



A summer reading list for the Prime Minister

November 2014

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Summer is a great time to relax with friends and family, to take a holiday, to reflect on the year past – and to read.

During the year it can be hard to find time for reading. Our ministers and MPs have less free time than the rest of us. So every year Grattan Institute releases a summer reading list for the Prime Minister.

The list contains books and articles that we believe the Prime Minister – or indeed any Australian – will find stimulating over the break. They're all good reads that say something interesting about Australia, the world and the future.

While we don't stand by every word in these books, they provide excellent food for thought. We enjoyed reading them, and we hope our leaders do too. We hope they have a refreshing break and return inspired to lead the country in 2015.

- **Fire and Ashes: Success and Failure in Politics**, Michael Ignatieff
(Random House Canada, 2013)
- **Anzac's Long Shadow: The Cost of Our National Obsession**, James Brown
(Black Inc, 2014)
- **A Rightful Place: Race, Recognition and a More Complete Commonwealth**, Noel Pearson
(Quarterly Essay 55, 2014)
- **The Golden Age**, Joan London
(Random House Australia, 2014)
- **The Wife Drought**, Annabel Crabb
(Random House Australia, 2014)
- **The Inequality Puzzle**, Lawrence H. Summers
(Democracy Journal, 2014)

Fire and Ashes: Success and Failure in Politics

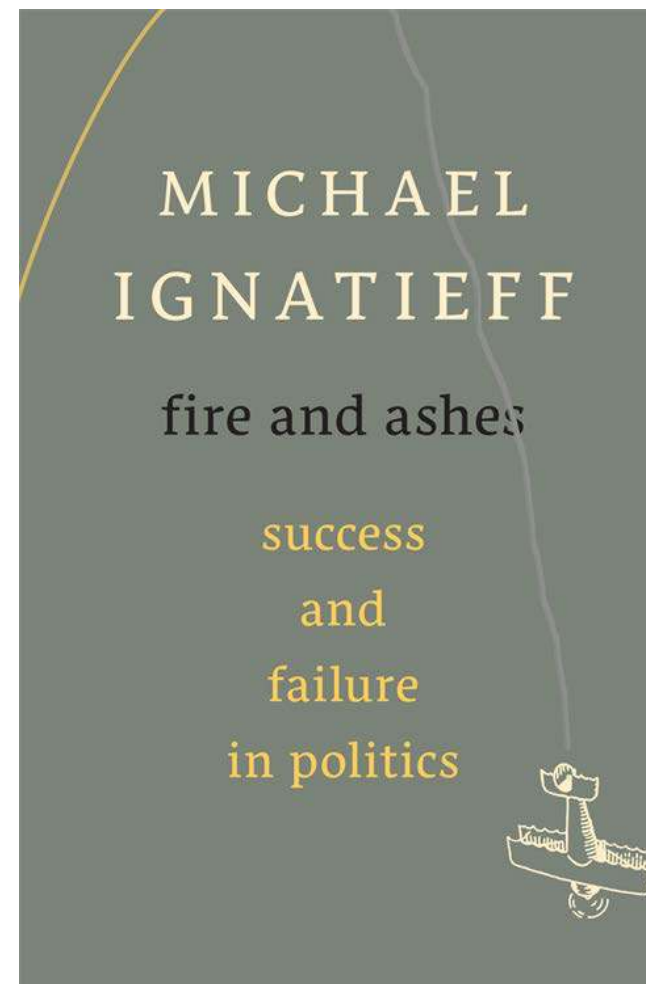
Michael Ignatieff

When the men in black come knocking, Michael Ignatieff is a Harvard professor and one of the world's leading public intellectuals in the fields of politics and human rights. But there is one great adventure he has not undertaken and the three men who knock on his door in 2004 hold the key to it. They ask him to come home to Canada to eventually lead the Liberal Party, then in office. Against some wise counsel, he says yes.

Fire and Ashes tells the almost mythical story of Ignatieff's political rise and fall.

