



Weasel Words Archives – Politicians

[Robust and inappropriate](#)

'I'm not being backward in saying that I'm not a perfect individual and you know I've had a robust past and there may be elements of that that have proved offensive to people ... Members of the press have in passing mentioned the word quokka and suggested to me that something inappropriate in the past may have happened ...I don't shy away away from that at all, but I'm not aware that I've caused any offence to a quokka.'

[WA Leader of the Opposition, Troy Buswell, after it was suggested that he had done something inappropriate with a quokka. 14 May 2008.](#)

[Australian Attorney-General Robert McClelland on the Haneef inquiry:](#)

'Well, well again, the procedure has been determined by Mr Clark as part of cooperation that in accordance with their undertaking, we would expect that they will of course give truthful evidence. If, at any stage, he believes that that cooperation isn't forthcoming in the context of the disclosure of such documents as are of relevance, such evidence as he genuinely believes someone may be able to provide, we have indicated to him and he acknowledges he has an invitation to come back to the Government to explain that ... Um, again, I was - have that ball placed in front of the goal post ready for me to kick today and I didn't accept the invitation.'

[And on discrimination against same sex couples:](#)

'Well, we - what you are talking about is providing a positive system of recognising at law a relationship that is in existence as a result of the registration of that, as is occurring in Tasmania and as is occurring in Victoria. That is something that is appropriate because it actually recognises something that is in existence. What we don't support is legal measures that create a relationship that is akin to marriage.'

KERRY O'BRIEN:' I'm still not sure why that's not discriminatory, but I think that's where we're gonna have to leave it.'

[ABC 7.30 Report, 30 April](#)

[Mission not specifically accomplished?](#)

'President Bush is well aware that the banner should have been much more specific and said 'mission accomplished' for these sailors who are on this ship on their mission And we have certainly paid a price for not being more specific on that banner.' [White House press secretary Dana Perino.](#)

'I will conduct a respectful debate. Now, it will be dispirited -- it will be spirited -- because there are stark differences. I am a proud conservative, liberal Republica-- conservative Republican.' [US Presidential candidate John McCain](#)

'There has to be a greater synergy between, let's call it our policy leadership in this, which has been focused so much, legitimately, on targets and global architecture, almost reverse-engineered back to the means by which you can quickly deliver outcomes, and on the demand side in our economy we're looking at potential advances in terms of 20 to 25% range if you do this across the board. It all takes cost, but let me tell you it's probably the



quickest lever you can pull given the challenges we face.' [Kevin Rudd on climate change.](#)

'Where it was before, which was in a preglacial position, we're now moving rapidly down the glacier ... it's going to take a bit more to gelignite this thing into gear.' [Rudd on getting an international deal on trade in the Doah round.](#)

'The elephant in the living room — it is big.' [Rudd on the global financial crisis.](#) 'Rudd says he's no robot, yet he talks like one', [Michelle Grattan in The Age](#) . Thanks to Geoff who says it looks like our PM was educated in Queensland - see quotes in Education.

'This is huge for them, huge for the name brand of Geelong...'
[Victorian Premier, John Brumby, on Geelong winning the AFL Grand Final in 2007.](#)

'It's not good for us, but it keeps the New Orleans brand out there.'
[New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin's take on murders in his city.](#) [Anti-violence activist Baty Landis said:](#)
'New Orleans is not a brand, it's a city. We're not products. We're people with lives.'

'Well, he's certainly, by certain standards, well he's certainly by some standards a dictator. I mean there's no doubt about that.'
[Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer talking about General Musharraf. ABC Lateline . And on the election:](#)

'Well, what we do know is that we have a very strong team. I mean that is what we do know. We know who the team is. Our ministers are well known. They are well known as administrators if you like, they are well known as administrators, they are well known as ministers, they are well known as politicians, they are well known for the policies they pursue.'

