

## From Dog Leads to Dying: “Moderate” Talkback as a Rhetorical Space for Democratic Processes

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*Talkback radio is not just a “top-down” flow of communication. Here I examine Jon Faine’s Morning Program on ABC Radio 774 in order to explore the opportunity of talkback to contest existing terms of power. While the public sphere requires the articulation of interests from a variety of sources, some critics deem certain topics more worthy than others. Yet it is only with a wide distribution of ideas that talkback can stimulate democratic deliberation. I describe my observations of topics raised by callers over a period in July 2005, and suggest the extent to which, and how, such calls stimulate democratic processes.*

Not long after radio first became available to the public,<sup>1</sup> there were suggestions that it should be “two-sided”, that listeners should be able to “talk back” to it; and that this activity would somehow contribute to public life, with all that this implies about enhanced communication processes and interactivity across a social terrain.<sup>2</sup> One of the first people to articulate explicitly the idea of “talk back” was the German dramatist and poet Bertolt Brecht, who said the following in his 1926 essay, “The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication”:

Radio is one-sided when it should be two. It is purely an apparatus for distribution, for mere sharing out. So here is a positive suggestion: change this apparatus over from distribution to communication. The radio would be *the finest possible communication apparatus in public life*, a vast network of pipes. That is to say, it would be[,] if it knew how to receive as well as to transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship instead of isolating him. On this principle the radio should step out of the supply business and organise its listeners as suppliers.<sup>3</sup> (Emphasis added)

Eighty years on from Brecht’s prognostication, and especially in the past two decades since FM radio broadcasting superiority in the sound quality of music forced AM stations to compete for listeners, much radio would appear to function now in a two-sided way, the most obvious example of this being what has come to be known as “talkback radio”.<sup>4</sup> Such programs are built around letting listeners call the radio station and speak on air, bringing them into the type of relationship, perhaps, that Brecht’s comments prefigure. But does this mean, as Brecht believed it would, that radio has become the “finest possible communication apparatus in public life”? And if so, “finest” for whom?

Politicians certainly have made increasing use of it. Ian Ward has argued that there has been “strategic utilisation of talkback radio by politicians over mainstream news media”.<sup>5</sup>

John Howard, in particular, favours this medium for communicating with the public, mainly – it has been suggested – because it enables him to by-pass tough questioning by the Press Gallery; and he uses talkback radio more than any of his predecessors.<sup>6</sup> As Ward has shown, this “strategy of exploiting talkback radio to gain unfiltered access to voters worked well”<sup>7</sup> for the Liberals first during the 1996 election campaign; and Howard has continued with it ever since. He gives radio interviews three times more than television interviews and press conferences, and 1.5 times more than doorstops.<sup>8</sup>

Talk radio has indeed become “the preferred organ for national and state leaders to sell policies and ideas, to get voter feedback and to attempt damage control on emerging scandals”, according to Melbourne ABC Radio 774 talkback presenter, Jon Faine.<sup>9</sup> Both of these views would seem to imply, however, that the flow of communication is all “top-down”; that is, from politicians to the public. But of course there is a great deal more content on radio talkback programs than politicians selling their policies and attempting damage control. As Graeme Turner says, drawing on John Tebbutt’s research, the medium of talkback radio has provided listeners with a significant break from hearing the voices of “experts”, and “notable people”, and has given voice to women and other marginalised groups.<sup>10</sup> This suggests that talkback radio has at least the potential to function as one of the few “rhetorical settings and space capable of enhancing the sorts of practices necessary for the making of democratic citizens”.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, as Kane points out, “for civil society to function as a mediating force...[that is, as a public sphere, then there needs to be] the articulation of interests from below as well as above”.<sup>12</sup>

