

AUSTRALIAN POLITICAL EXCHANGE COUNCIL
INDIVIDUAL STUDY TOUR TO THE UNITED KINGDOM
23 NOVEMBER-22 DECEMBER 2013

Mr Sebastian Zwalf (Australian Labor Party)
Lead National Organiser, Australian Labor Party

Acknowledgements

The author is enormously grateful to everyone who offered their time, thoughts and insights to support this project by meeting and in some instances providing additional information. The author is particularly grateful to a few individuals who gave advice about others to meet with and in some cases provided introductions; Lord Maurice Glasman, Matthew McGregor of Blue State Digital, Karin Christiansen, Andy Bagnel, Justin Cartwright, Nabilla Satar, Liz Leffman, Toni Griffiths and Richard Angel were especially helpful and generous. Thank you. The author is also grateful to those people who agreed to meet up but due to scheduling challenges were not able to do so. Lastly, the author is deeply grateful to Miles Saltiel and Felicity Miller of Marble Arch, London, who provided accommodation, companionship and friendship throughout the period of study.

Contents

- Acronyms.....4
- Glossary of Key Terms4
- Executive Summary5
 - Purpose.....5
 - Methodology5
 - Scope5
- Contemporary Political Issues6
 - Scottish Devolution Referendum6
 - European Succession6
 - Election 20157
 - Forming Government8
- Campaigning.....8
 - Movement for Change8
 - 38°9
 - Summary of Campaigning 10
- Think Tank Operations 10
 - Funding and Operating models 10
 - Funding Overview..... 12
 - Project specific funding 12
- Influencing Policy 13
 - Think tanks 13
 - Pressure Groups 14
 - Pressure Groups Overview 16
- Conclusion 16
 - Contemporary Political Issues 16
 - Campaigning..... 17
 - Think tank operations..... 17
 - Influencing Policy..... 17
- Appendix One: References 18
- Appendix Two: Schedule of Meetings..... 19
- Appendix Three: Events attended 20

Acronyms

ERS: Electoral Reform Society

IPPR: Institute for Public Policy Research

LCN: Labour Campaign Network

MfC: Movement for change

MP: Member of Parliament

NHS: National Health Service

UK: United Kingdom

Glossary of Key Terms

First-Past-The-Post: The electoral system used to elect members to the House of Commons. Voters give a single indication only of which candidate they wish to support. No preferences beyond the primary vote are allocated. The successful candidate is the one that has the highest primary vote.

Political Campaigns Funds: Political Campaigns Funds were established during the 1980s as a way of ensuring greater transparency over the use of union funds for political purposes, including giving members a say about whether the union should continue to contribute to political causes.

Potential Parliamentary Candidate: A person identified by a political party through an official process who is subsequently available to be endorsed by a local constituency party as the selected candidate.

United Kingdom: The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Is used interchangeably with 'Great Britain'.

Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of selected aspects of the author's recent study trip to the United Kingdom (UK). The purpose of the study was to meet with key political and think tank personnel in the UK with respect to the following topics:

- Contemporary and emerging campaigning and organising techniques;
- The funding and operating models employed by think tanks in the UK;
- Interactions between think tanks and pressure groups and decision makers; and
- Contemporary political issues.

With regard to all of these topics, the author was interested in both the similarities and differences between the UK and Australia, giving consideration to what could be done differently in the Australian context.

Methodology

The author was sponsored by the Australian Political Exchange Council to conduct a study of the author's choosing. The author conducted semi-structured interviews with approximately 35 senior political and think tank personnel in the United Kingdom with respect to the aforementioned topics. Interviews were arranged by request and typically took 60-90 minutes to conduct. The author took extensive notes, of which the relevant sections are used as the basis for this report. Some additional information was obtained from additional publicly available sources (for example, media reports or website copy) and in some instances, primary documents were provided by those interviewed.

Scope

This report is largely limited to a summary of a selection of verbal accounts provided by those interviewed. In some instances, additional information was sought through publically available sources or by information provided by the interviewee. It has not been possible to seek independent verification of the information provided by interviewees. In other words, information provided is taken at face-value.

The author has also made every effort to respect the information that was provided on a confidential or off-the-record basis. If any interviewee believes this has not occurred, they should contact the author to arrange correction.

Contemporary Political Issues

A central aspect of the study trip was to consult key political and campaign personnel on current and emerging political issues in the United Kingdom. To this end, the following issues are discussed.

