

MEDIA RELEASE



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Global Aussie activists give patriots example to follow

Young people wanting to identify themselves as patriotic Australians could follow the example set by nine Australian activists, Deakin academics believe.

In their new book, *Global Citizens : Australian Activists for Change* launched today (Thursday, 26 June) by the Rev Tim Costello, Deakin University Professors Geoff Stokes and Gary Smith, along with Dr Roderic Pitty from the University of Western Australia argue that young Australians don't have to be bound by the old ways of nationalistic thinking embodied by Pauline Hanson and current party politics. Nor do they just have to accept the other 'global' alternative of free market philosophy.

"Australians can be global citizens and this book shows how nine Australians and activists have brought about change by promoting and acting upon universal values and international human rights," Professor Stokes said.

"Each of our 'activists' – Michael Kirby, Jack Munday, Nancy Shelley, Thao Nguyen, Bob Brown, Margaret Reynolds, Faith Bandler, Herb Feith and Keith Suter – has a way of acting which is globally focused and incorporates a humanitarian view of the world."

These are:

- See the challenges that face Australians in a wider global or regional context
- All focused on the long-term problems, global warming, pandemics, infringements of human and civil rights
- Hold an inclusive ideal of Australian citizenship and are socially engaged
- Have a humanitarian vision of how Australia should respond to local and global challenges

Professor Stokes said the activists chosen for the book had effectively bypassed societal and geographical boundaries in their quest to build an identity that was both Australian and global.

"Most wanted the institutions of Australian democracy to become more inclusive of those on the margins of society, and to adopt regimes based upon international human rights," he said.

"Munday and Brown are particularly linked by their work for ecological and social sustainability. A constant theme for Feith, Shelley and Suter is their advocacy of global peace and justice. The Christian religion is a central motivation for both Shelley, Suter and also Kirby. Bandler, Reynolds and Nguyen are connected by their activism.

"All of them have looked outward from Australia to larger global problems as well as inward to local and national issues."

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Professor Stokes said the nine individuals were patriotic Australians with a strong allegiance to Australia and its people, yet they are very sceptical of nationalism.

“Each has sought to open Australia up to global influences in innovative ways and by doing so have reshaped Australian institutions and policies,” he said.

“They have demonstrated the practical possibilities of global citizenship in action. Faith Bandler used the court of world opinion to change a racist section of the constitution, Bob Brown helped to establish the Greens as a third force in Tasmania and by doing so linked Australians into the broader global movement for a sustainable planet.”

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