Australia is one of the highest waste-producing nations in the world but what if we could unlock the wealth buried in all that rubbish? A new research collaboration hopes to do just that by turning our waste depots into urban mines. Page 5
Putting literature in our sights

BY WENDY FREW

Great literature won’t make us better people and it shouldn’t make us righteous, says Hannah Kent.

The author of the hugely popular Burial Rites – a fictionalised account of the life of the last woman to be executed in Iceland – writes Kent in her introduction to a new collection of short stories by young Australian writers.

They are sentiments no doubt shared by the team of young editors from the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) who earlier this year finished the gargantuan task of selecting and editing the stories for Sight Lines, the latest UTS Writers’ Anthology, published by Xoum.

For almost 30 years the UTS Writers’ Anthology has showcased the breadth and depth of the writing and book events and the stories that caught the choreography.

The result is a theatrical landscape that stands the test of time. It is a work that makes us think, “Yes, this is the way things were and is the way they are,” and it is the way they are.

 confirming that the book is in a category of its own. It is an affirmation of the strength of the writing and the stories that captured the choreography.

The breadth and depth of the writing and book events and the stories that caught our attention taught us a lot about ourselves and our work. This book is an offering of 31 new ways of seeing the world.”

An inspired blend of music, dance, and technology

BY WENDY FREW

A flickering light reveals, first a body then a face, peering out of a sea of shimmering bubbles. Light plays across a dancer’s limbs; those limbs then stir up more bubbles to create a new set of images.

This is Encoded, a large-scale “immersive aerial dance performance” that uses the latest interactive technology, and which emerged from a collaboration between Stalker Theatre and researchers from the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS).

It is difficult to do justice in words to this ambitious melding of technology and human movement first performed in Sydney in 2012. The result is a theatrical landscape where imagery projected on to dancers and real-time interactive projections respond to the dancers’ moves, thanks to infrared cameras that track the choreography.

Theatre and dance have always played with illusion, says Stalker Theatre co-director David Clarkson. But interactive technologies using photogrammetric projections and fluid simulations have “opened up a whole new palate of creative possibilities”, says Clarkson, who founded Australia’s pre-eminent physical theatre company in 1989.

“Using technology in this way was a fairly radical departure for us although, when you look at our earlier work where we played with notions of identity, ancestry and of images of the self projected onto the self, it was a logical progression in theatrical terms.

“Then this idea of the body generating images emerged and became of great interest to me.”

Several years ago, when Clarkson teamed up with the Co-Director of UTS’s Creativity and Cognition Studios, Dr Andrew Johnston, he was able to put those ideas into practice.

Dr Johnston and his researchers develop software for creative projects, such as live performances. They then study how performers and audiences react to the technology. In July, they will conduct interactive technology workshops at the prestigious International Conference on New Interfaces for Musical Expression in London.

Interactive technology, such as fluid simulation (a computer graphics tool that generates realistic animations of fluid substances) is increasingly embedded in all kinds of live performances and will “have far-reaching implications for performers who choose to embrace it”, says Dr Johnston.

With a background in music and computing, Dr Johnston investigates how to use computers to support the creative arts, with an emphasis on the development of interactive virtual musical instruments.

“The novelty value is high but we want to create material that stands the test of time. It is about making the work interactive and meaningful for the performers as well.”

Sight Lines is one such example. With Linda Walsh, an obiotic and PhD candidate at UTS, Dr Johnston and fellow software designer Andrew Bluff, another PhD candidate at UTS, used motion tracking, real-time fluid simulation and fluid-controlled sound synthesis to produce a performance in which the music’s movements and the sounds she creates direct digital images onto a scrim that partly screens her while she plays.

An infrared camera at the front of the stage can detect the infrared light attached to the end of the oboe. The camera picks up the sound and does the same. Fluid simulation software responds to the movement and the sounds produced by the performer.

“We are painting with music, blurring the line between dance and music,” says Dr Johnston of Walsh’s performance.
Through the main character in her award-winning novel, a writer explores the forces that conspire to keep people silent, reports Wendy Frew.

Christine Piper had been struggling to find the right voice for her novel about Japanese civilians interned in Australia during World War II. She tried writing in the third person, she considered making her main character a pearl diver in Broome; she even toyed with the idea of a romantic angle for the story.