Scottish Devolution Referendum

The electors of Scotland are due to vote in a referendum which, if passed, would see Scotland secede from the United Kingdom. The referendum is due to be held on 18 September 2014. The move to succeed from the UK is being advocated by the governing party in the Scottish parliament, the Scottish Nationalists. UK and Scottish Labour do not support the push for succession and whilst arranging for a referendum to take place on the succession question, the Conservatives do not support succession either. The push for succession appears to be driven by nostalgic notions of a pre-unification independent Scotland. For example, the referendum will take place exactly 700 years after the Battle of Bannockburn in which Scottish armies led by Robert the Bruce defeated the English. Few other arguments appear to be able to be made in support of devolution. The case for remaining within the United Kingdom is largely economic. Although opinion is mixed, studies tend to suggest that Scotland is fiscally and economically better off as a result of being in the union. For example, a recent poll of economic and financial commentators and academics by the Financial Times found nearly 60 per cent of those surveyed believed devolution would be a net negative for Scotland.¹ The economic argument appears to have held sway with voters with a series of public opinion polls indicating that the succession referendum will fail. No independent public opinion poll has found support for devolution to be greater than 39 per cent of the Scottish population. The latest poll by YouGov/Times held over 6 to 9 December found that support was at 33 per cent, opposition at 52 per cent and 15 per cent of electors undecided.² Public confidence in the succession proposal does not appear to have been helped by the November 2013 release of details about the succession proposal in Scotland's Future, a government white paper on the devolution plan. What several commentators described as key questions were left out of the proposal including the question of what currency Scotland would use were it to secede. Questions also have been raised about whether Scotland would be eligible to stay in supranational organisations such as the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

European Succession

Significant public debate has been taking place within Britain about whether the United Kingdom should continue to be a member of the European Union (EU). Discussion of this issue has been brought to the fore by the activities of the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) led by Nigel Farage. Much of the publicity UKIP has been able to generate is leveraged off the awkward positions taken by the leadership of both major parties. Both major parties are officially supportive of continuing in the EU whilst large parts of the voting base (and in the case of the Conservatives, also their parliamentary base) of both parties are sympathetic to secession ideals. Anti-European Union sentiment appears to be driven by a number of factors that are felt by large cohorts of the population. These concerns include migration and the impact of European Union laws and regulation that many British citizens reportedly feel are overbearing, unrepresentative and unnecessary. Migration is a central issue in the United Kingdom at the moment with 1 January 2014 being the first day that Romanian and Bulgarian citizens have work and residency rights within the UK. Large numbers of UK citizens appear fearful that further European migration will undermine their own economic circumstances. In some instances social concerns about migration are expressed also. The Conservative Party have committed that if they are re-elected at the 2015 election, they will facilitate a referendum on leaving the EU in 2017. Labour has resisted some internal pressure to match this commitment, staying broadly pro-European. The issue of leaving the EU is politically difficult for both the Conservative and Labour parties. Although UKIP has been successful in some recent by-election for Westminster seats and at some recent local government elections, it is largely believed that they will not win any significant number of seats at the 2015 general election, possibly winning none at all. Despite this, UKIP's ability to elevate issues of Britain's relationship with Europe has served to put significant pressure on the major parties. The leadership of the

¹ Newsroom, 2014, "Financial Times survey of expert opinion on impact of Yes vote for Scottish independence," *Argyll News*.

² YouGov, 2013, YouGovTimes Survey Results, *YouGov*.

Conservative Party is committed to staying in the EU. However this view is not supported by large parts of their backbench. This issue has the ability to split the Conservative vote at the 2015 election, with there being a strong possibility that large numbers of voters who supported to Conservatives at the 2010 general election will support UKIP in 2015. This is similarly a challenge for the Labour Party, although public opinion polls indicate that UKIP’s voting base includes proportionately more former Conservative supporters than Labour electors. The issue of major parties losing voters to a minor party is critical in the UK political system which does not permit preferential voting, meaning that votes for minor parties cannot be reclaimed by major party candidates in a preferential ballot count. Thus, perhaps ironically, the net impact of UKIP’s posturing on EU succession may be to help Labour win seats at the expense of the Conservatives.

Election 2015

The May 2015 election is presenting challenges for all three major political parties. The formation of the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition in 2010 appears to have damaged both parties’ electoral fortunes, although it has most severely and directly impacted the Liberal Democrats. Recent polls suggest that more than half of electors who voted Liberal Democrat in 2010 do not intend to do so again at the 2015 election. The perception that the Liberal Democrats have broken several 2010 election commitments and moreover compromised their position as a party that is willing and able to speak out against both Labour and Conservatives, appears to have damaged them most among voters. This presents a significant threat to the Liberal Democrats that they will lose voters to Labour, reducing their vote and losing a number of seats at the same time. Electorates in England’s North that Labour initially lost to the Liberal Democrats are believed to be most at risk. The loss of a large number of Liberal Democrat seats also presents challenges for the Conservative Party who, given their own vote level, would almost certainly be required to again enter a coalition if it is to stay in government beyond 2015. The most direct electoral challenge to the Conservatives however, is their own lacklustre vote level. This is currently estimated at around 32 per cent (down four percentage points on the 2010 election) with one recent opinion poll suggesting that up to 37 per cent of their supporters at the 2010 election are prepared to vote differently at the 2015 election.³ The Conservatives do not appear to have been able to lift their primary vote since the 2010 election which saw them win the largest number of seats in the House of Commons without gaining an outright majority.