He becomes leader, but quickly learns that a fine mind and good ideas are not enough. He lacks the mongrel factor; his opponents do not. He is the target of a brutal campaign: 'Michael Ignatieff: just visiting' and 'He didn't come home for you'. He makes mistakes, he lacks the vital hunger. In 2011, the Liberal Party crashes to catastrophic defeat and Ignatieff loses his seat.

This is a book about high policy ideals and low politics. Given Ignatieff's experience, should any sane and decent person pursue a parliamentary career? Ignatieff insists, despite everything, that they should. He believes that politics remains a noble calling: the use of vices – cunning and ruthlessness – to pursue the virtues of justice and decency in the service of the people, "the only divinity left". His obstinate faith is not entirely convincing, but if Ignatieff lost, the rest of us have won by gaining this brave, honest and compelling look inside a political life.



Anzac's Long Shadow: The Cost of Our National Obsession

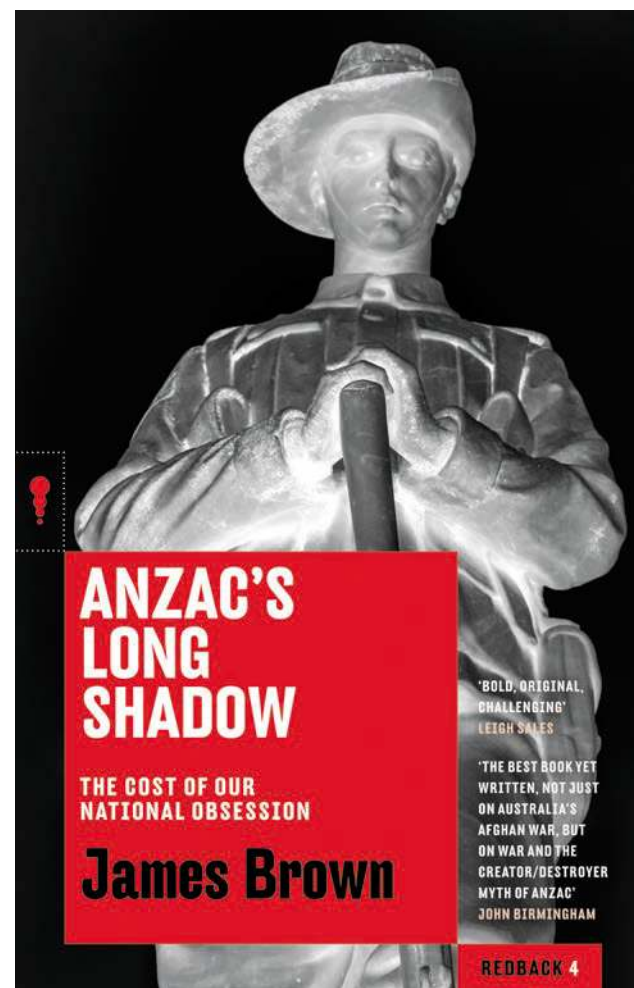
James Brown

Is there anything new to say about the Anzac Legend? Unbelievably, there is, and it's in this short and startling book by James Brown, a recently retired soldier.

Brown argues that Australia's obsession with Anzac is not only prone to vulgar exploitation, more importantly it masks profound confusion about what the current Australian Defence Force is for and what it actually does. While old battles are endlessly commemorated, other countries analyse their strategic lessons more carefully than we do. Anzac's focus on the heroism of ordinary soldiers obscures changes in modern warfare and the need for soldiers who are also able to "do battle in the realm of ideas". Anzac also distracts us from debates about serious weaknesses in our defence forces, and difficult conversations about what Australia can realistically hope they will achieve. Reverence for our dead soldiers is making life rough for our living ones.

It doesn't help that few politicians have any military background, and even fewer are prepared to ask difficult questions either publicly or privately. And while official histories and critical commentaries by participants were published a year or two after World War One, much less has been published about any of our recent conflicts.