And then it came to her. The main character of the novel that would become the award-winning After Darkness would be a man of honour but also one with regrets. Japanese doctor Tomokazu Ibaraki thinks he understands the value of discretion and loyalty. But both ideals are tested when, while working in Broome, he is arrested as an enemy alien.

In April, Piper, who is a Doctor of Creative Arts (DCA) student at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), won The Australian Vogel's Literary Award for young writers, worth $20,000, for After Darkness. The book, published by Allen & Unwin as part of the award, was the creative component of Piper’s DCA, which included research into Japan's biological weapons experiments.

Born in South Korea to an Australian father and Japanese mother, Piper says she had always wanted to write about the Japanese immigrant experience because of her mother’s heritage. "I found I was drawn to reports about Australian-born Japanese and mixed-race Japanese [who were sent to the Australian internment camps] ... They felt they were Australian but were no longer being treated as Australian."

In Unearthing the Past, she writes: "Although I have lived in Japan several times since my childhood, I have always remained an outsider."

Piper visited the site in Tokyo where the bones of some of the suspected victims of those experiments were discovered. For an essay on the issue, Unearthing the Past, for which she won the Calibre Prize for Outstanding Essay, she has interviewed some of those trying to solve the mystery and analyses the forces that drove Japanese authorities to try to cover up the story.

"I was fascinated by the internal and external forces that conspire to keep someone silent," Piper wrote in her essay. "We were going to be in trouble, I was told, if American soldiers asked us about the specimens." Piper says Ishii’s testimony had more impact on her than most things she had read about Japan’s notorious Unit 731, a covert biological and chemical warfare research and development unit of the Imperial Japanese Army that undertook lethal human experimentation.

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Building smarter, better
Being at the leading edge of good design presents a unique research opportunity, reports Wendy Frew.

The Central Park apartment development on Broadway has attracted plenty of attention, thanks to its spectacular rooftop gardens and lush green walls. But across the road, a quiet revolution is taking place in one of Sydney’s newest buildings that could set fresh construction standards and change the way we think about architecture.

The Broadway Building – soon to be home to the Faculty of Engineering and Information Technology (FEIT) at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) – will be a veritable “living” building, designed not only to maximise sustainability and efficiency but to monitor its own vital signs.

Like a fitness tracker on a jogger’s wrist, a sophisticated sensor system embedded throughout the building will collect data on everything from room temperature and humidity, light levels, air quality and dust particles, to the building’s energy and water use.

Data collected in real time will help the university monitor how the building ages – the saline levels in concrete reinforced steel, the expansion and contraction of the concrete, the ability of internal columns to bear heavy loads. The system will literally be monitoring every heart beat and breath the building takes, even before it is completed.

But for Ray Clout, more importantly, the massive amount of data collected will be made available to UTS researchers and students. Clout, the faculty’s Research Laboratories Manager, says the philosophy behind the technology has always been about supporting research and teaching.

“This was always to be about using cutting-edge technology that would help set new standards for all kinds of things,” says Clout, whose life has been consumed by this massive project since even before UTS announced it in 2011.

“It is a huge, huge project. Faculty Dean Hung Nguyen and I had often talked about the sort of vision we had for future research in the faculty. The new building afforded us a prime opportunity to get in on the ground floor, not retrofitting an existing building but starting from scratch.”

With construction company Lend Lease, the faculty has used a $50 million grant from the federal government to embed 300 sensors in concrete columns, beams, slabs and shear walls throughout the building.

Another 2600 environmental sensors are inside the building, which is part of a $1 billion campus master plan for UTS that includes a new Frank Gehry–designed Business School in Sydney’s Haymarket.

Sustainability is a key part of the master plan. In the FEIT building, renewable energy sourced from a six-metre-high roof-top wind turbine, and from solar modules, solar hot water panels and a solar thermal concentrator, will provide about 20 per cent of the building’s electricity. Water heated by solar power to drive the turbine in an electricity generator will be reused in an air-conditioner chilling and for the building’s internal hot water system.

Alternative energy sources also include hydrogen fuel cells and charging stations for hybrid cars.

Clout investigated current technology, cutting-edge technology and technology that was still just a germ of an idea, and then talked to the companies involved with such technology.

“We then polled our staff about what kind of technology they wanted in the new building, the technology they wanted to get their hands on for their research and teaching work,” he says.

When it was all approved, “there was a mad rush to lock down everything, find suppliers and check that all the things we wanted to do were feasible”.