Research into the specific “public” constructed in the rhetorical setting of talkback radio, and into the topics that constitute the contours of this space, is scarce and badly needed, according to Graeme Turner.<sup>13</sup> The majority of studies are American, although there is some Australian research into talkback radio, including Graeme Turner’s excellent study of the infamous Sydney talkback radio hosts (John Laws and Alan Jones) “Cash for Comment” scandal, an incident that served as a prime example of how “political participation [is] restricted by those who had access to influencing media content”.<sup>14</sup> Another important Australian study by Ward, mentioned above, charts both the rise, and the rise in respectability, of talkback radio, and the increasing use being made of it by politicians, John Howard in particular.<sup>15</sup> Both Turner and Ward conclude their discussions by calling for more such studies, Turner even suggesting that with Australian talkback radio there are opportunities to “contest, reconstruct and redefine existing terms and relations of power in the media through direct critical engagement”.<sup>16</sup> I seek to situate my own interest in talkback radio within this narrow chink of opportunity – possibly with the intention of widening or at least illuminating the chink – with my qualitative analysis of the content of a popular Melbourne ABC Radio talkback show: the Radio 774 Morning Program, which runs from 8.30am to twelve noon each weekday morning, and is hosted by Jon Faine.

Faine, a former lawyer, is a well-known and long-time presenter of this program that comprises interviews and discussions with politicians, authors, and various other guests, as well as a string of regular co-hosts who feature during what is called “the conversation hour”, including a period in which callers can ring to comment on a topic raised in one of the interviews, or in the news more generally. Callers can also raise issues of interest in their local community. It was just such an issue that was the focus of one critic’s ire two months before I commenced my own research into Faine’s program: in late May, in her op-ed article in *The Age* on the topics she had heard during one day of listening to Radio 774, including Jon Faine’s program, *Age* journalist Gay Alcorn pronounced most of what she heard to be “dull and frivolous...[and] excruciatingly parochial”.<sup>17</sup> The topic from Faine’s program that she singled out for particular attack was one raised by a caller who had been told by a council worker that his dog lead had to be no longer than 1.5 metres. The caller felt the rule was unfair. Faine responded by offering to “follow up” the issue with the relevant authority.

There is no doubt that many of the topics on all Radio 774 programs are tendentially Victorian, or even Melburnian, although on the Morning Program topics that are nationwide, such as the budget, or “evergreen” issues such as euthanasia or abortion, are not in my observation generally neglected in favour of local issues. But in any case, following Kane’s argument mentioned above, that the public sphere requires the articulation of interests from a variety of sources, we can use Craig’s conceptualisation of public life to develop this notion further by pointing out that a democratic public sphere needs to “foreground the multiplicity of public domains and the *porousness* between those domains ... [including the] ‘private’ realm traditionally dissociated from the public sphere”.<sup>18</sup> In any case, in a society in which the keeping of companion animals is a common and widely-sanctioned activity, is the means of exercising those animals in public such a private matter in the first place? Who *should* proscribe topics that a “public” come together to discuss? And what would be at stake in such proscriptions? Today dog leash lengths may be deemed by some as unworthy to discuss, and tomorrow it may be a proposed ban on teenagers wearing hooded windcheaters (a ban recently mooted in the UK, and reported in Australian newspapers).

What I believe Alcorn is really doing in her article is labelling “ordinary people speak[ing] out on their own behalf”<sup>19</sup> as “dull and frivolous ... [and] excruciatingly parochial”; such judgements draw on a discourse of “ideals of public debate which have become increasingly irrelevant”.<sup>20</sup> Many issues once deemed apolitical or trivial, because personal, are now regularly aired in a diversity of voices, and of ways of speaking. For this reason, I believe it is important to resist any homogenising imperative (such as that which seems to be embodied in Alcorn’s critique), especially those that seem not to acknowledge that “the public ... is in reality an extraordinarily diverse, complex and fractious collection of people who hold an equally bewildering array of ideas, values and attitudes”.<sup>21</sup> Proscriptions are especially worrying when one considers that talkback radio provides a unique space viable for civic society or public sphere activity,<sup>22</sup> in the absence of any such space elsewhere. This view is echoed by Turner’s suggestion, above, about the opportunities afforded by talkback

radio, regarding direct critical engagement. And the link between listening to talkback radio and increased political participation (surely a crucial form of the "critical engagement" of which Turner speaks) has been at least partially demonstrated in several studies, such as those by Barker, Hofstetter and Gianos, Hofstetter, and Page and Tannenbaum.<sup>23</sup>