It's a privilege to read a book that so deeply penetrates this closed and secretive world. As we prepare for a year of Anzackery – the torrent of ceremonies, exhibitions, books, televised re-enactments and \$39.99 Lest We Forget watches that will mark the centenary of the Gallipoli landing – all Australians should read *Anzac's Long Shadow* to understand the urgent policy issues that lie behind the playing of The Last Post.



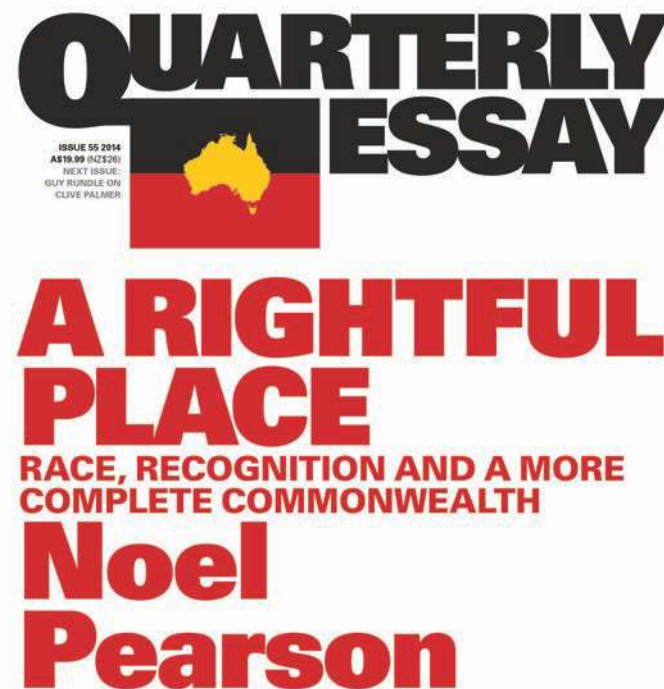
A Rightful Place: Race, Recognition and a More Complete Commonwealth

Noel Pearson

Australians have unfinished business, writes Aboriginal leader Noel Pearson in this characteristically powerful Quarterly Essay. Recognition of Indigenous people in the Australian constitution, he argues, will not only bring them closer to the centre of national life, it will help all Australians come to terms with the injustices of the past and thereby live more easily in this land.

Recognition would acknowledge both the essential difference of Indigenous Australians, as the land's first inhabitants, and the humanity they share with other Australians. It would help to move Australians past an oppressive concept of race toward an inclusive idea of one people.

The essay is no narrow analysis of how to amend a century-old document. Pearson shows how the three great intellectual traditions that have shaped Australia – conservatism, liberalism and social democracy – can all embrace Indigenous constitutional recognition. It's a restless, generous, uplifting piece by a great Australian mind, determined to unite the best of Aboriginal and European thought and life.



Correspondence

'DRAGON'S TAIL' John Edwards, Max Corden, Michael Cooney, Jim Chalmers, Eric Knight, Billy Griffiths, Satyajit Das, Andrew Charlton