'I will resign as a minister in the Howard government if there are any substantial changes ...'
[Workplace Relations Minister Joe Hockey on what would happen if substantial changes were made to Work Choices laws if the Howard government is returned to office\(and it wasn't\)...](#)

'I said I was sorry they occurred. I don't think I used the word apology ... I think there is a difference between the two things. I think we've been through that debate before in the context of something else.'
[Former PM John Howard on interest rate rises.](#)

'It is great to see the spatial industry making real progress towards enhancing what it can deliver to both private and public sectors.'
[The Special Minister of State, Gary Nairn, announcing in a press release 'a number of new initiatives to drive the development of spatial technology and enablement.'](#)
[Thanks Peter Anson](#)



'We have a stake in the future. We've built a platform whereby we can now have a stake in the future, look at the big problems going forward.' [Senator Helen Coonan on the upcoming Federal election on ABC Radio National, 14 Sept.](#)

'On what he was saying last night it's a bit confused. It's not clear to me what he was saying last night. The truth about Labor's industrial relations system is it's all about going forward.' [Julia Gillard making everything clearer after the Paul Keating interview.](#)

'Every now and then you've got to make creative choices in terms of talent available.' [Kevin Rudd, ALP leader, on Labor's latest recruit, Nicole Cornes. 'Star recruit takes rain check on tough issues', The Age](#)

'I think it's about the most poll defiant thing that I've done in the whole of my prime ministership ' [John Howard on sending Australian troops to Iraq \(ABC Radio: AM\)](#)

[And from the masters:](#)

Sir Humphrey: 'Complicated, lengthy, expensive, controversial. And if you want to be really sure that the Minister doesn't accept it you must say the decision is courageous.'

Bernard: 'And that's worse than controversial?'

Sir Humphrey: (laughs) 'Controversial only means this will lose you votes, courageous means this will lose you the election.' BBC

'But I hope now that the family can get on now with the burial and they can come to terms with their grief and the process can move on to establish the truth through these inquiries.' [Peter Costello, 'Treasurer apologises to Kovco family' ABC News \(thanks to John Blahusiak\)](#)

'... iconic compass points in the Australian calendar year...'

[Senator Joyce commenting on proposed IR legislation, ABC Radio News, 23 Nov 05. Thanks to Charlie Myres who explains, 'ICPs have replaced public holidays'.](#)

'These are careful, balanced, evolutionary proposals - taking us forward to meet the challenge that we have in the future.' [Former Australian Workplace Relations Minister Kevin Andrews, The Australian, 17 November 2005 \(thanks to Matt Williams\)](#)

'Mr Howard would not give further details, citing operational security reasons (2 Nov)... You will understand that there are sensitive operational matters and I cannot and will not go into any further detail (Howard, 31 Oct) ... The department strives for transparency in our operation to the extent possible in light of security and operational requirements ... (Philip Ruddock 29 Oct) ... Thirdly, the Bill would exclude access to remedies for unfair dismissal where an employee is dismissed on operational grounds ... (Senate inquiry, 1 Nov) [Thanks to Karen Dacy who asks 'what does it mean?'](#)

'I envisage this cultural change will include customer focus... The Department of Immigration is in many respects a can-do department ... the



Government now wants the Department ... to be a can-do department in terms of changing its own culture to be one that is user-friendly and has an open culture of continuous improvement... I'm confident that Mr Palmer's report will provide a strong basis for the department to move forward with the challenges ahead.' [Senator Amanda Vanstone talking about changes to the Australian Department of Immigration who have deported and locked up Australian citizens.](#)

'The outcome was very, very unfortunate for the people involved.' [Former Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock on ABC radio when asked about the Cornelia Rau and Vivian Alvarez cases.](#)

'I have no idea what the black dot means, to be blunt, to use straight language.' [Julie Collins, Denison \(WA\) Labor Candidate \(thanks to Charlie Myres\)](#)

'At this stage we're committed to seeing the job through.' [New Australian Defence Minister, Brendan Nelson, on Iraq \(thanks to Lauren Seventis\)](#)

'Instead of weasel words, these people need an unqualified guarantee that they won't be out of pocket.' [NSW Opposition Leader, Sydney Morning Herald, November 7, 2005 \(thanks to Mark J who says 'Notwithstanding Mr Debnam's demand, I look forward to the Opposition's next policy announcement. I'm sure it will empower someone, provide solutions to something, enhance something else and at the end of the day, take a holistic approach to the issues with respect to clients.](#)

