine to stay as is. If we want to show our findings to Labor and say, “hey, your stuff lacks a consistent values theme” then we should try and do a better job of reflecting what they are trying to say or they just say ‘of course that doesn’t test well but that’s not our message’. For our own reflection it is worth noting that with the base (and to some extent the centre) this will always outperform the meaningless jumble of empty platitudes that it is because its repeated use has come to be associated with the left side of politics.

“It sounds like at least it’s thought about... not just taxes...a lot of things, like ... electricity... things we pay, infrastructure, roads, trains, all of those things that make a big difference.” (Group 3, Brisbane, Base, Female)

“Definitely more of a connect but it seemed to hit on everything and every aspect but all they said was it needs to be fair. And it doesn’t give much of a stance.” (Group 3, Brisbane, Base, Male)

“This one sounds like Bill Shorten wrote it. There’s a bit of hypocrisy in that.” (Group 3, Brisbane, Base, Female)

“They’re more specific things, (in the other messages) it’s such a broad ‘oh we need to do this’ it goes into more detail with things you can identify with and agree or disagree with.” (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Male)

“I think it’s good, I think I get most of it but it seems too ideal.” (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Female)

“Yikes...there’s about 20 ideas there.” (Group 5, Melbourne, Centre, Male)

“It’s very governmentally written...it feels like ‘I’m going to spit all these words out and make you think that we’re doing all this stuff and make you feel the pain of something’ but it doesn’t really mean anything.” (Group 4, Brisbane, Opponents, Female)

“It sounds wonderful but the amount of power from the big businesses the corporates have over the government society will make it a bit hard to do these things.” (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Female)

“A politician wrote that.” (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

4. In Australia, we can enjoy our lives because so many people contribute, making our community great. Our sense of a fair go means everyone benefits, not just the most fortunate:

Public hospitals and Medicare; education to give our kids a great start in life; roads and public transport, and so on.

But some of the biggest and most profitable corporations won’t pay their fair share. If we try to make them play by the same rules as the rest of us, they run political campaigns against Governments, and threaten to sack workers or increase prices.

It’s time we backed our Governments to crack down on these corporate tax cheating bullies. It is only fair for everyone, especially the corporations who make their profits from our community, to put their fair share back into our community.

Advice on this message:

There’s good stuff here but quite a bit of it got lost because of the language and tone.

It starts out all happy and upbeat – so much so that it is a bit sickly sweet. The idea that our community is great because so many contribute is well over-cooked.

“I think it portrays a really rosy view of Australia (this) sentence I think that’s a bit disingenuous because isolated communities, indigenous people and migrant populations, asylum seekers they’re not well-integrated

*into our society and they do not receive the same benefits or the same levels of respect and treatment.”
(Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Female)*

We then lead up to “tax cheating bullies” – we need to make up our minds on the tone. Is Australia a good nice happy place or a damaged nation being predated upon by corporate evil?

“The first part is like ‘everything’s great and perfect’ but (then) ‘crackdown on this’.” (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Male)

“It starts off very inclusive ‘we enjoy our lives our sense of a fair go’ then it has this separation between us and the big corporation and the government.” (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Female)

“I think it’s a fair sledge (because) they illustrate it with something...it sets a case out which is easy to follow ‘this works because everyone pays in’.” (Group 5, Melbourne, Centre, Male)

“Fair go” felt a bit 1950’s to some younger people.

It might be worth using a bit of a (so called) specific for example, “half of all overseas corporations operating in Australia paid no tax last year” – “corporate Australia has opposed every single rise in the minimum wage granted in the last three decades – they say it will hurt them while raking in bigger and bigger profits and paying out millions in executive bonuses”.

“It’s cheating the system that everyone else is obliged to comply with.” (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Female)

“Sneakiness as well which it is...concerted and deliberate.” (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Female)

Maybe a structure that opens with the corporate crime – then goes to the harm caused – then goes to the remedy / call to action.

4. *(as revised for Parramatta)*

In Australia, most of us believe in a fair go where everyone benefits, not just the rich.

That’s why we have public hospitals and Medicare that anyone can get access to; education for every child; roads and public transport, and so on.

Many companies do the right thing and pay their fair share of the taxes. But a few of the biggest and most profitable corporations won’t contribute back fairly – in fact they don’t pay any tax at all. And the rules are rigged in their favour to make this perfectly legal.

If we try to make them play by the same rules as the rest of us, they run political campaigns against Governments, and threaten to sack workers or increase prices.