Table 1: Comparison of recent polling versus 2010 election results

Party	Poll held 6-7 January 2014	2010 General Election
Conservative	32 %	36.1 %
Labour	37 %	29 %
Liberal Democrat	10 %	23 %
UKIP	14 %	3.1 %
Other	9 %	8.8 %

Source: YouGov Voting Intention Poll for The Sun.⁴

The issue of post global financial crisis economic recovery appears most central to the Conservative’s fortunes. Britain is largely seen as having gone through an economic recovery which has not been associated with a significant reduction in unemployment. In addition, Labour has campaigned heavily on cost-of-living issues and have highlighted the fact that in all months bar one since the 2010 elections, consumer prices have risen more than wages. The Conservatives are also suffering from a loss of their vote to UKIP which is affecting them more than Labour in proportional terms. Given these circumstances, it is regarded as a likely possibility that the first-term Conservative Government may lose the 2015 election; a situation considered most unlikely given recent and conventional developed world trends toward re-electing first-term governments. In these circumstances, Labour finds itself in a political context that it arguably did not expect upon leaving office in 2010. The Labour Party is currently undertaking an extensive policy review process which will determine which policies it will take to the

³ Ashcroft, 2014, “Project Blueprint: Phase 4”.

⁴ YouGov, 2014, “YouGov Survey Results: Voting Intention Tracker from 2010 general election – present”, *YouGov*.

2015 election. The process, being led by Jon Cruddas MP, is notable for its breadth and depth, giving Labour a real opportunity to reassess its policies after a 13-year period of government. The process is also notable for the high-level input it enjoys. Several current and former corporate, public service and NGO leaders and one former Australian minister are chairing or providing input to the policy committees that have been established. The thoroughness with which the policy review process is being undertaken is appearing to put some pressure on Labour's leadership with a choice between adopting a mild-reform stance or embracing deeper change through the policy proposals that the policy review process will recommend. Labour's leader, Ed Milliband, it has been said, has come under pressure not to "shrink the offer", and instead take a bold, detailed and comprehensive platform forward to the next election.⁵

Forming Government

A current and likely future issue within the UK political environment is the composition of the next government. That is, with the next election due in May 2015, which party or combination of parties will form a majority in the House of Commons. The current arrangements in which the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats exist within a coalition government has caused substantial disquiet among their support bases – especially for the Liberal Democrats, their own support level more than halving since the 2010 election. A substantial amount of this disquiet may be attributable to the fact that neither party had committed to entering into the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition as part of their election manifestos hence taking their supporters somewhat by surprise when the coalition agreement was made. Given Great Britain's first-past-the-post electoral system, it is hard to know if the current vote levels for each party would result in any party forming a majority at the 2015 election. Great Britain may once again face a political impasse. The level of uncertainty is exacerbated by the fact that none of the three major parties have made any commitment to whether it would govern in collation from 2015, this includes those parties that comprise the present coalition. Indeed, the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives have both said that they will campaign as independent parties in the lead up to the 2015 election. Such a proposition will presumably not increase the level of harmony within the coalition as both parties head toward the 2015 election. Within Labour, a debate is taking place about whether the Party should aim to win enough seats to be the biggest single party within the House of Commons at the 2015 election, or to seek an outright majority of seats, thereby ensuring it does not need to rely on any other party to form government. A further view that is held within some parts of UK Labour is that the Party should refuse to govern in coalition under any circumstances and if it does not win a majority of seats at the 2015 election, offering itself as a minority government or instead to continue in Opposition. This view has been largely informed by the observed experiences of Britain's current coalition government and those parties internationally that have entered similar agreements – including Australian Labor from 2010 to 2013.

Campaigning

The author met with representatives of a number of campaign organisations and three political parties to discuss their operations and develop an understanding of emerging trends in campaigning and organising in the United Kingdom.

Movement for Change

Movement for Change (MfC) was established in 2010 for the purpose of training existing and potential future activists on the principles and techniques of community organising. MfC works exclusively for the political centre-left providing support only to UK Labour, trade unions or with groups in civil society on projects that involve member based action on specific issues. In addition to providing training, they also provide ongoing support and advice to groups in civil society to assist their campaigns. To date, 2000 activists have conducted training with MfC, which has had a cascading effect on the ability of those activists to take a role in organising in their communities. A number of MfC graduates are now local government councillors and some are potential parliamentary candidates.

⁵ New Statesman, 2013, "Leader: Milliband must not "Shrink the Offer"", *New Statesman*. November 2013.

MfC's model for community organising is based on a template five-step approach, which can be summarised as:

Step One: One-to-One. Involves meeting with interested potential activists on a small-scale basis, listening to people about the issues that concern them and proposing a potential course of action.

Step Two: Together. Involves getting a larger group of affected people together and getting them organised around the issue of concern.

Step Three: Action. Involves taking an agreed course of action on the issue to demonstrate the strength and depth of feeling by the group on an issue. For example, this may include holding a public rally or collecting signatures for a petition and presenting those signatures.

Step Four: Negotiation. In this stage, the group will negotiate typically via its leaders for an acceptable outcome with the protagonists in the situation.

Step Five: Celebration: In this stage, the group will celebrate the outcome achieved in the previous step. The key purpose of this stage is to acknowledge the win achieved and the efforts of all those who helped to achieve it.