The Golden Age

Joan London

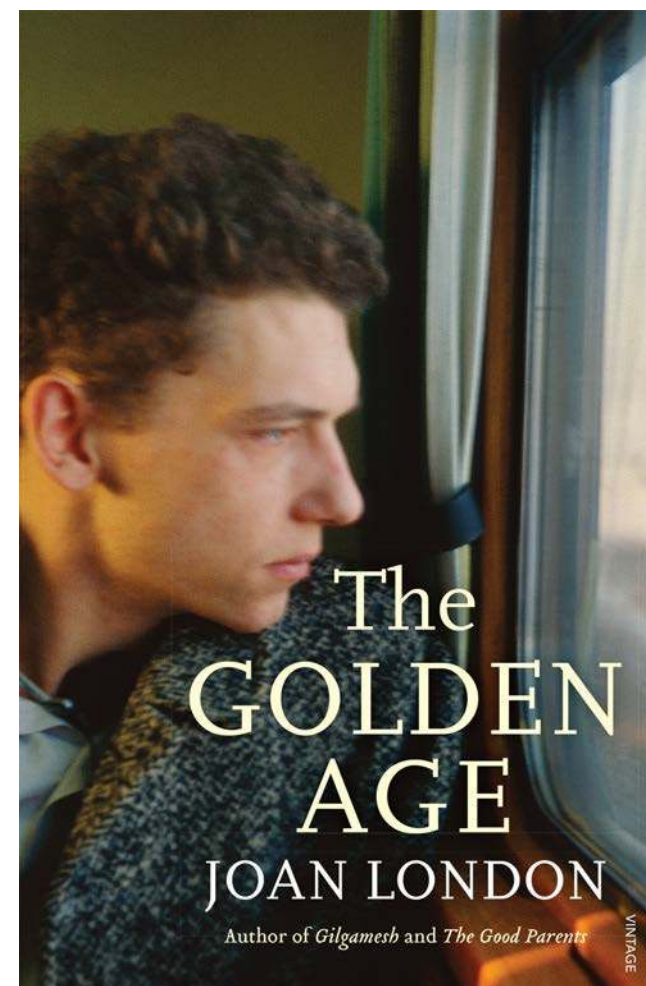
It was like this. Budapest was the glamorous love of his life who had betrayed him. Perth was a flat-faced, wide-hipped country girl whom he'd been forced to take as a wife. Only time would tell if one day he would reach across and take her hand.

Set in post-war Perth, *The Golden Age* is a story of isolation and resilience in a changing Australia. A wave of 'New Australian' migrants is beginning to integrate. The country is modernizing but infectious disease lingers, and many Australians, particularly children, are still struck down by polio.

A book about all of this could be pretty grim. But Joan London's novel creates a set of characters that you want to invite home, in prose so beautiful you want to frame it on your wall.

Ferenc, now Frank, is a polio-afflicted child poet living in The Golden Age, an institution for polio victims in Perth. His depth of feeling and quiet store of resilience wall out the adults on his periphery. Raising Frank are Meyer and Ida, Hungarian refugees who have unwillingly fled Europe to resettle on the shores of a remote and indifferent land. Their isolation is different to Frank's but palpable nonetheless. Their extraordinary talents are frustrated, but when they are allowed to flower, at a magical piano concert on a summer evening, they make Australia a richer and better country.

Sixty-five years after the events of *The Golden Age*, the impacts of war and infectious disease can feel remote. But Australia remains a country of migrants. The novel evokes the quiet gifts of the isolated, and the potential riches of an Australia more willing to accept them.



The Wife Drought

Annabel Crabb

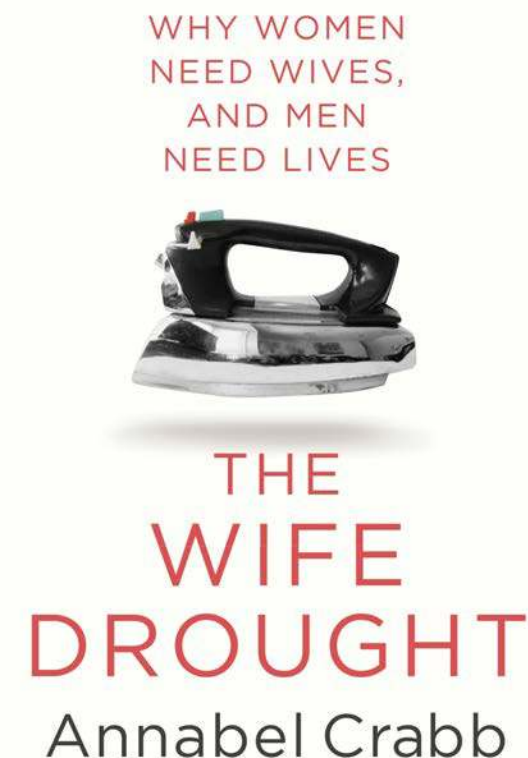
Packed with data, impishly written, *The Wife Drought* dissects the gender dynamics bedevilling Australia's labour force in a way that is both serious and seriously funny.