It’s time to change the rules, crack down on the loopholes to stop the minority who are avoiding their obligations.

The rest of us do our bit and it is only right that corporations who are making good profits from our community put their fair share back in to our community.

Advice on this message:

Most people supported the values expressed here. They generally felt this was a fair sledge against big corporations.

“I think there’s points of truth in it.” (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

"I like what it says, in theory that is what I would like to see happen." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Female)

"I just hate the fact that the rules are rigged in the favour of them." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Male)

"We've seen with the mining resources tax BHP and Rio Tinto run a campaign against the government because they didn't want to pay their fair share." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

"They grilled the big companies like Apple and all these people that don't pay taxes here so I thought they were doing something about it." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Female)

The language and tone seemed to work better as people no longer suggested it had an unrealistic utopian view of Australia.

"It just resonates with me more than the others. Maybe it's just the language used when they say 'fair go'. This seems the least convoluted. It's the least like it's telling me what to think." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Female)

Some people were doubtful big companies could be reined in and made to pay their fair share of tax.

"I would want that to happen, how it's going to happen, I don't know." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Female)

"They've been talking about that for years, cracking down and making them pay their fair share, all these off-shore companies and tax havens but what's actually changed?" (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Female)

In many ways it is a shame that people lack faith that this could happen. But there's an upside. If people think something obviously should happen but our broken system won't let it happen they'll be energised to hear a major voice calling for it.

(It is the extreme other end of the scale but just think of the jubilation of the racists when Pauline Hanson finally stood up and had the courage to say what they were all thinking – they were energised by hearing their thoughts advocated on a grand scale.)

5. Australia has always been the land of the fair go, for everyone, not just the wealthy. But corporations who don't contribute their fair share have changed that, and made things worse, especially for the people in our society who have the least. Everyone in Australia deserves a fair go. And everyone in Australia should put in their fair share- especially the biggest and most fortunate. The only way to make sure every child gets a good education and every sick or injured person gets all the treatment they need is for every company that does well in Australia to contribute to Australia. We cannot let powerful CEOs rig the rules to suit themselves while hurting the rest of us.

Advice on this message:

Again the land of the fair go is a bit 1950's cliché to some.

"If we go this path of all wages have to be increased constantly young teenagers won't be able to get jobs we're pricing people out of the economy...it sounds like something from the 1950's." (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Male)

"What's fair? Who decides what's fair?" (Group 5, Melbourne, Centre, Male)

We could 'lower the bar' we set for ourselves by removing the "only" way – we could use "one way". Ditto the use of "every" which raises the bar (maybe 'every child' could become 'children', 'every sick' - 'the sick', 'every company' - 'companies').

"It's sort of black and white just blaming the powerful CEO's, there's a lot more wrong in the country than what the CEO's are doing." (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Female)

"(it says 'the only way') it's not the only way." (Group 5, Melbourne, Centre, Female)

"The problem is the words 'only way' really narrow it down." (Group 5, Melbourne, Centre, Male)

Maybe a nice simple link to connect the corporate crime to the harm.

"What they're saying here is 'unless they're paying their tax then this going to impact our children's education, sick and injured...I don't agree. They're saying we have homelessness and people in poor situations because of the big companies not paying taxes." (Group 5, Melbourne, Centre, Male)

The "...powerful CEO's rig the rules..." line might have too much of a negative attack tone.

"It villainises (CEO's)." (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Female)

"It's the blame game." (Group 5, Melbourne, Centre, Male)

"They're not rigging the rules they're following the rules." (Group 5, Melbourne, Centre, Male)

We certainly do want to brutally attack them but the overt nature of the negativity probably isn't helping. Sometimes a soft sledge is what really packs punch hence the following variation tested in Parramatta.

It's understandable that a few powerful CEO's want to make more and more profits by paying less and less to their staff and making less and less of a contribution to Australia's tax base. It's greedy, but it's also just doing their job as they see it.

But for us, the everyday people who do the work in these businesses and buy their products, is it too much to ask for highly profitable companies to pay decent wages and make a contribution to the community?

Half of the major international companies operating in Australia pay no tax at all. Surely, that tells us that things are out of balance.

And it makes it harder for Governments to provide a good education for our children, quality care for our elderly, or provide the infrastructure and healthcare we need. There are a lot of things we could do to rebalance the system.

Tougher corporate tax laws.

Better pay and more secure jobs.

