

# Public Policy Forum



Actuaries  
Institute



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## Why engage in the public debate?

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*This presentation has been prepared for the Actuaries Institute 2014 Public Policy Forum. The Institute Council wishes it to be understood that opinions put forward herein are not necessarily those of the Institute and the Council is not responsible for those opinions.*

## My perspectives

- Policy maker:
  - Former head of economic policy in Victorian Cabinet Office
- Lobbyist:
  - Former chief economist for Business Council of Australia
- Professional Society:
  - Member of central council of Economic Society of Australia

## Why engage?

- Want to make Australia a better place
- Believe public policy can help
- Believe your professional perspective is important in **policy** design
- Eg contributions to the Murray Inquiry

## How is policy formed?

- A 'need' emerges
  - From a problem or from an opportunity
- Minister asks Department for recommendation
  - Department reviews alternatives
- Minister/Cabinet weighs different alternatives

## Where to engage

- Professional groups have three entry points
  1. Identifying the need
    - Lead the debate
  2. Reviewing alternatives
    - Being a trusted adviser
  3. Influencing political choices
    - Lobbying for outcomes

## How to lead the debate

- Define the issues you are willing to engage on
  - Eg post-retirement income policy, natural disasters, health insurance
- Argue consistently and regularly on those issues
- Long term strategy; few issues only

## How to be a trusted adviser

- This is harder because the policies involve different Ministries and levels of government
- Need to build trust
- Requires regular engagement
- Requires willingness to help Ministries solve their problems
  - Especially by providing factual research



## How to be a trusted adviser cont'

- Decide in advance the key agencies
  - Finance, ATO, Treasury, APRA, Health
- Identify the key individuals
- Visit them regularly
- Understand the problems they are trying to solve
- Help them – it is a trade of 'favours'

## How to lobby for outcomes

- Politicians work mainly by compromise
- Review the range of alternatives, and the trade-offs involved in each
- Then they choose
- Implications
  - You will not get exactly what you want
  - You need to engage seriously to get close to the outcome you want

## What does it add up to?

- Is your viewpoint important?
- What are the key issues to focus on?
- Engage on them consistently - **shape**
- Be willing to help Ministries - **trust**
- Be willing to engage in public – **influence**
- **Do not be too purist, policy=compromise**

## Low hanging fruit

- CSIRO-Monash Superannuation Research Cluster
  - Major project looking especially at post-retirement income issues
- Lever off Productivity Commission's impending report on natural disaster funding arrangements
  - Adopt it as a major theme across governments

# Questions