ABC journalist Annabel Crabb passes over some of the more familiar arguments about the gender gap (women don't "lean in"; men push women out) to explore the structural impediments to women advancing in the workplace and men participating fully on the domestic front. She argues that we need much more support at home for working mothers wanting to accelerate their careers, and fewer cultural barriers to fathers taking advantage of the work flexibility won by mothers. Put simply, women need wives and men need lives.

In Crabb's loose but useful definition, a wife is not necessarily a woman, nor a spouse, but rather "a person who pulls back on paid work in order to do more of the unpaid work that accumulates around the home." Making a photographic holiday diary for Chiquita, the stuffed kangaroo from childcare, may not contribute to national productivity, but no-one wants to be the child whose parents were "too busy" to document Chiquita having a good time.

"Wives" are potent assets, and the fact that few women have them helps explain why the top rungs of political and corporate governance in Australia are so chromosomally homogenous.

The statistics presented in *The Wife Drought* are grave but the outlook is not. Crabb lays out some practical steps to ending the drought. She sees the economic benefits but is ultimately focussed on a more human goal: satisfying personal and professional lives for women and for men.



The Inequality Puzzle

Lawrence H. Summers

The hot policy book for 2014 was Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*. But at 700 pages, few will read it on the beach, and it remains the second-least finished book available on Kindle.

Nevertheless, Piketty's *Capital* sparked an industry of reviews, and former US Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers wrote the definitive bluffer's guide. In just nine pages he captures the main themes of the book: the increasing share of wealth and incomes going to the top one per cent; the increasing ratio of wealth to income; and how this led historically to a focus on finding a rich partner, rather than earning a living.

Summers also summarises the challenges to Piketty's thesis that have emerged since the book was published. Wealth seems both more mobile and more fragile than the French economist allows for. Despite Piketty's focus on inheritance, most of those on the Forbes 400 list of wealthy Americans drop off within 30 years, and few of them inherited their wealth.

Summers dismisses Piketty's proposal of a global wealth tax to reduce inequality as impractical. Instead, he suggests reducing tax concessions that benefit the rich, stripping back intellectual property rights, and making it easier to sub-divide residential land.

Summers' article both explains Piketty's contribution and shows its importance to provoking debate on issues vital to our politics and lives.

LAWRENCE H. SUMMERS

The Inequality Puzzle

Thomas Piketty's tour de force analysis doesn't get everything right, but it's certainly got us pondering the right questions.

CAPITAL IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY BY THOMAS PIKETTY
TRANSLATED BY ARTHUR GOLDHAMMER • BELKNAP/HARVARD UNIVERSITY
PRESS • 2014 • 696 PAGES • \$39.95

Once in a great while, a heavy academic tome dominates for a time the policy debate and, despite bristling with footnotes, shows up on the bestseller list. Thomas Piketty's *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* is such a volume. Like Paul Kennedy's *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*, which came out at the end of the Reagan Administration and hit a nerve by arguing the case against imperial overreach through an extensive examination of European history, Piketty's treatment of inequality is perfectly matched to its moment.

Like Kennedy a generation ago, Piketty has emerged as a rock star of the policy-intellectual world. His book was for a time Amazon's bestseller. Every pundit has expressed a view on his argument, almost always wildly favorable if

LAWRENCE H. SUMMERS is the Charles W. Eliot University Professor and President Emeritus at Harvard University. He served as the 71st Secretary of the Treasury for President Clinton and the Director of the National Economic Council for President Obama.

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Summer reading for 'wonks'

A few books and articles that the Prime Minister's advisers might be reading...