We live in a democracy and we all basically want the same things. Surely it wouldn't be too hard to put things right?

This version was only tested in the Parramatta groups.

Advice on this message:

This drew a mixed response. Some people felt it was overly idealistic.

"That's the problem we don't live in a democracy." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

"It's so international now ... government probably feels a little bit powerless themselves. (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Male)

Some thought it was the government trying to shift blame to businesses and not accepting full responsibility.

"It sounds a bit whingy." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

"It sounds like the government saying 'it's not our fault. it's CEO's'." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

"It is the job of the government to collect taxes ... so they can't just say 'we feel powerless'. If they want to collect taxes from these guys they should try harder." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Male)

Others, however, felt it wasn't being too harsh on any individual entity, business or government.

"I kind of liked it...it's more accurate it's not because some people are greedy it's the way the system is." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

Some felt the (milder and more sarcastic) sledge in the opening sentence was unnecessary as they already understood corporations' and CEOs' predatory approach to penalty rates and disregard for the environment. A couple simply didn't get the sarcastic tone of the opening sentence and thought it was supporting CEO's actions.

Perhaps the lesson is that (as shown in pre-Parramatta groups) the overt sledge is too harsh sounding but from the Parramatta groups we could say we don't need to give the corporations much respect either.

"I'm putting that one down the bottom I don't like it...I'm not feeling it." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Female)

7. Australia has been a lucky country for many people. A place where all children are educated, the sick are cared for and most people enjoy their life, no matter their background. But more and more, corporations and CEOs are taking more and putting in less. When corporations cheat on their tax or cut people's wages, it hurts our community. We need stronger tax laws and fairer tax rates and better pay rates so the biggest and most fortunate can't let the rest of us down. In Australia, everyone should be able to put food on the table and be home in time to enjoy it with their family or friends. Nothing matters more than time to do things we enjoy with the people we love and care for, and community only works if everyone puts in their fair share.

Advice on this message:

Some of our Base immediately retorted to the lucky country, "yeah, for the white middle class".

"The first paragraph you're bullshitting because none of this is true." (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Female)

"Once upon a time it was a lucky country." (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Male)

"(It's accurate) If you're white and middle class." (Group 6, Melbourne, Base, Female)

The food on the table line generally worked a treat. Let's keep that in somewhere.

"I definitely agree (with that) sentence... that puts six things that make me happy at once." (Group 5, Melbourne, Centre, Male)

"Most socio-economic groups they have the choice of keeping the lights on and the power and the heat or eating." (Group 5, Melbourne, Centre, Male)

"It is lovely." (Group 4, Brisbane, Opponents, Female)

There's probably too much of a clash between the 'love and care and community and enjoy life' and the general call to action to hate the stinking guts out of the corporate elites.

"The place that clashes is pointing the finger at corporations and CEO's... (They) work completely within the law of their country...the laws are set by the government businesses work within those laws. If you do want to point the finger it's the legislators." (Group 5, Melbourne, Centre, Female)

"This is assuming corporations and CEO's are all the bad guys." (Group 5, Melbourne, Centre, Male)

Other messages tested in Parramatta

The world is changing fast. Technology will have a bigger and bigger impact on our everyday lives and especially on our jobs.

We need to reprogram the Australian economy and upgrade it for the century ahead.

Advice on this message:

Most people thought the first two sentences rang true and that technology would have a substantial and increasingly large impact on the workplace.

"Not all of us will have a job because a lot of things will be automated. If the population keeps growing at this rate, and it's not a huge rate, I still feel technology would have a very big impact." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Female)

"There will be some new jobs created that don't exist now though. Ten years ago who would have heard of a data scientist?" (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Male)

"But will those new jobs make up the balance for the jobs that we have lost?" (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Male)

"There was some examples of that with the car industry all those people are losing their jobs and they've gone into robotics and different areas." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Male)

Most were unsure but a few thought this might happen so rapidly that we will be unprepared and will face huge employment problems.

"I would say it will be so fast we will be blindsided when it happens." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Female)

The idea that the economy would need to be reprogrammed drew mixed responses. People said it was not clear how this would be done, who would drive this - government or business - and who would benefit - workers or corporations.