But this link between talkback listening and political mobilisation is problematic because increased political participation does not preclude outright misinformation obtained as a result of listening to talkback, as demonstrated by research into levels of misinformation in public affairs knowledge possessed by listeners to talkback radio, revealed in studies by Barker, Bennett and Hofstetter.<sup>24</sup> And, second, because – as Faine himself agrees:

Talkback is a loose description that covers a multitude of differing approaches. There is massive variation from commercial radio to the ABC, from city to city and even within stations from different presenters. As with the USA, Australia has redneck shock jocks – and wannabe jocks who are just shocking.<sup>25</sup>

Faine goes on to define talkback, arguing that it is not an interchangeable term with "talk radio": "Talk radio involves interviews with guests. Talkback requires the host – with or without a guest – to interact with callers over the phone".<sup>26</sup> Ward, on the other hand, uses the term "talkback" in a very generic sense: Talkback radio, he says, "mixes calls from listeners, commentary on public affairs, pre-arranged interviews and newsbreaks".<sup>27</sup> For the purposes of my project, I am adopting Faine's definition – the host interacting with callers, with or without guests – since it is the narrower definition, and because the focus of my study is primarily the topics and the discussions between host and callers on Faine's talkback program.

Although the topics on this program vary widely, as I mentioned above, if there are current issues or events involving politicians, elections or public policy, at least some of the morning's discussion, including the talkback segment, will tend to concentrate on these topics. This type of emphasis has led some theorists to label such shows under the rubric of "political talk radio", as does David Barker in his study of "the extent to which listening to the Limbaugh program [a political talk show in the US, broadcast from more than 660 stations] related to participation in [elections]".<sup>28</sup> While I do not specifically make use of the term "political talk radio" myself, I need to make clear that I view Faine's program as having a great deal to do with "politics" in both the wide and narrow senses of the word. Of course, since the ABC is the public broadcaster, both Faine and his producers need to ensure they do not reveal any political partisanship, nor ideological bias; and because of this, I believe the program could be described as "moderate" rather than "radical" or "conservative".

A study of listeners to both moderate and conservative talkback radio programs found that although political talk radio "has been associated with increased general political participation ... and awareness of issues",<sup>29</sup> this effect is not universal: listeners to conservative talk radio were found to be more misinformed (than were other programs'

listeners who were studied) about ideologically charged matters and about political facts.<sup>30</sup> This study also found that:

Somewhat surprisingly, the more one listens to moderate talk, the less misinformed one tends to be regarding these matters ... [although] these findings do not mean that moderate talk radio programming necessarily does a better job than conservative talk programming at providing listeners with accurate information. Those inclined to listen to moderate programming may be more fair-minded than conservative talk listeners, something that the shows themselves cannot control.<sup>31</sup>

I do not cite this study in order to make any special claims for “moderate” talkback shows in general, nor for Jon Faine’s program in particular, but rather to suggest that we cannot claim talkback radio per se to be an unqualified benefit to the public sphere, given that an informed and rationally deliberating public is its major prerequisite.