- Stephen Mills, *The Professionals: Strategy, money and the rise of the political campaigner in Australia*, Black Inc, 2014.
- Atif Mian and Amir Sufi, *House of debt: How they (and you) caused the great recession, and how we can prevent it from happening again*, University of Chicago Press, 2014.
- Philip Chubb, *Power Failure: The inside story of climate politics under Rudd and Gillard*, Black Inc, 2014.
- Jill Lepore, 'The Disruption Machine: What the gospel of innovation gets wrong', *New Yorker*, June 2014.
<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/06/23/the-disruption-machine?currentPage=all>
- Alice Chen, Emily Oster and Heidi Williams, 'Why is infant mortality higher in the US than in Europe?', *NBER working paper*, September 2014.
<http://www.nber.org/papers/w20525>
- What Works Network, *What Works? Evidence for Decision Makers*, November 2014. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/378038/What_works_evidence_for_decision_makers.pdf

Independent, rigorous, practical

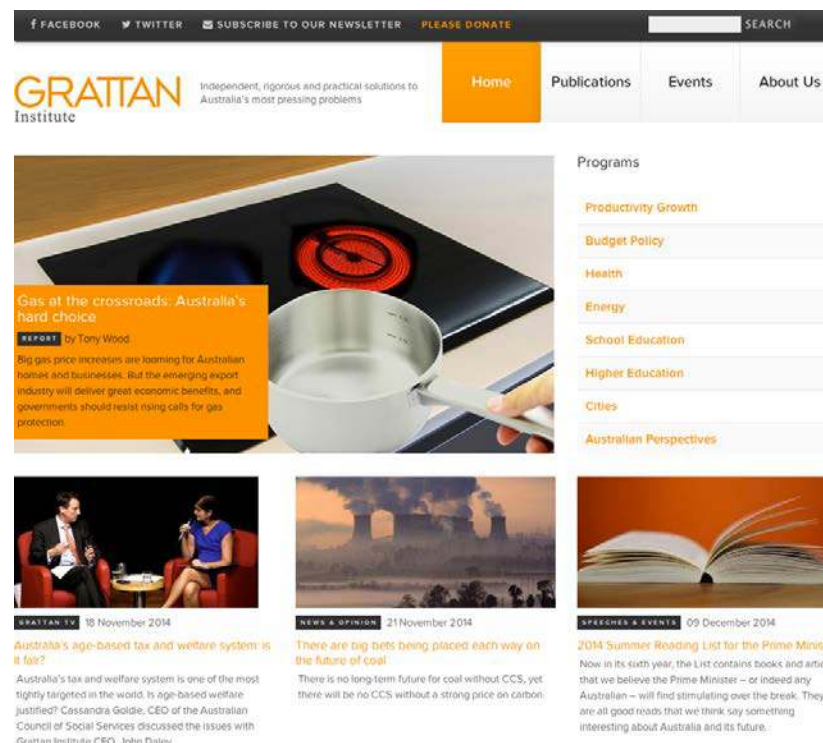
Grattan Institute is an independent think tank dedicated to developing high quality public policy for Australia's future. It was formed in 2008 in response to a widespread view in government and business that Australia needed a non-partisan think tank providing independent, rigorous and practical solutions to some of the country's most pressing problems.

These three words are vital to Grattan's mission. We are **independent**, taking the perspective of the Australian public interest rather than any interest group. We avoid commissioned work to ensure this independence.

We are **rigorous** in obtaining the best available evidence from our own data analysis and from published work. And we are **practical** in articulating what governments should do to improve the lives of all Australians.

Grattan runs seven policy programs: Australian Perspectives, Cities, Energy, Health, Higher Education, Productivity Growth and School Education. We chose them because we believe they are vital to shaping Australia's direction as a liberal democracy in a global economy.

We also believe they are areas where fact-based analysis and lively debate can change the minds of policy makers and the public, and where key issues are not being resolved. All our reports and our public events are free and can be viewed online.



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