"What does it involve?" (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Female)

"I just find this hard to get my head around. The words 'reprogram' and 'upgrade' the economy. Are they going to get some people in the tech room to come to some way to tweak the economy? All computer-based, tech-based. It's very strange." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Male)

"It makes sense but how are you going to reprogram something now that's going to happen in the future? How are you going to pre-empt that? How are you going to know what changes need to be made." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Male)

"It doesn't make sense to me." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Female)

"There isn't this idealistic force to reprogram it for sense, the only reprogramming they're interested in is what suits them, the small group that control it." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

"Isn't this going to be driven not so much by government but by business." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

"Who is the 'we'? The government?" (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Male)

The 'reprogram' metaphor probably is good framing (as shown in studies OS) but here it suffers from its unfamiliarity and abundant cynicism that things cannot be made better. Neither of these handicaps undermine the framing idea in principle. Perhaps if we are to try and use it we'd need to accompany 're-program' with some simple examples of what we mean by it.

*In this country democracy rules. It is the people who get the final say.
We all want a quality health system for everyone. We all want every child to have access to a good quality public school. We all want the elderly to be properly cared for. We all want the corporations who are squirming out of doing their fair share to contribute. We all want people who work to be able to put food on the table and get home in time to eat it with their loved ones. These are our rights.
So let's stop mucking around and just do it.*

Advice on this message:

This message drew some positive feedback with most people suggesting it agreed with their values.

"It's pretty good for me it's more aspirational." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

"It's more specific which is good they're talking about the things that I value like education and health compared to the other one where 'growth is fragile'." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

"It's the best of a bad bunch." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Female)

While offering minimal comment most people accepted the notion of 'democracy rules' although a couple of Base people felt that it was an exaggeration.

"I don't think we have democracy in this country because we have a two-party system where they're so close they might as well be the same party...I can't remember the last - whether it was a Liberal or Labor - government that changed my life in any way." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

"It's disjointed...at first it's saying 'democracy rules' then its saying 'we all want this'." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Female)

There were mixed views about the word 'rights'. When asked about removing the first and last sentences so it focused on values, Base participants generally preferred that the message keep the references to rights.

"I like when it says 'rights'." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

Some Centre participants took issue with the word 'rights' and felt they would be more comfortable if it said 'a good quality health system, good quality education, care for the elderly are things we believe in, things that really matter' i.e. values instead of rights.

"Are they rights though? Is that the best word to use there? They've said 'want' repeatedly and then it's 'these are our rights'. When have wants equalled rights?" (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Female)

It's simple we can hand over public money and services to corporations or we can put them to work for people and families, this is the fight of our times. Big corporations should contribute at least as much tax as teachers, nurses and tradies everyone needs stronger schools, better hospitals and a decent roof over their heads to thrive. Public services should be in the hands of those committed to serving the public instead of companies committed to profiting off the public. Corporations bend governments to increase their profits. Only people look out for people. So, we have to make people the bosses of our country again so that our government looks out for us the way we look out for each other. When we do that not only will we have a stronger economy, we'll have better lives.

Advice on this message:

"Very idealistic." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Female)

"There's always a problem when you start taxing corporations, they just go somewhere they don't get taxed as much....there's nothing stopping a company closing up shop and having a factory in China." (Group 8, Parramatta, Base, Male)

Some Centre people objected to this message as it seemed to imply that the people at the head of corporations were inherently bad. Participants felt that there were good and bad people at the top of big companies and while we want good people in charge, to assume that everyone in charge of a corporation is a bad person doesn't make sense.

"I disagree. It's where you come from. I've had bosses who are dickheads because they are dickheads outside of work too. I have had bosses who are amazing and ...outside they are decent people." (Group 7, Parramatta, Centre, Male)

Appendix A: Discussion Guide CAP-Economy Research (Oct/Nov 17)

1. The important things

- a. What are the most important things in life? What makes life enjoyable and worthwhile? (get them to rattle off the list – it doesn't matter too much what they say... use this list as probes to get things moving if required ... it is just to set the scene)

1. Time with family and friends
2. Health
3. Education for our children
4. A reliable job (even career)
5. Money
6. Owning your own home (or at least having a good place to live in)
7. A healthy environment / beautiful nature
8. Safety (from crime and accidents)

- b. More...

Is there anything that you feel like people – you, or people you know – are missing out on? (wait for response, but prompt with buying a house, travelling to work for two hours, getting pay cuts, missing out on time with family)

- c. What or who decides whether we get these important things or if we miss out on them? Do you think most of us can get what we want if we put in the effort or are we at the mercy of the system?
- d. To put it another way can we do it all alone or do we need to cooperate?

