

# PIBCI - Monthly Perspective

**August 2023**

**Title: Apathy is not an option**

## Summary

Apathy has a stake in our future, and it is to keep the status quo firmly in place.

Political activism does not end following elections. It needs to continue in between elections when the machinery of government shifts gears by disengaging from its focus on public interests to fulfilling corporate interests. Since the federal election in May 2022, little substantive change has occurred. The political brands may have changed, but the political ideology has not. The desiccated neoliberal order continues to function ensuring that stagnant wages, homelessness, child poverty, the rising cost of living and growing inequality remain entrenched in our society despite our nation's vast natural wealth. Meanwhile large disasters loom on the horizon. The environmental emergency continues to deteriorate. The economic slowdown and inflation are a growing reality across the globe. The pandemic and other biological timebombs are ever-present and conflict between the major global powers continues to escalate on a daily basis. There simply is no plausible reason for Australians to stick their heads into the sand and slide into a state of political apathy. There is work to be done!

## Political apathy

When did a lack of caring, social disengagement and political inactivity become acceptable? When did an attitude of indifference towards politics and activism help to improve society? The simple answer is that it hasn't. Nor has the act of 'hanging up the gloves' after casting a vote for politicians left the nation in good hands and on the right course. It goes without saying that once the nation has voted, the country is not necessarily on the road to better times. Nor does it signal that the nation is being directed by a beneficent team of bright politicians aiming to bring about economic development and social progress to the majority of the population. We know through bitter experience that not all elected politicians support legislation aimed at creating a safer and more wealthy nation for the Australian public. In summary, very few governments reach their full potential by functioning for the betterment of the majority. This is where we, the public need to step in by voicing our

opinions on social and economic issues. We need to participate in community actions and hold our elected officials to account. This is a civic responsibility that we all must share if we are to improve our lot.

### The cost of apathy

At its core, political apathy generally stems from a lack of understanding politics and how government operates. Not appreciating how laws are drafted, how legislation is passed and who influences politicians (lobbyists and major corporate donors) when making key decisions that ultimately impacts the public highlights a significant deficit in grasping the costs of political apathy. Political apathy extends across all social and economic demographics, regardless of level of education and status in society. The attitude of wilful political apathy is a mindset that is encouraged by the political and economic elite. A superficial grasp of political intrigues and sensationalisation promulgated by the mainstream media does not warrant an understanding of political and power that dictates our future as a nation.

For years, the major political parties supported by the corporate owned media have been feeding the public a staple diet of “infotainment.” This slurry pit of celebrity news, advertising, sensationalisation and sport is aimed to sidetrack the public from important social issues. The barrage of distractions is designed to take your attention away from real issues such as homelessness, improving the health system, redressing inequality and calling for the fairer distribution of wealth, closing down corporate tax loop holes and putting the breaks on political donations by large corporations and wealthy individuals.

### Comfortably numb

Through the mass media, citizens are being transformed into customers. This culture of consumerism is all embracing, with advertisements adorning billboards and public transport during our journey to and from work and our stroll to the centre of town. Ads capture our attention on our devices and permeate the airwaves 24/7. Consumerism has become so sophisticated that adverts are tailored to individuals based on the personal information harvested from each interaction we have with our device.

Consumer culture prevents the public from critically engaging in politics and social activism, thereby thwarting resistance and promoting conformity to the status quo. Acting on concerns to resolve the vast array of social ills such as inequality, poverty and homelessness

are smothered by the incessant noise of glamour and glitz generated by the billionaire owned media. Through the glow of our screens, the mass media sedates the public to the point that the population has become blissfully ignorant to the real world of conflict, exploitation, environmental degradation and growing inequality.

Our education system has been captured by the prevailing neoliberal ideology which reinforces the notion to reproduce the status quo through compliance and consumerism via the next generation. Despite living in a capitalist system based on the market ideology, students are not taught about the nature of money, nor how to become financially independent. Students are not taught about the use of sophisticated psychological triggers in advertisement despite being saturated by marketing 24/7. We have little idea how we are being monitored, psychologically manipulated and emotionally triggered on a daily basis by large tech giants and corporations seeking to make a quick buck. For decades, the neoliberal order has taught the population to be consumers and forget that we are producers in the sense that we work by creating products and services, that we volunteer our time to help our neighbours and our community and we voluntarily engage in improving society beyond the workplace.