“The public will be able to enjoy some of the benefits of this smart building when it is officially opened this year. Real-time data about Broadway’s air pollution, pollen index and UV rates will be displayed on screens in public areas within the building with messages about things such as asthma and UV risks.

“I have always said that what we do is inherent in our name – we are a university of technology so we have to maintain a high level of development,” says Clout.

“Having this new building was a chance to leave a legacy for our future students and researchers.”

Chinese buyers are not fuelling the property boom
New research busts the myth that Chinese investors are inflating Sydney property prices, reports Lesley Parker.

Chinese buyers are not pricing first-home buyers out of the Sydney property market, according to new research that has busted some of the myths around foreign investment in residential property.

A University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) study of 10 years of individual home sale transactions has found Chinese investors, on average, pay less for residential properties than other purchasers.

This discount holds true year by year, at locations where there is a high percentage of Chinese buyers or a large Chinese community, and when the sample of buyers is split into prestige and non-prestige suburbs, say UTS Business School researchers Dr Lorenzo Casavecchia and Dr Adrian Lee.

It also holds true for individual Chinese buyers and for their overall impact on the property market as a group.

“Chinese buyers, on average, do not seem to overpay for housing, as some commentary suggests,” says Dr Casavecchia. “On the contrary, we found evidence that Chinese buyers pay less than other buyers for similar quality homes.”

The study of a random sample of 74,000 transactions between 2000 and 2011 found that, on average, Chinese buyers paid 2.04 per cent less than other buyers, even after taking into account characteristics such as housing quality, suburb and date of purchase. That represents a saving of $13,800 on the average price of $676,300 for the properties in the study.

The researchers are seeking funding to extend the study to 2013 and all property transactions – about one million home sales. Based on the results of their preliminary study, they still expect to see a discount.
Making wealth from waste

BY WENDY FREW

We have killed for it, enslaved others to mine for it, and even built a world currency based on it. Gold. Homer described it as the glory of the immortals. The locus simply called it the tears of the sun. Despite gold’s long association with wealth and culture, many of us discard this precious metal with barely a second thought. Every year, we ditch millions of mobile phones when we buy a new model, throwing the old phones into bottom drawers or, worse, chucking them in the bin. With them goes gold and other precious metals used to make a phone’s circuitry. It's a phenomenal waste when you consider that the two grams of gold needed to produce one wedding ring could be extracted from just 10 kilograms of mobile phones. In comparison, you would need 10 tonnes of ore to extract the same amount of gold.

It is a level of waste that is replicated down the periodic table: the copper, silver, gold, palladium and a host of other rare metals found in electronic waste, for example, are increasingly ending up in landfill. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, by 2008, Australians – one of the highest waste-producing nations on a per capita basis – had already sent about 17 million televisions and 37 million computers to landfill. But it doesn’t have to be so.

What if we could unlock the wealth buried in all of that waste? What if our waste depots could become the new urban mines?

A new collaborative research group that brings together cutting-edge researchers and industry partners from around Australia and overseas is exploring just that. Wealth from Waste is a three-year, $9 million research program that will identify viable options to “mine” above-ground resources, such as the metals contained in discarded manufactured products and consumer goods.

There are two main reasons we should recycle metal waste, says researcher Dr Damien Giurco from the Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS). “There is money in recycling and it is good for the environment,” he says.

Dr Giurco, who is leading the CSIRO-funded collaboration, says that for most metals, there is a much lower environmental footprint from recycling than from mining. But Australia risks missing out on a plethora of new and more sustainable business opportunities by ignoring the benefits of recycling metals.

“Waste is definitely on the policy agenda in Australia but metals are not at the heart of that,” he says.

“But recovery of metals is at the heart of international considerations about waste and it is important that we are not left behind. It will be technology and business models that underpin accessing the value in waste material and we need to be part of that.”

The Wealth from Waste collaboration also includes Monash University, the University of Queensland, Swinburne University of Technology and Yale University in the US. Teams drawn from different universities and disciplines will concentrate on four distinct but interconnected research programs to develop a better understanding of the complex landscape and possible pathways for change.

The research areas will address issues such as the barriers and enablers for industrial ecology in Australia, innovation and business models that could create and capture resource value in future material chains and how Australia could move from an economy based on exporting resources to one that generates wealth from waste.