The objective of each stage is to be sufficiently effective to graduate to the next stage. For example, MfC have abandoned certain projects in the first stage where it did not appear there was a sufficient support and leadership group to graduate to the next stage. Further, the 'Negotiation' stage can only be commenced if the prior stage, 'Action', sufficiently incentivises the other parties to participate in negotiations. The success of the MfC model appears to be contingent both on finding a group of local campaign leaders to drive and continue the campaign locally and also on the ability of those leaders and other activists to draw and build support from other members of the community in which they are taking action.

MfC have run approximately forty campaigns on a range of issues, both national and local. Major national campaigns they have been involved with have included campaigns around the living wage, improving standards for tenants and money lending practices. Local campaigns have included campaigns around local health services, planning and town use, general practitioner appointment times, bad landlords, food banking and domestic violence.

Training is offered either at cost (for residential weekends) and in some instances at no cost at all. For example, an upcoming training residential weekend is being charged at a cost of around £200.

38°

Founded in 2008, 38° is an online, non-party political member-based and directed campaign organisation who see their core objective as being to demonstrate to their membership the next practical steps in achieving progressive change. They are based on the same principles as other member-powered campaign organisations such as GetUp! in Australia and Move On in the United States. They have a membership of just over two million which they have developed over their five years of existence. Examples of campaigns 38° have run include campaigns on climate change, funding for the National Health Service, chemical regulation affecting pollinating bees and their 'Zero Hours' campaign around the right of casual workers.

38° determines on a weekly basis which campaigns to pursue by doing a weekly poll of a randomly selected sample of its membership. On the basis of the poll results, a weekly program of activity is determined. In addition to this, the organisation trials a majority of their asks of members on a sample

of their membership to ensure the ask receives sufficient follow through. If they do not, campaigns and asks are modified.

The organisation sees no perceivable limit to the actions that they can encourage their members to take on issues. However common examples of campaign actions have included actions such as:

- petitions directed at decision makers;
- encouraging emails direct to MPs;
- public meetings in relevant MPs' constituencies;
- public rallies;
- twitter storms;
- encouraging phoning to MP's offices; and
- crowd funding of billboards, newspaper ads and other public advertising.

In addition to this, any individual member of 38° can start an online petition with their Campaigns-by-You online tool. This allows individual members to commence campaigning on issues that are pertinent to them. Through this function, the 38° head office is able to observe campaigns and in some instances has been able to provide additional support to them, for example advice on elevating the issue through use of public media. Campaigns on the government budget, the National Health Service (NHS), cycling paths and public toilets have been commenced through this tool.

Summary of Campaigning

A number of trends are observable within the UK political system which demonstrate tangible differences to the Australian political system. Other features are noticeably similar. Movement for Change is unparalleled in the Australian political and civil environment. Their activities in the UK have the ability to have a large impact on political and civil outcomes – and in many instances have already done so. 38° has also had a significant impact on politics within the UK, although its impact is comparable to that of GetUp! in the Australian context. It is notable that MfC and 38° appear to have been enormously successful organisations involved in politics whilst sitting outside of the party-political process. This has occurred at a time of declining memberships of political organisations that has occurred in the United Kingdom as well as Australia. The success of both MfC and 38° perhaps suggests that while a large number of people in the community are willing to be politically active, they have a preference for doing so outside of political parties. Their success is perhaps also aided by the ability of organisations such as MfC and 38° to pursue issues that are not inherently partisan – and do not require strictly partisan actions. There would be no reason that a Movement for Change style organisation could not be viable in the Australian environment.

Think Tank Operations

It has been estimated that the UK has between 50-60 active think tanks of which 10-20 have critical size, publish research frequently and attract public and media attention for their work. This appears to be a vastly bigger sector than its Australian equivalent. Given this, the author conducted a number of consultations with representatives of think tanks with the objective of learning about:

- their structure and operating model; and
- their funding model.

The author also took the opportunity to learn about the various methods by which think tanks seek to influence policy, the findings of which are discussed in the following chapter.

Funding and Operating models

The following observations can be made with respect to the operations of the think tanks studied. With respect to funding, think tanks are funded through one or a combination of the following sources. In most cases a combination of funding sources are drawn upon with varying weights on each source.

Table 2: Think tank funding sources

Funding Type	Definition	Example
Individual Membership	Funding is received in respect of membership of the organisation by individuals – typically for fairly modest amounts annually. For example, individual membership of the Adam Smith Institute is available from £150.	Although most think tanks offer an individual membership subscription, the Fabian Society is noted for receiving the majority of its income through individual membership.
Corporate or Trade Union Partnership	Funding is received in respect of a corporate or trade union subscription to the organisation. This type of membership may be associated with benefits such as guaranteed access to events and briefings or sector specific research.	Centre Forum lists in excess of a dozen corporate members. Compass is sponsored by two large trade union affiliates.
Project specific	Funding is received with respect to undertaking an individual project on a particular topic. This may occur as a result of responding to a public tender to complete a piece of research or through a direct-approach of the sponsor. Project specific funding may be received from sponsoring individuals, trusts (for example, the Cadbury Barrow Trust) or government organisation (e.g. the European Parliament).	While many think tanks receive project specific funding, Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) and Centre Forum can be noted for receiving a sizeable income from project specific sources.
Donation	Funding is received from particular donors to assist the operation and management of the organisation.	Almost all think tanks receive donations that are general and not received in respect of specific projects or membership of the organisation. Policy Network is one organisation that receives a large degree of its funding from a relatively small number of donors.
Service	Funding is received from an ownership of a company that provides services on a fee-for-service basis.	The Electoral reform Society (ERS) receives a majority of its income from Electoral Services Ltd, a company established to run ballots and elections in membership based organisations.
Other	Funding is received from other sources such as fundraising events – for example dinners or fringe events held at political party conferences.	Several think tanks receive small amounts of income from other sources such as fundraising dinners.