For decades, the neoliberal ideology has been transforming the public from citizens into customers, whilst reducing our collective appetite to flex our political muscle and get our nation on the path towards social and political progress.

## The guise of democracy

In theory, a democratic system seeks to promote a fair battle between all political parties. During this battle, political parties compete to attract votes based on improving the living standard for the majority. Under the guise of democracy, the major political parties speak of freedom based on the good old Australian ability to have a 'fair go.' However, a critical look under such values and promises espoused by the major political parties illustrates a very different picture. The only reason that the major political parties are able to promote their views as 'mainstream' and 'moderate' is simply due to the vast amounts of finance that is poured into the corporate boardrooms of mainstream media outlets that helps to promote their policies and platforms as palatable to the public. The fact remains that the major political parties are very similar, despite the mainstream media's ability to over-emphasise their petty differences as if they are worlds apart.

A mutual relationship exists between the major political parties and the corporate owned media, who relentlessly work to set the social and political agenda. The cacophony that passes for political debate merely grinds down the public's interest, distracts from real world issues and conflates spectacle and sensationalisation that is designed to numb the public into a state of disengaged and docile consumers. Ultimately, civic complacency and political disengagement enables powerful interests to hollow out democratic institutions and maintain the status quo that singularly benefits the small and wealthy section of society.

## From apathy to activism

In order to unshackle ourselves from the dead weight of apathy, it is vital to maintain a clear vision of how much better our society could be by reminding ourselves that Australia is a resource rich nation with enough wealth to go around. Disentangling our attention from the mainstream media is a vital step towards gaining clarity with regards to real issues that impact our society and our environment. Only through community engagement and political activism can we collectively connect the dots based on what is happening on the streets and not what we are being told via the multitude of screens that we view on a daily basis. By recognising the dominant narrative for what it is, can we climb above the grim world view that the mainstream media presents the public designed to make us feel powerless. This mainstream perspective presents us with very little hope, a dark future based on conflict and catastrophe (economic, social and environmental) and a single escape route into the funnel of consumer society in which we can numb ourselves in the myriad of online shopping options and shopping centres that dot our towns and cities. Clearly there are other options which requires an active citizenry and a public that is politically engaged.

Given Australia's wealth, we should be the epitome of nations. Regrettably, our political and business elite do not focus on delivering human and environmental development and progress. Without the necessary political system supported by a willing and capable government and corporate leadership, progressive change will remain a distant mirage. What is required is the collective will of the public to redirect government and corporate interests towards social and environmental needs. With a capable government at the helm directed by public needs, real issues such as eradicating homelessness and child poverty would be prioritised ahead of nuclear submarine and Tomahawk missile purchases. A politically engaged public is the key ingredient in addressing real issues. Promoting peace and setting the course towards a better future come from a healthy sense of caring,

engagement and political activism. The public needs to collectively flex its political muscle to ensure that our democracy is kept vibrant. Apathy simply fuels the current decaying system based on inequality and the exploitation of humans and the environment alike.

## Thinking is denying

Political apathy has a stake in our future which aims to keep us on the neoliberal path that is hurtling towards social, economic and environmental catastrophe. By encouraging public disengagement in the community, indifference towards politics and a reticence towards activism, we are witnessing the warning signs of social decay. The consequence of broad political apathy merely strengthens the political and corporate elite which emboldens the 1% to take steps unimagined in democratic society.

Given the rapidly changing social, political and cultural terrain, it is vital that the public take immediate steps to shake off the paralysing bonds of consumerism, cut through the noise that masquerades as news and see through the thin veil of propaganda that poses as democratic values broadcast by the billionaire owned and government-controlled media outlets.

If we collectively accept the tag of customer, we will condemn ourselves to a life of consumption, compliance and the narrowing down of our political and social imagination to the confines of the neoliberal sand pit. However, if the public is to change course by reminding ourselves that we are producers of social good, progressive ideas and that we demand a brighter future, we will force a tear in the decaying neoliberal order. Only by thinking critically, asking the right questions and demanding a better future can we exercise our obligations as citizens and protect our democratic rights, protect our environment and protect peace whilst holding our political and corporate leaders to account.

It's important to keep a clear vision of how much better our society can be. The only thing holding us back from a better future is apathy.

Join PIBCI and help realise a better future.

**Anthony B – Website Editor**  
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**PIBCI** | Public Interests  
Before  
Corporate Interests

*"We Are The People We've Been Waiting For"*