More than $2 billion is lost to the Australian economy every year from failure to recycle waste metals, according to research by the Wealth from Waste team.

“We’ve found that recovering the five million tonnes of metal such as iron, aluminium and copper locked up in landfills or discarded products could provide up to 70 per cent of Australia’s metal consumption each year,” Dr Giurco says.

E-waste is a prime example of the opportunities going begging. In Australia, it is the fastest growing waste stream, with only about 10 per cent of old TVs, DVD’s, computers and other electrical goods recovered or recycled.

But in what is a challenging time for many sectors of the economy, unlocking the potential of the so-called circular economy will ensure Australian companies retain their competitive advantage, says Suzanne Benn, Professor of Sustainable Enterprise at the UTS Business School.

“In a circular economy, the re-use and remanufacturing of products becomes standard practice, so that companies start to close the loop on their daily operations,” she says.

In the circular economy, products are not only recycled, they are designed so they can be easily repaired and upgraded, reused or resold, thereby recycling the material in them many times over.

In Europe this year, the biggest annual conference on environmental policy will focus on the circular economy and how to unlock its potential, while China’s latest five-year plan has an entire chapter on efforts to “vigorously develop a circular economy”.

Changing business and government attitudes about waste and recycling won’t be so easy. There has been little pressure to close the loop.

There is money in recycling and it is good for the environment.

Disposal. Unlike in Europe, where recycling rates are much higher, it doesn't cost much to bury our rubbish. And, Australia’s large resources market means few are worried about the security of the supply of metal and minerals. Mostly, we just dig it up.

Another problem could be that Australia’s large resources market means few are worried about the security of the supply of metal and minerals.
Chill wind of climate denial

Ideological warriors and vested business interests are fuelling dangerous conspiracy theories about the science of man-made climate change, explains Elaine McKewon.

There’s an old saying in legal circles that goes something like this: When the facts are on your side, pound the facts. When the law is on your side, pound the law. When neither is in your favor, pound the table. Climate change deniers have vacillated between all these tactics in their quest to find a weakness that would kill the scientific case for anthropogenic climate change.

Contestation of scientific facts is often the first line of industries that see science as a threat. Climate change denial has been in earnest when the fossil fuel industry began recruiting minority-view scientists to “testify” as “expert witnesses” in the media that the Earth was not warming and that, even if it was, there was no evidence it was due to greenhouse gas emissions generated by human activity.

This manufactured “scientific controversy” is still maintained by think tanks and the conservative media, even though scientific peer-reviewed literature contains no research that refutes the now almost universal scientific consensus that climate change is a real threat.

As the scientific evidence and consensus strengthened, climate deniers tried to discredit scientists. Their attacks were nasty and intimidating.

Researchers studying climate change, denial or policy have faced actions, investigations and political interference.

Recently, I peer-reviewed a paper published by the journal Frontiers in Psychology called “Regressive fury: Conspiracist ideation in the blogosphere in response to research on conspiracist ideation”, by Professor Stephen Lewandowsky and colleagues. The paper published on 10 April 2014 found a link between conspiratorial thinking and the rejection of climate science.

The journal received a barrage of complaints from climate deniers, and the bloggers discussed in the paper threatened to sue the journal for libel unless the paper was retracted.

In a move that shocked the scientific community, the journal retracted the paper even though it concealed it was academically and ethically sound. This prompted several of the journal’s editors to resign, angry that Frontiers had failed to defend academic freedom.

One group of deniers has already launched a new campaign to have another scientific paper co-authored by Lewandowsky retracted.

In an extreme case of intimidation in the US, the former Attorney-General of Virginia, Ken Cuccinelli, launched a fraud investigation in 2010 against leading climate scientist Professor Michael Mann. Mann co-authored the now famous ‘hockey stick’ graph that shows a dramatic increase in global warming since the mid-20th century is unprecedented in the past 1,000 years.

Cuccinelli ordered the University of Virginia (where Mann had been assistant professor) to hand over all data, emails, computer code and other information relating to research grants received by Mann.

After two years of legal stoushes, the Supreme Court of Virginia ruled Cuccinelli had demonstrated no reasonable basis to suspect fraud or demand any documents. This landmark victory for academic freedom cost the university a staggering $US660,000 in legal fees.

