

Launch of the Australian Leadership Index

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Professor John Pollaers OAM, Chancellor

It is time to have a conversation. That time is now.

We live in uncertain and volatile times. The world around us can be confusing and complex.

There is a general sense among Australians – ascertained by the Australian Leadership Index - that we are not well-served by our leaders and institutions. That leadership is truly lacking and it's been lacking for some point in time.

When you deal with government institutions and deal with their chiefs-of-staff, when you deal with the heads of our bureaucracy, the attitude is to anticipate the needs of the minister. Whereas, certainly in my early days of lobbying government, these people had a strong point of view and they put that point of view on the table.

We are lacking that point of view. And, if we are lacking that point of view in business, we're lacking that point of view in government. So, where do we need to look for it?

Frankly, one of the great and empowering points that I think is coming out of this Leadership Index, is the acknowledgement that it is now the power of the people.

Think back to the Wall Street movement and the question over the 1 percent versus the 99. This is about the real need for the 99 to use their voice to be heard and to have something to say. So, it must be your bravery, your courage in leading

this effort that is really showing the kind of community leadership that we need and we are all capable of.

We need to speak.

Steve Graham, with your support and the work of the researchers and the team here at Swinburne, we now can have this conversation and, as you said, use this as a mechanism to open up the conversation and force that conversation.

But, we have to be heard and we have to make sure that we continue to keep the Index high on people's agenda.

What I love about this project is that the data is being made freely available, and it is being available so that people can explore it. Let's encourage people to do that. If every person goes away from here and encourages others to get involved in this Index, and make it a living, breathing part of the way in which we think, then we are more likely to get the kind of traction we need to bring about genuine change.

I for one am fed up with the lack of leadership in Australia. We want to be counted. We, as a country, long to be counted on the world stage.

We do need to start to provoke, to prod and to force the kind of conversations that we're talking about. There is no doubt in my mind that one of the great problems with leadership is that everybody thinks they understand it but very few people are practicing it.

So, where do we look to try and develop that kind of leadership?

I am an optimist. I look at my family. I look at their friends. They are young adults and they have a point of view. They are approaching society with a different perspective, genuinely open and clear-thinking.

I believe in the way that we start to lead and shape the young minds that we come in contact with from day to day. The way that we identify those people in the community that have the potential to lead and we encourage them and we support them. I aim to do so and we can, as Steve says, open the way to genuine understanding and development of what leadership means for the greater good.

I thank you again, Steve. I thank you, Margaret, for your support and the entire family here. Without your guidance, without your encouragement, without your vision and your leadership, these types of initiatives would never happen. These great breakthroughs often in mankind come from that kind of commitment and that kind of support.

So on behalf of everybody, I thank you, and it is with great pleasure that I officially launch the Australian Leadership index.