For all think tanks consulted, funding is received from a combination of sources with varying weights on the sources between organisations. For example, the ERS receives the overwhelming majority of its funding from a private company in which it has ownership, while IPPR receives the majority of its income on a project specific basis. Policy Network, for example, does not have a membership so receives no membership based income.

The nature of the income sources has a direct relationship with the variety and type of work undertaken by think tanks, which is noted in Table 3. That is not to say, however, that the income source is the primary determinant of the work undertaken, rather that different think tanks have elected to adopt

various models which reflect their values and objectives with respect to funding and operations. Funding is not necessarily the primary determinant of the project model pursued.

Table 3: Think tank project model

Work undertaken	Definition	Example
Membership driven	Research is undertaken by members in co-operation with the think tank and is co-sponsored.	The Fabian Society is noted for sponsoring and publishing the work of its members at the core of its activities.
Externally produced work	Research is undertaken by policy experts outside of the organisation and is edited, published and sponsored by the think tank.	The Adam Smith Institute is one example of an organisation that publishes work undertaken outside of the organisation by non-members (for example, academics).
Internally produced research	Research is undertaken by internal researchers or economists (i.e. employees of the organisation) on a specific issue.	The IPPR is noted for publishing a vast quantity of internally produced research.
Commissioned work	Research is undertaken by a subject matter expert outside the organisation who is commissioned by the think tank to provide this research.	
Knowledge sharing	The think tank provides a platform for sharing research and its findings by connecting researchers with an audience.	Policy Network was established for this purpose with the majority of its publications being produced externally.

The majority of organisations consulted are active across several types of activities undertaken and in some cases act as a pressure or advocacy group also running public campaigns on issues of importance to them. For example, while primarily being a think tank Compass has campaigned on wealth gap issues and pay-day lending reform. The Electoral Reform Society is equally focussed on its role as an advocate for electoral reform whilst also being a think tank on electoral issues producing research of interest on these matters.

Further, some think tanks undertake additional work not outlined in Table 3. For example, the Adam Smith Institute runs an educational program, speaking to students at both high school and universities about their role and issues that are pertinent to them.

Funding Overview

All think tanks receive income to cover running costs. The major costs incurred by think tanks consulted are:

- staff salaries, on-costs and related labour expenses;
- publication of research and distribution including online;
- office overheads, administration and governance costs; and
- event hosting.

The most significant expense for all organisations are salaries and related labour expenses, typically taking up about 70 per cent of the organisation’s annual expenditure. In order to cover these costs, think tanks receive income from a range of sources.

Project specific funding

Within those think tanks consulted, a range of views exist about the efficacy and related ethical issues associated with accepting funding on a project specific basis. Some organisations accept such funding,

others do not, believing that it has the potential to impact the quality and independence of the research produced, with project sponsors expecting a given outcome as a pre-condition for work being financially supported. It is argued that some think tanks (although none consulted for this research) have become proxy public relations agencies by adopting a 'consultancy' model in which almost any project would be undertaken, and therefore elevated into the public spotlight, provided that there is a project sponsor to fund it. This approach is regarded as unethical and impure for the research outcomes by some interviewed. While most think tanks consulted agreed that project specific funding could compromise research outcomes, they also agreed that measures could be put in place to limit this possibility. For example, Centre Forum has adopted a policy of developing a scoping study for projects before they are commenced, thus attempting to ensure that the final project adheres to the initial scoping document which is developed prior to financial support being granted. IPPR has a policy of only carrying out funding specific projects where it has existing expertise or it would be an extension of existing work.

A related topic is the extent to which single donors to think tanks can influence the research produced by those organisations. Because of the inherent risks in producing research which may be viewed by others as fitting the political agenda of third-parties, some organisations have put in place steps to limit the influence of donors. For example, the Adam Smith Institute does not accept donations that would exceed 10 per cent of their annual budget. Public debate has also focused on the disclosure of income sources to think tanks with a number of think tanks (especially those on the reactionary side of politics) attracting criticism for not disclosing their funding sources.⁶ Somewhat relatedly, two well-regarded free-market think tanks were criticised in June 2013 for accepting donations from tobacco firms with the suggestion being made that this sponsorship could compromise their work.⁷

The issue of disclosure is significant and ongoing within the think tank sector. Think tanks that register as charities have a higher disclosure threshold than those who do not. They are required to register their income and expenditure and other details about its operations. Such information is publicly available through reports to the Charities Commission website.