Unsurprisingly, Jon Faine himself makes several special claims about talkback programs with political content (of which he says there are fewer than thirty in Australia): that “talk radio deals with opinion, often robustly contested, and events”; and that it is “now centre stage in the ‘contest of events’”; and, moreover, that it “provides a unique litmus test of public opinion”.<sup>32</sup> Research would suggest this last point at least to be somewhat contestable or at least problematic, given the data on demographic groups which has shown that political talk radio activity was linked statistically to both level of education and income.<sup>33</sup>

I am not suggesting here that Faine’s listeners comprise an always already determined audience, but more a public among many such publics; and such a public can be conceptualised, because of the moderate political content and the deliberative nature of the program, more as a political or civic identity, distinguishable from “the commercial forces that inform an audience ... [and emphasising] interactivity, as in debates about issues and activities such as voting”.<sup>34</sup> But as with public consumption of media in general, this particular public is constituted by the Morning Program, and by the very act of coming together

through their common access to and consumption of media content ... [a process that will facilitate] the organisation of consent, as well as expressions of difference. Public formation involves a dialogical process, where the ... public appraise the representations of public opinion offered to them.<sup>35</sup>

Indeed, in examining what can be thought of as “Faine’s public” (a discursive construction, I own, but for the present discussion a useful one), it is salient to draw upon the view that some forms of media production, especially those involving dialogic processes, have the potential to stimulate processes of democratic deliberation.<sup>36</sup> The extent to which this view is valid is of course determined by the range of contending viewpoints that are able to access the media. But democracy also requires, as Christopher Lasch has noted, “a

vigorous exchange of ideas and opinions. Ideas, like property, need to be distributed as widely as possible".<sup>37</sup> In the week in which I listened to and noted Faine's content, a time frame seven weeks later than Alcorn's one-day observation, I recorded a distribution of ideas for discussion that stretched from the camber of roads near roundabouts, through dog-lead lengths, to detention centres, to euthanasia, and the legislation surrounding this issue.

While Faine, despite his disingenuous comment that he is "just a filter", does not allow all topics to proceed to a true dialogic state, most ideas gain at least a minute or two of the airwaves. On my first day of observation, Monday 11 July, the caller who rang to discuss what he perceived as roundabouts being unsafe because of the camber of the road, was told by Faine: "I can't share your enthusiasm [for this topic]". The originator of this topic, in common with all callers, was thanked politely as his airtime was terminated. And I have never heard Faine refuse to discuss something on the grounds that it is a "personal" issue and therefore too trivial to be worthy of talkback time. While the topic of road surfaces may not have proceeded to a dialogic process, other callers on that day, "speaking out on their own behalf",<sup>38</sup> included the following range:

Lou rang to say she had just visited the Baxter Detention Centre, and seen people in the "housing solution" which is the placement of people outside the centre in what I assume is ordinary housing. Lou felt this was not much different to the centre, as the people were still living under guard, and one woman had had to move back into the centre because one of her children had been frightened by the guards. Faine asked Lou if she had noticed much actual change since the changes to detention laws that had recently been instituted following the Cornelia Rau case. Lou said she believed there were only "subtle" changes.<sup>39</sup>

A woman rang to tell how, after many years with a private health fund, she had recently reduced her health cover down to a more basic level, and so the health fund was treating her like a new member by making her wait for benefits. Faine asked her if she had considered approaching the Health Care Ombudsman. She said she had not, but that she might indeed do that now. Trivial? Personal? Or an attempt to scrutinise the practices of a large commercial organisation?

A guest on Faine's program that week was Dermot O'Brien, News Director of Channel 10. During the talkback segment, a woman rang in to complain about Big Brother, currently airing on Channel 10. The woman engaged in a lively debate with O'Brien, saying that the explicit sex, nudity, and constant talk of genitalia, among the "Big Brother" cast, was an indictment of Australia. She asked, "What are we offering to the rest of the world, especially to Muslim countries?" O'Brien's glib reply was: "If it wasn't popular, it wouldn't be there". The woman had the last word: She said, "Yes, but it's popular with kids who are too young to have any powers of judgement".

But the most deeply moving topic was raised by a caller named Steve Guest, and this call was to have a dialogic effect that spread out in ripples across public life in Melbourne for

weeks to come. At the start of his call, Steve Guest immediately situated his topic within a current deliberative issue – the legalisation of euthanasia. I believe it is worth transcribing some excerpts from the first few minutes of this call:

Steve Guest: I'm a bit concerned about Kevin Andrews<sup>40</sup> and his attitude towards Christianity. I can't see any Christian compassion. I'm dying an awful death of cancer...