'I'm not saying we will win the day but the day we have to win might not be the day next year but it might be in a few years' time when we will have a structure here that can be satisfactorily devolved to us.' [Minister Edwina Hart, Welsh Assembly \(thanks to Dave Smith of the Plain English Campaign\)](#)

'Federal Health Minister Tony Abbott says the allocation reflects the Government's commitment to improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. [ABC News Online - Wednesday, May 11, 2005 on the subject of the allocation in this year's budget of \\$42.5 million per year to Indigenous health \[from Courtenay Rule who points out that Oxfam Australia says \\$450 million is needed per year\]](#)

'Dr Samuell contacted the Government expressing some concern over some material he'd seen and expressing concern over the robustness of that material ... I mean, his concern is with the robustness of some work on which we're being asked... I think the robustness of this needs to be tested...but we do want the comments when they're held out as being informed and, you know, safe to rely on because of their academic nature. We do want to be sure that they are robust ... As I've indicated to you, I think if someone raises a concern about the robustness of some research that's been done on which other people might rely, it's quite appropriate to have the robustness of that tested out ... I mean I, I am turning my mind, as is the department in consultation with me, as to how we can be sure that we can get some robust and reliable information ... The key thing that I'll be



looking for, however, is, as I say, robustness and integrity of what's done ... But it would only be on the basis of it having integrity and being robust and being free from bias either way in relation to this matter.' The Immigration Minister, Amanda Vanstone, defending the Federal Government's decision to commission a report on mental illness in detention centres from a psychiatrist, Dr Doron Samuell, who has been critical of past studies into mental illness amongst detainees. [ABC radio, The World Today, 10 February 2004.](#)

The Washington Post: In Iraq, there's been a steady stream of surprises. We weren't welcomed as liberators, as Vice President Cheney had talked about. We haven't found the weapons of mass destruction as predicted. The postwar process hasn't gone as well as some had hoped. Why hasn't anyone been held accountable, either through firings or demotions, for what some people see as mistakes or misjudgments?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, we had an accountability moment, and that's called the 2004 election. And the American people listened to different assessments made about what was taking place in Iraq, and they looked at the two candidates, and chose me, for which I'm grateful. [The Washington Post, Sunday, January 16, 2005 \[thanks to Margaret Morgan\]](#)

'It encapsulates world's best practice when looking at ecological tourism.' [NSW Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation Sandra Nori talking about a frog sanctuary which she described as 'iconic'. Sydney Morning Herald \(thanks to Tom Wilson\)](#)

'Streamline the process... for location functions.' [Western Australian Premier Geoff Gallop describing plans to build hotels in National Parks.\(thanks to Charlie Myres\)](#)

'If you spit the dummy because the vast majority of people in your own party won't agree with you, and you in effect behave as a political terrorist, well I think you actually lose credibility.' [Sophie Panopoulos, Liberal backbencher \(Australia\), describing Liberal MPs dissenting on the Federal Government's policy of mandatory detention: ABC News 15 June, 2005](#)

Fact of the matter

According to our contributor Ben, Bronwyn Bishop, Australian Liberal backbencher, used fact of the matter when debating, on radio, about Muslim schoolgirls being prohibited from wearing a headscarf in school. Ben describes the phrase as 'a linguistic device to convey to the listener an impression that the speaker has proof of whatever assertions he/she may be making when, in fact those assertions may or may not be true. i.e. a device to give dubious credibility to an opinion stated as fact If my memory serves me aright, the phrase was overworked at the time of the Tampa and SievX incidents!'

'...former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission chairwoman Lowitja O'Donoghue said Mr Howard's speech was mostly weasel words...' [The Age, 6 June](#)



'TONY JONES: You would want it resolved in this term of government, very briefly?

MARK VAILE: It's been the stated objective of the Government we do need to resolve it in this term of the Government. In fact, we may want to resolve it in the shorter term, but that's the process we'll embark upon in the shorter term in terms of what we need to do and if that reasonably fits into a pattern that will deliver us into a position of making that final decision. [The new Deputy Prime Minister of Australia's 'very brief' answer on the privatisation of Telstra, ABC Lateline, 23 June](#)