Influencing Policy

The author undertook consultations with a number of senior think tank and pressure group personnel. The purpose of these consultations was to consider the methods by which these organisations seek to influence policy outcomes of government and political parties. It is important to note that the UK has an active pressure group sector whose sole purpose is to be a pressure group within political parties. In other words, they are not typically producers of original research.

Think tanks

Across think tanks, a range of methods are in use with regard to influencing decision makers. Key among them are:

- publishing detailed research to broad audiences (e.g. to their membership or online);
- through summarising their research for publication in media (either as press releases or drops to columnists);
- holding public events to launch research and focus public attention;
- facilitating private events between researchers and politicians; and
- arranging direct briefings with politicians.

Within this spectrum, various think tanks have a preference for certain approaches, or combinations of approaches. For example, some think tanks seek to influence policy by having direct contact with decision makers, influencing them on a one-to-one basis on topics of potential interest or relevancy to the decision maker. This approach was employed by the Electoral Reform Society (ERS) with respect to

⁶ Monbiot, G., 2011., "Think Tanks are Crushing our Democracy.", *The Guardian*.

⁷ Doward, J., 2013, "Health groups dismayed by news 'big tobacco' funded rightwing thinktanks", *The Guardian*.

recent proposed changes to voter registration legislation. Other think tanks eschew direct involvement and dialogue with politicians instead preferring to influence broader public debate about issues, believing this has a greater, more substantial and long term impact on policy outcomes than one-to-one contact. This is, for example, the case with the Adam Smith Institute. Other organisations have on occasions run public campaigns on relevant issues acting more like a lobby group than a think tank. ERS and Compass have both at times adopted this approach. Another organisation, Policy Network, often arranges contact between researchers and politicians but does not see the principal role of the organisation as being to directly influence policy, rather it is to provide a forum or platform for researchers to publicise their research. The majority of organisations appear to employ a horses-for-courses approach, using various styles depending on the nature of the policy issue and their level of involvement with it. For example, the ERS has been known to campaign quite publicly on certain issues (the 2011 referendum on electoral methods reform) while adopting a lower key approach on other (voter registration). The degree to which various methods are employed is perhaps also influenced by the nature of the think tanks with some, for example, IPPR, Centre Forum and Policy Exchange having almost exclusive relationships with Labour, Liberal Democrats and Conservatives respectively while other think tanks, such as the ERS or the Adam Smith Institute having no direct relationships with any party.

A corollary to this spectrum of preferences appears to be the nature of the work undertaken by the think tanks. Organisations undertaking big-picture research appear happy to influence public debate without being involved in the direct implementation or design of policy. For example, the Adam Smith Institute have a preference for floating ideas, without necessarily taking a strong role in the ensuing steps of their implementation via government policy. Other think tanks appear to have a niche generating research and policy on very particular matters and become a sounding board for these policies by government and opposition on design and implementation. IPPR and Centre Forum are two such organisations that conduct very detailed work of this nature. As a result, big-picture think tanks tend to be involved in the policy development process at its earliest stages in conceiving an idea, while other think tanks such as IPPR tend to be involved in the concluding stages of those ideas that receive traction with policy makers. Other organisations in the UK appear to exist with the sole purpose of attracting public attention through the free media, contributing little in the way of new ideas but instead acting as a self-appointed public advocates around pet issues.

Pressure Groups

With respect to pressure groups, these organisations differ from think tanks, in that they exist to principally influence the methods by which political parties operate, organise and pursue policy, typically without being the primary generators of research themselves. These were of interest to the author given such entities have no comparison in Australian context. The author interviewed representatives from three Labour pressure groups. Some information about these organisations and their methods is as follows:

Progress Online

Progress Online was founded in 1996 in the wake of successful reforms in 1995 to UK Labour's constitution, particularly Clause IV of the Party's constitution. The reforms to the constitution were regarded as the unofficial commencement of the New Labour era with the express acceptance of a market-based economy in lieu of a stated preference for nationalisation. In its present day format, Progress see their role as being:

- a connection point between UK Labour's membership and the Parliamentary Party and the parliamentary leadership;
- fostering policy ideas and debate; and
- a pressure group within the Party and broader community for New Labour ideals.

To this end, the organisation plays a role in trying get Labour to give consideration to pragmatic policy stances, not necessarily via stipulating what policy should be but rather who should be considered or

consulted in its design and the electoral impacts that may be considered. This function is helped and facilitated by an ethos in which dissent is encouraged and is not equated to disloyalty but rather it enables debate and discussion leading to a stronger and more diverse Party. Whilst being integrally involved in UK Labour, Progress has a track record of publicly disagreeing with the Party and some of its MPs and spokespeople. For example, it has recently taken issue with the number of key seats that UK Labour is planning to campaign in at the 2015 election. Progress' ability to so publicly campaign against the chosen stances of UK Labour is perhaps more likely and publicly tenable in the UK given the relative flexibility of Party votes and the plurality of views this encourages within the Party. They have a membership of over approximately 2100 individual subscribers which they communicate with via a monthly magazine, events, a website and emails. In addition to their individual members, they have a group of over 20 Members of Parliament with whom they have a direct and a regular dialogue.