John Faine: I'm sorry to hear that.

Steve Guest: Not as sorry as I am, mate!

Guest then explained that he had been diagnosed with cancer of the oesophagus ten months earlier, a condition which was inoperable and is now beyond all treatment. He cannot swallow, and has a feeding tube in his stomach. He continued:

I'm as good as dead now, Jon. I've probably got less than a fortnight to live. For the past few months I've had no quality of life whatsoever. I'm in pain 24 hours a day despite the fact that I'm wearing a morphine patch ... which I top up with liquid morphine when the pain gets excruciatingly bad. I'm constantly nauseous ... I can't eat and I can't do anything ... I can't even hang washing on the line. And I want my life to end.

Guest then recounted the story of how his family had ended the life of their old dog when it was very sick, and how they gathered in a patch of sunshine with the dog while the vet gave it an injection that ended its life "painlessly and quickly".

Guest continued: "I want my life to end. That's all I ask. And those bastards who call themselves Christians won't let me have that death, Jon. That's all I want now. I want a pill in the cupboard that I can reach for and take ... and end this nightmare I'm living at the moment".

Five days later, on 16 July 2005, a feature story by journalist Kate Legge appeared in the national broadsheet newspaper the *Australian* under the title "Demanding a Right to Die". Legge had obviously just interviewed Guest and she included some of this new material in her article:

"I own my own life," he tells me, energised by the overwhelming response to his appeal for the right to determine the timing of a departure already destined ... "I've had a good life," he says ... "I haven't had to scabble for scraps on a Manila rubbish tip. There are people who have had longer lives than me but their existence has been awful from day one".

Dying has concentrated his mind on euthanasia and a debate that will increasingly absorb aging baby boomers as they nurse ailing and possibly bewildered parents to the grave.

Our generation supports the right to abortion and we are less likely than our elders to be conflicted by religious affiliation when it comes to assisted suicide.<sup>41</sup>

This issue – gaining access to the public sphere because of Steve Guest’s initial call to Faine’s talkback segment – quickly widened, becoming a complex deliberative process, directly as a result of Faine’s adoption of the issue as something that ought to be discussed. To this end, two days after the Legge article appeared, Faine invited Steve Guest to join him in the studio and appear on his program. To ensure a “vigorous exchange of ideas and opinions”,<sup>42</sup> Faine also invited Nicholas Tonti-Filipini, a Catholic Bioethicist who is known to oppose euthanasia. If Faine had had his way, things might have been even more vigorous: he had contacted Kevin Andrews and other anti-euthanasia activists, but none had agreed to participate in a broadcast discussion. Such refusals are always brought to public attention by Faine, as the noting of absences should also inform a debate.

During the second half of the hour of Steve Guest’s time in Faine’s studio, listeners called in to respond to the studio discussion, and to broaden it. Following this, a series of articles and letters on the issue of euthanasia – each articulating the perspective from a particular source<sup>43</sup> – then appeared in a range of newspapers, starting with the *Geelong Advertiser*<sup>44</sup> on 19 July (“My Death, My Choice” by Rebecca Tucker), and continuing on beyond Steve Guest’s death on 26 July. The articles have not stopped since. The last one I collected was only five days prior to writing the final draft of this paper: members of the public clearly wish to continue the debate, to widen this rhetorical and potentially democratic space that was first hollowed out by a man phoning a radio station to talk about his illness and his life, and to express his feelings about the legislation that prevents him – indeed, prevents all of us – from ending our own lives when we are terminally ill.