Meanwhile, fossil-fuel-funded think tanks and conservative media continue to disparage scientific evidence about climate change, falsely claim scientific consensus is crumbling and repeat conspiracy theories about scientific fraud.

Individual academics have also been attacked privately. For example, Lawrence Torello, a philosopher at the University of Rochester, received more than 700 abusive emails and phone calls following an article he recently published on The Conversation website in which he said corporate funding of climate denial was morally wrong and criminally negligent.

Two years ago, an investigation by The Canberra Times revealed dozens of climate scientists regularly received abusive emails, some of which contained death threats.

Australian Attorney-General George Brandis complains loudly that climate deniers are being “sidetracked” but he has side-stepped the war on science that has defined the history of climate denial. All the table-pounding in the world won’t change the reality that climate denial is driven by vested interests and ideological warriors resolutely opposed to policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Elaine McKewon is a research associate at the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism and a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, University of Technology, Sydney.

How a radio station staged a revival

A radio station that provided an important community service was at risk of going under until a team of MBA students gave it help it couldn’t afford, writes Terry Clinton.

No one can accuse Radio Skid Row of a lack of authenticity. The Marrickville-based community station, 88.9FM, has been a ‘scrapper and a battler, stuck to its guns and somehow survived for 30 years’.

Founded as a voice for marginalised communities – including migrants, Indigenous youth, prisoners, the homeless – it has run on not much more than the enthusiasm and commitment of volunteers, coming close to slipping off the financial edge more than once.

Another crisis loomed last year. The team of MBA students from the University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) was given access to Radio Skid Row’s books to develop a plan for financial sustainability.

Some months on, Radio Skid Row has hit the halfway point in a “$30,000 for 30 years” fund-raising campaign and sponsorship has more than doubled. It has also won a national award for excellence in community broadcasting.

“For a while we were thinking that the day-to-day broadcasting,” said operations manager Megan Hamilton, “we hadn’t had a station manager for a while because of the financial situation.”

The station needed the kind of help it couldn’t afford, which is where UTS’s community access program Shopfront stepped in. It organised a student team with professional experience in marketing, business planning and financial management.

The point was hammered home to one of the team members, research consultant James Sowden, when he saw the Radio Skid Row premises. There was a tarp over critical electrical equipment to protect it from a leak – a tarp over what was essentially the radio station.

The books made it clear the station would run out of money by April this year. Financial controls had to be improved, the grants process refined and other sources of revenue found, because the station had relied too much on grants.

The team went looking for support from the community. "Radio Skid Row can be heard there and there for 54 per cent of residents are from communities less represented in the mainstream media.”

The board wanted no time after the UTS team delivered its recommendations. Hamilton says: “The first task was to appoint an operations manager – me.

“We’ve worked through the report and accomplished the short-term goals – sorting out financial systems and reporting, launching the fund-raising campaign and building sponsorship.

“We’ve got big listener bases among the Pacific island, Greek, Macedonian and African communities and connecting with businesses serving those communities helped boost sponsorship from $8000 last year to $18,000 this year.

“We are also developing our capacity to offer broadcast training to youth and other volunteers.

“We’ve put together a project with Marrickville Council to train youth in the studio and another with the Matthew Talbot hostel to give onsite training to residents, including a two-hour outside broadcast from the hostel.”

“It’s going really well. We’ve got more than 18,000 this year.

“We’ve worked through the report and accomplished the short-term goals – sorting out financial systems and reporting, launching the fund-raising campaign and building sponsorship.”

“We’ve got big listener bases among the Pacific island, Greek, Macedonian and African communities and connecting with businesses serving those communities helped boost sponsorship from $8000 last year to $18,000 this year.

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“We’ve put together a project with Marrickville Council to train youth in the studio and another with the Matthew Talbot hostel to give onsite training to residents, including a two-hour outside broadcast from the hostel.”

“It’s going really well. We’ve got some great plans in place and the UTS report gave us that direction.

“It’s a platform that allows the station to stay true to its core values and everything we’ve stood for over 30 years.”

On the smell of an oily rag… Will Kemp and other Skid Row broadcasters have always done it tough. Photo supplied.

Turning a blind eye to scientific facts is the first step for industries threatened by climate change. Photo: Thinkstock.
House of cards

ICAC enquiries in NSW have uncovered a culture of lobbying and back-scratching that runs across party lines, reports Amanda Woodard.