Blue Labour

Blue Labour was founded in 2010 and is a movement within UK Labour to refocus Labour on winning the support of working class electors which it argues have become disenfranchised from Labour. Key amongst its ideals are:

- rethinking and general opposition to the growth of the state and centralisation that Labour has progressively adopted since 1945;
- democratisation and giving citizens a greater and more direct role in government; and
- self-reliance and self-determination for citizens.

It has been argued that its ideological position can be summarised as being economically to the left of Labour but socially to Labour's right, perhaps reflecting the ideological sympathies of the voters they believe Labour must reclaim.

Blue Labour is led by former academic and Labour peer, Lord Maurice Glasman. Lord Glasman and Blue Labour have been instrumental in two high-profile campaigns which have given voice to their ideals, being the creation of the Bank of Salford (near Manchester) in co-operation with the Salford credit union and the Unite trade union and the current campaign in opposition to the privatisation (and likely purchase by overseas based investors) of the Port of Dover. Both campaigns have been based on urging the local community to take an active role in large scale, public campaigns based on personal interest and those of the community around them. Lord Glasman is currently working to create a non-political organisation based on similar principles, The Common Good, which will be supported equally by trade unions, businesses and the Church of England.

Labour Campaign Network

The Labour Campaign Network (LCN) was established in 2011 and is a political pressure group representing Community Union designed to reach into and have a direct relationship with the membership of UK Labour. The LCN model is unparalleled in Australia and unique to the UK also. It aims to have a values-based relationship between UK Labour members and the union where UK Labour members share the political objectives and values of the union. LCN has mobilised a coalition of Labour Party activists including Labour Students around political campaigns and training, believing that political campaigns are best executed over a sustained period, not only immediately prior to elections. In addition to supporting several by-election and local government candidates, they have sponsored in excess of 20 activists to undertake training with Movement for Change. This has had the added benefit of those trainees cascading their learnings on to other Labour members in their geographies. They have also donated one of the 100 field organisers for Labour's 2015 election campaign in the Redcar constituency where LCN has a relationship with the Labour candidate. LCN presently boasts a membership exceeding 300 general members in addition to over 20 MPs and a number of Members of the Scottish and Welsh parliaments in addition to local government councillors. Members of the LCN are also members of UK Labour and pay a modest membership fee with half of the membership fees being contributed to Community's Political Campaigns Fund.

Pressure Groups Overview

The presence of pressure groups that exist within parties, with the almost exclusive aim of lobbying parties, is a phenomenon that is unparalleled in Australia. The nature of the UK political system, in which MPs are not bound to vote with their party, appears to facilitate an environment in which open debate and a plurality of views are an accepted and welcome aspect of dialogue within parliamentary parties; collectively MPs have the freedom to explore multiple perspectives on issues. Pressure groups, such as those discussed above, appear to flourish in this environment. A further factor that appears to encourage the activity of pressure groups is the lack of formalised factions that exist with UK political parties, and especially UK Labour. This also appears to result in MPs and party activists having the capacity to openly listen to and be influenced by multiple perspectives on issues without the pressure groups feeling that certain MPs are pre-bound to a position.

Conclusion

The objective of the author's study trip was to meet with key political and think tank personnel in the United Kingdom to glean information with respect to the following:

- contemporary and emerging campaigning and organising techniques;
- the funding and operating models employed by think tanks in the UK;
- interactions between think tanks and pressure groups and decision makers; and
- contemporary political issues.

These topics were considered with a view to developing an understanding of the similarities and differences between the United Kingdom and Australian jurisdictions. A summary of the observations that are made is as follows.

Contemporary Political Issues

With respect to contemporary political issues:

- The Scottish devolution referendum scheduled for September 2014 looks set to fail with those advocating secession seemingly failing to make the case for devolution.
- Key issues within the secession debate include the future of the Scottish economy and fiscal situation. It appears both could fare worse in an independent Scotland.
- Debate within Great Britain is at near fever pitch regarding its future in the European Union. This issue is being pushed to the fore of public debate by UKIP. The leaderships of both major parties appear somewhat awkwardly out of step with parts of their constituency on the issue, preferring to stay within the EU.
- Key to voters concerns about Europe are migration, the impact of European law on the UK and social factors.
- The 2015 general election may see the first loss of a one-term government in a generation. Polls indicate ongoing frustration with the Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition. Key election issues include the pace of economic recovery after the global financial crisis and the UK's membership of the EU.
- Government may be won by the Labour Party as a result of a falling Conservative and Liberal Democrat vote, a small rise in its own vote and a sharp rise in support for UKIP.
- It is a very real possibility that no party will form a majority at the 2015 election. No major party has indicated whether it would be willing to enter into a collation under this scenario, and if they are with whom it would be.

Campaigning

With respect to campaigning:

- Movement for Change is an innovative organisation training activists and potential activists to take action in their communities. No similar organisation presently exists in Australia however there is no reason why a similar group would not be successful.
- 38° operates by a similar approach to Australia's GetUp!. They have had considerable success as a campaign organisation.
- The success of both organisations speaks to the willingness of citizens to engage in politics in a non-partisan way, taking political action outside of political parties and processes.