I contend that the processes set in train by Steve Guest’s initial phone call would have involved media consumers (of the radio broadcasts, or the newspaper articles) on both sides of the euthanasia debate in reflecting seriously on their beliefs. Some might even change their preferences or judgements on this topic, as a result of the process; while others will be strengthened in their beliefs. Whether or not we do change our minds is not the point. It is the deliberative process that is important, a crucial component in democratic deepening.<sup>45</sup>

In this paper I have only been able to give a brief overview of the deliberative processes I have observed taking place over the issue of euthanasia, sparked by Steve Guest’s first phone call to Faine’s talkback program on 11 July. Whilst it is true that all citizens cannot be personally involved in deliberation and dialogue, we can listen to the dialogic exchanges of others, and use these experiences to form our own judgements,<sup>46</sup> the major constituent of deliberative democracy. For my longer study, to which this paper is the introduction, I will conduct an analysis of the content of talkback calls to Faine’s Morning Program over a five-week period with the objective of making qualitative assessments of the content, to determine

how much of talkback constitutes informed public debate, and real deliberation over issues concerning our lives.

Such issues will necessarily involve the local, since our everyday experiences are essentially and necessarily local, even though our lives are increasingly shaped by global processes. I argue that “local” cannot be immediately equated with “parochial” in the sense of restricted or narrow in scope. Indeed the now well-worn mantra of “think globally, act locally” applies here, a mantra that Code believes is born of optimism. As she states: “Local achievements enhance and refine practice, informing knowledge, [and can] strengthen or modify the content of governing conceptions of justice”.<sup>47</sup> And the potential for this exists, I believe, in any honestly expressed views of “ordinary people speak[ing] out on their own behalf”.<sup>48</sup> For this reason people need not only the rhetorical space but also the encouragement, or at least the acceptance, to make public their feelings on topics that affect their (and all our) lives, whether this be to do with dog-leads or dying, or everything in between. In the end, it is really all to do with living together, democratically.

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<sup>1</sup> The first broadcast of the BBC, for example, was in 1922; and “the first authorized broadcasting of telephone calls to radio was on April 17 1967”. See Ian Ward, “Talkback Radio, Political Communication, and Australian Politics”, *Australian Journal of Communication* 29, no. 1 (2002), 22. In the United States, however, the practice of talkback commenced in the 1930s.

<sup>2</sup> I am adopting Craig’s term “public life” here, rather than “public sphere” because I subscribe to his argument that “public life” signals “a broader conceptualization of the public domain than is encapsulated in ideas of the public sphere”. “The use of the broader term ... is also motivated by a belief that we cannot ... circumscribe boundaries for a public sphere where particular kinds of political and civic activities occur ... [The public sphere] is always informed by, and in constant dialogue with, more comprehensive societal figurations which together constitute public life”. See G. Craig, *The Media, Politics and Public Life* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2004), 53.

<sup>3</sup> Bertolt Brecht cited in William J. Mitchell, *ME++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

<sup>4</sup> This seems to be the most prevalent term in Australia currently, but the term “talk radio” is also used, while “call-in” radio is common in the United States. I will clarify and justify my choice of the term “talkback” a little further into the paper.

<sup>5</sup> Ian Ward, “Talkback Radio, Political Communication, and Australian Politics”, *Australian Journal of Communication* 29, no. 1 (2002), 21-38.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>9</sup> This is from Jon Faine's paper "Talkback radio", draft chapter for Robert Manne (ed.), *Politics and the Australian Media*. Draft chapter given to me by the author, June 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Graeme Turner, "Some things we should know about talkback radio", Keynote speaker's paper at the 2005 Radio Conference, RMIT University, 11-14 July 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas Kane, "Public Argument, Civil Society, and What Talk Radio Teaches About Rhetoric", *Argumentation and Advocacy* 34, no. 3 (Winter 1998), 154-161.

<sup>12</sup> Kane, *Ibid.* Kane elaborates, quoting Jean Bethke Elshtain: "By civil society, I mean the many forms of community and association that dot the landscape of a democratic culture, from families to churches to neighbourhood groups to trade unions to self-help movements to volunteer assistance to the needy". See Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Democracy on Trial* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 5

<sup>13</sup> Turner, 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Graeme Turner, "Ethics, Entertainment, and the Tabloid: the Case of Talkback Radio in Australia", *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies* 15, no. 3 (2001), 356.