2. The economy Direction

Still thinking about the things that are most important to us do you think it is getting easier or harder for people to look after the things that really matter to us?

Are ordinary Australians getting a bigger say in their lives or a smaller say?

Let's talk about the economy -

1. What is the economy?
2. How does the economy work?
3. Who decides how the economy works?
4. (If necessary, probe) What is the role of corporations in the economy?
5. What is the role of the government in the economy?
6. What is the role of ordinary people in the economy?
7. Should we change the way the economy works?
8. Can we? How?

3. Who's in charge

Head to head:

Do you think Australians control our economy or does our economy control us?

Do you think the Government controls the corporations or do the corporations control the Government?

Out of business and government, who is more powerful/important/which affects our lives the most?

4. Future

- a. Is there anything you think we can do about this...?
(Do you expect things to be better or worse for the next generation?)

5. Test messages

Appendix B: Discussion Guide CAP-Economy Research (Jan 18)

Area & timing	Question
<p>1. Introduction</p> <p>10 minutes</p>	<p>Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Introduction and explanation of the overall purpose of the research · What is market research · Surveys find out WHAT and focus groups find out WHY · We'll ask "why?" · You were randomly selected · All views wanted, all views correct, even what you don't know · All views even different wanted · No need to debate · I'll be a devil's advocate – but I'm trying to understand you not convince you · Being taped / recorded · Your name address info not shared · Limited time for each issue · What we discuss in groups is to be treated confidentially. · Your name, occupation, family etc (general introductions)

<p>2. The important things</p> <p>15 minutes</p>	<p>What are the most important things in life? What makes life enjoyable and worthwhile?</p> <p>(get them to rattle off the list – it doesn't matter too much what they say... use this list as probes to get things moving if required ... it is just to set the scene)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Time with family and friends 2. Health 3. Education for our children 4. A reliable job (even career) 5. Money 6. Owning your own home (or at least having a good place to live in) 7. A healthy environment / beautiful nature 8. Safety (from crime and accidents) 9. More... <p>Is there anything that you feel like people – you, or people you know – are missing out on? (wait for response, but prompt with buying a house, travelling to work for two hours, getting pay cuts, missing out on time with family)</p> <p>What or who decides whether we get these important things or if we miss out on them? Do you think most of us can get what we want if we put in the effort or are we at the mercy of the system?</p> <p>To put it another way can we do it all alone or do we need to cooperate?</p>
<p>3. Public goods</p> <p>10 mins</p>	<p>Writing exercise:</p> <p>What are some of the important things the government does that you or others in the community benefit from?</p> <p>Write them down.</p> <p>Share and discuss.</p>

<p>4. Economy</p> <p>10 minutes</p>	<p>1. The economy Direction</p> <p>Still thinking about the things that are most important to us do you think it is getting easier or harder for people to look after the things that really matter to us?</p> <p>Are everyday Australians getting a bigger say in their lives or a smaller say?</p> <p>2. Let's talk about the economy -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What is the economy?2. How does the economy work?3. Who decides how the economy works?4. (If necessary, probe) What is the role of corporations in the economy?5. What is the role of the government in the economy?6. What is the role of ordinary people in the economy?7. Should we change the way the economy works?8. Can we? How?
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<p>5. Economy</p> <p>10 minutes</p>	<p>3. Who's in charge</p> <p>Head to head:</p> <p>Do you think Australians control our economy or does our economy control us?</p> <p>Do you think the Government controls the corporations or do the corporations control the Government?</p> <p>Out of business and government, who is more powerful/important/which affects our lives the most?</p> <p>4. Future</p> <p>a. Is there anything you think we can do about this...?</p> <p>(Do you expect things to be better or worse for the next generation?)</p> <p>Writing / drawing exercise</p> <p>Let's talk about the economy overall. What actually, is, the economy??</p> <p>Can you draw a picture of the economy? Full Marks for creativity!</p> <p>(Other questions we could use to prompt: who does it include? Who does it not include?)</p> <p>A few people should share examples and discuss.</p> <p>Please label the key elements, and leave them on the table for us to collect.</p>
<p>6. Changing the economy</p> <p>5 minutes</p>	<p>4. If we were to 'improve' - or change the way things work that would be better for people like you, what would that mean?</p> <p><i>Prompt to explore the idea of:</i></p> <p>Do things feel 'balanced'?</p>
<p>7. TEST MESSAGES - 30 Minutes</p>	