



Sydney Bioethics Seminar Series

**Tackling complex issues in an age of
'wedge politics', 'spin' and 'the new normal'**

Barry Jones



5.00 pm – 7.00 pm, Wednesday 23 November 2005
Carlaw 159, University of Sydney

Followed by Refreshments

Free—Open to the Public—No RSVP Required

Convened by:

Australian Health Policy Institute (AHPI)
Centre for Values, Ethics, and the Law in Medicine (VELIM)
Unit for History and Philosophy of Science (HPS)

Sponsored by:

Centre for Human Aspects of Science and Technology (CHAST)
Faculty of Medicine
Research Institute for Humanities and Social Science (RIHSS)



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Speaker:

Barry Jones

Title:

Tackling complex issues in an age of
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Abstract: Although formal levels of education are far higher than ever before and access to information has increased exponentially in the past thirty years, the political process has been deformed by appeals to emotion, especially fear, and to immediate economic self-interest ('wedge politics'). Parliament has lost much of its moral authority, the public service has been increasingly politicised, universities have adopted the cult of managerialism, the media is preoccupied with 'infotainment', and public debate is dominated by the black art of 'spin', in which the truth of a complex proposition (going to war in Iraq, stem cells, Industrial Relations reform, climate change, evolution, Knowledge Nation) is less significant than how simple arguments, for and against, can be 'sold'. In the United States, in the age of 'the new normal', policies – and appointments – are now 'faith based', not evidence based.

Hon. Dr. Barry Jones, is a writer, broadcaster and former Labor politician. A Member of the House of Representatives for the Victorian Electorate of Lalor 1977-98, in the first three Hawke Governments he became Australia's longest serving Science Minister 1983-90. He served as National President of the Australian Labor Party 1992-2000 and took up this position again in 2005. He is the only person to have been elected as a Fellow of all four Australian learned Academies: Technological Sciences and Engineering (FTSE) in 1992, the Humanities (FAHA) in 1993, Science (FAA) in 1996, and Social Sciences (FASSA) in 2003.

His book *Sleepers, Wake!: Technology and the Future of Work* (Oxford University Press, 1982), having been translated into Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Swedish and braille, ran to 26 impressions. His other books include the *Dictionary of World Biography* (1994), a best seller. His autobiography, *A Thinking Reed* (Allen & Unwin) will appear in 2006.

He was a member of the Executive Board of UNESCO in Paris 1991-95, Vice President, World Heritage Committee 1995-96 and a consultant for OECD. He is a Board Member of CARE Australia, the Macfarlane Burnet Institute, the Centre for Eye Research, Australia, the Strategic Advisory Committee of the John Curtin School of Medicine and the Australian Stem Cell Centre, and chairs Vision 2020 Australia.

In 1998 he became a 'Living National Treasure', one of 100 people nominated by the National Trust as Australian icons and received a John Curtin Medal in 2001.

In 1999 he was appointed an Adjunct Professor at Monash University and elected as a Visiting Fellow Commoner at Trinity College, Cambridge. He became a Vice Chancellor's Fellow at the University of Melbourne in 2005.