Think tank operations

With respect to think tanks and their operations:

- Think tanks draw funding from a wide range of sources typically being individual and corporate or trade union memberships, donations and project specific funding. In some instances, other sources such as investment income and fundraiser events generate income also.
- A range of operating models are used. Producing work in-house, publishing and commissioning the work of experts, co-producing with members and being a platform to highlight the works of others are all models in existence.
- There is some relationship between the funding sources and the nature of the work undertaken.
- An ongoing issue within the think tank community is the role of financial supporters. Concerns exist about the independence of research where the project is enabled by project specific funding.

Influencing Policy

With respect to influencing policy outcomes:

- The UK political system has a number of pressure groups that exist principally to influence political parties from within the party. This exists on a scale and to a degree not seen in Australia.
- Pressure groups see their role as being about influencing the direction and approach taken by political parties. Given the nature of the UK political system, there appears to be more scope for pressure groups to have a meaningful dialogue with MPs.
- Think tanks use a range of method to influence decision makers and policy outcomes. These include dealing directly with policy makers and seeking to influence them indirectly through changing public debate. Both approaches appear to be correlated with a desire to influence policy at a detailed level (dealing directly with policy makers) or influencing big, transformational ideas (seeking to influence public debate).

Appendix One: References

Doward, J., 2013, "Health groups dismayed by news 'big tobacco' funded rightwing thinktanks", *The Guardian*, 2 June 2013.

Lord Ashcroft Polls, 2014, "Project Blueprint: Phase 4", *Lord Ashcroft Polls*, January 2014

Monbiot, G., 2011, "Think Tanks are Crushing our Democracy.", *The Guardian*, 13 September 2013.

Newsroom, 2014, "Financial Times survey of expert opinion on impact of Yes vote for Scottish independence," *Argyll News*, 5 January 2014.

New Statesman, 2013, "Leader: Milliband must not "Shrink the Offer"", *New Statesman*, November 2013.

YouGov, 2014, "YouGov Survey Results: Voting Intention Tracker from 2010 general election – present", *YouGov*.

YouGov, 2013, YouGovTimes Survey Results, *YouGov*.

Appendix Two: Schedule of Meetings

Person	Role	Organisation
Richard Angel	Deputy Director	Progress Online
Andy Bagnall	Director – Campaigns	British Confederation of Industries
Eamonn Butler	Director and co-founder	Adam Smith Institute
Mike Cain	Acting CEO	Movement for Change
Jon Cruddas MP	Policy Co-Ordinator; Member for Dagenham and Rainham	UK Labour
Karin Christiansen	General Secretary	Co-Operative and Labour Party
Olaf Cramme	Director	Policy Network
Stella Creasy MP	Shadow Minister of State for Crime Prevention	UK Labour
Andrew Dismore AM	Member of the London Assembly; Candidate for Hendon; MP for Hendon (1997-2010)	UK Labour
Dan Elton	Principal author	The Latimer Project
Claire-Frances Lennon	Training	UK Labour
Tom Fristock	Communications Manager & Policy Analyst	Centre Forum
Toby Fenwick	Associate	Centre Forum
Richard Green	Campaigns Officer: Print and Key Seats	UK Labour
Tom Geldard	Director - Campaign Co-ordination	UK Labour
Katie Ghose	CEO	Electoral Reform Society
Lord Maurice Glasman	Founder	Blue Labour
Patrick Heneghan	Director of Field Operations	UK Labour
Blanche Jones	Campaigns Director	38°
Neil Lawson	Chair	Compass
Thomas Lavelle	Borough Organiser	UK Labour
Alasdair McDonnell MP	Party Secretary & MP for Belfast South	Social Democratic & Labour Party
John-Paul McHugh	Assistant Secretary	Community
Lord Tom McNally	Minister for Justice	Liberal Democrats
Kirsty McNeill	Former Downing St Director of External Affairs	UK Labour
Sarah Mulholland	Head of Campaigns and Stakeholders	UK Labour
Anthony Painter	Author	
Robin Priestley	Campaign Manager	38°
Nabila Satar	International Projects Manager	UK Labour
Paul Smith	President	Labor Abroad
John Spellar MP	Shadow Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs	UK Labour
Hilary Stephenson	Deputy CEO; Head of Field.	Liberal Democrats
Will Straw	Associate Director for Climate Change, Energy and Transport; Candidate for Rossington and Darwin	Institute for Public Policy Research; UK Labour
Gisela Stuart MP	Member for Birmingham and Edgbaston	UK Labour
Tim Waters	Head of Contact Creator, Targeting and Analysis	UK Labour

Appendix Three: Events attended

Event	Organisation	Date
Doorknocking in Hendon Electorate	UK Labour	24/11/2013
Tomorrow's Party	Electoral Reform Society	25/11/2013
A yw'r Plenari yn Ddiflas? (Is Plenary Boring?)	Electoral Reform Society (Wales)	26/11/2013
Public debate: "Is Angela Merkel Destroying Europe?"	Intelligence ²	26/11/2013
South Belfast Constituent Committee SDLP meeting	Social Democratic and Labour Party	12/12/2013
Doorknocking with SDLP preselection candidate, Justin Cartwright.	Social Democratic and Labour Party	14/12/2013