<sup>15</sup> Ward.

<sup>16</sup> Turner, 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Gay Alcorn, *Age*, 26 May 2005

<sup>18</sup> G. Craig, *The Media, Politics and Public Life* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2004), 54 (emphasis added).

<sup>19</sup> Catharine Lumby, *Gotcha: Life in a Tabloid World*, (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1999), xii.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Kane.

<sup>23</sup> See David C. Barker, "The Talk Radio Community: Nontraditional Social Networks and Political Participation", *Social Science Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (1998), 261-72; Barker, *Rushed to Judgment: Talk Radio, Persuasion and American Political Behaviour* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); C. Richard Hofstetter, "Political Talk Radio, Situational Involvement and Political Mobilization", *Social Science Quarterly* 79, no. 2 (June 1998); Hofstetter and Christopher L. Gianos, "Political Talk Radio: Actions Speak Louder than Words", *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 41, no. 4 (1997), 501-15; Benjamin I. Page and Jason Tannenbaum, "Populist Deliberation and Talk Radio", *Journal of Communication* 46, no.2 (1996), 33.

<sup>24</sup> Barker, *Rushed to Judgment*, Bennett (2001), and Hofstetter, "Political Talk Radio, Situational Involvement and Political Mobilization".

<sup>25</sup> Faine.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Ward, 21.

<sup>28</sup> David C. Barker, "The Talk Radio Community". And at least several other theorists use this term; see, for example, C. Richard Hofstetter, and David Barker, with James T. Smith, et al., "Information and Misinformation and Political Talk Radio", *Political Research Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (1999), 353-69; and Hofstetter and Gianos, "Political Talk Radio".

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* Hofstetter's underlying theory for this study was that "individuals gather political knowledge by inferential reasoning--constructing political 'reality' from the messages to which they are exposed by making

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inferences about what they do not know based on extrapolations from what they see or hear. This ‘filling-in’ may often result in misinformation”.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Faine.

<sup>33</sup> Interestingly, this study found that political talk radio activity was not linked to “age, gender, marital status, race/ethnicity, or length of residence in the local area”. See C. Richard Hofstetter, “Political Talk Radio, Situational Involvement and Political Mobilization”, 275.

<sup>34</sup> Craig, 60.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 50.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Simon Cottle, “Television Agora and Agoraphobia Post-September 11”, in B. Zelizer and S. Allan (eds), *Journalism after September 11* (London: Routledge, 2002), 178-98; and J.S. Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>37</sup> Christopher Lasch, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1995), 10.

<sup>38</sup> Lumby, xii.

<sup>39</sup> Happily, in the weeks following this call, all children and their families were released from Australian detention centres into the community, together with most long-term detainees.

<sup>40</sup> Kevin Andrews, currently the Employment and Workplace Relations Minister in the Coalition Government, sponsored the private members bill that overturned the Rights of the Terminally Ill Act in the Northern Territory in 1997, revoking the first legislation in the world to legalise euthanasia, during the existence of which four terminally ill people legally ended their own lives (Rebecca Tucker, *Geelong Advertiser*, 22 July 2005).

<sup>41</sup> Kate Legge, “Demanding a right to die”, *The Australian*, 16 July 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Lasch, 10.

<sup>43</sup> The viewpoints ranged from people who had witnessed a loved one recover from the same type of illness as Guest’s, thereby arguing against euthanasia, through to doctors who had assisted terminally ill patients to die by euthanasia by providing them with the relevant information.

<sup>44</sup> Steve Guest lived in Point Lonsdale, near Geelong, Victoria.

<sup>45</sup> Cottle and Dryzek

<sup>46</sup> Cottle.

<sup>47</sup> Lorraine Code, “How to Think Globally: Stretching the Limits of Imagination”, *Hypatia* 13, no. 2 (1998), 73.

<sup>48</sup> Lumby, xii.