The glittering prize of government contracts has fuelled massive growth in the lobbying industry, and a consequent increase in political and government corruption, says a Sydney academic and former corruption prevention officer at NSW’s Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC).

In this “era of the contracting state,” lucrative government tenders have provided a strong incentive for business to curry favour with politicians, often by donating to their political parties, argues University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) academic Dr Bronwyn Dalton.

Public-private partnerships (PPP) opened up a whole new world of opportunity to develop social and economic infrastructure in Australia but they also ushered in a world of cosy, behind-the-scenes dealing between some in government and business, says Dr Dalton.

Any state or federal project with a capital cost in excess of $50 million could be suitable for a PPP, so “it should be no surprise,” says Dr Dalton, “that corruption sometimes appears when you have serious commercial interests on the one hand, a bucket-load of money on the other and the politicians in between.”

“Contracts for outsourcing major infrastructure projects tend to be prepared by corporates and their savvy lawyers who negotiate sweet deals that are not only lucrative but, if things go wrong, leave much of the financial risk with government,” says Dr Dalton, who is the Director of the Cosmopolitan Civil Societies Research Centre at UTS’s Business School.

In recent months, the ICAC has held several enquiries into alleged corrupt behaviour in NSW. At the time of writing, although no findings of corruption had yet been made, public hearings had led to the resignation of several politicians, including former NSW Premier Barry O’Farrell, his Police Minister Mike Gallacher and Energy Minister Chris Hartcher.

Mr Hartcher has denied allegations of corrupt behaviour; while Mr Gallacher refused to deny the claims levelled against him, saying: “I don’t even know what the allegations are.” Mr O’Farrell resigned because of what he described as a massive memory failure over the gift of a $3000-dollar bottle of wine from businessman Nick Di Girolamo.

Allegations of favourable treatment by the Government of certain businesses in return for political donations, breaches of state laws governing political donations, and politicians failing to declare gifts from businessmen and their companies, have all been aired in this round of ICAC sessions.

Coal baron Nathan Tinkler is one of the businessmen embroiled in the enquiries. Among other things, he has denied allegations he donated to the National Party to beat limitations on political donations. Mr Di Girolamo was chief executive of Australian Water Holdings (AWH), a company the ICAC has alleged has links to the family of corrupt former NSW Labor Government minister Eddie Obeid. Mr Di Girolamo denied all the allegations at the ICAC.

Movement between the political and lobbying classes should be regulated, says Dr Dalton. Of 272 registered lobbyists in NSW, recorded by the ICAC in 2010, almost half had previously served as MPs or worked as ministerial staff.

“What we’re seeing is a lot of the political class, party functionaries and senior public servants migrating to the corporate sector, and many of them played a role in the tender-granting process,” she explains.

In the ICAC spotlight:

From left, former NSW energy minister Chris Hartcher, former NSW Premier Barry O’Farrell, former NSW Police Minister Mike Gallacher and businessman Nathan Tinkler. Photos: AAP

There are few people who lobby but don’t call themselves lobbyists, the says. Lobbyists also operate inside most corporations although they are rarely identified as such.

“The corporate government relations people usually come with strong political linkages. But the fact that their role isn’t defined or monitored means they can operate under the radar and remain Trojan horses.”

In the words of Prime Minister Tony Abbott, “You can either be a powerbroker or a lobbyist – but you can’t be both.”

Under the current code of conduct, members of any state or federal political party, state executive or administrative committee are banned from being a lobbyist. It’s not yet clear whether Mr Abbott’s new rules around lobbying (which, at the time of writing, were due to be announced) will force in-house lobbyists to declare themselves alongside independent lobbyists on the federal register.

Proposals are highly dependent on self-regulation and self-reporting, says Dr Dalton, “but the more successful measures will be those that create transparency, such as putting private information on the public record and posting transcripts of exchanges between ministers and lobbyists on the web.”

NSW Premier Mike Baird has recently said he supports tighter regulation of lobbyists in general and singled out the publication of ministers’ diaries as one measure to enhance transparency.

In the final analysis, corruption is a culture problem, she says. “You can increase incentives to behave ethically and introduce structural changes, separation of tasks, new systems ... but unless you change the culture, people will find their way around systems.”

Scandals can help curb corruption. “If there is strong community resentment [about alleged and proven corruption], it sends a message to politicians who then suffer enormous reputational damage.”

Dr Dalton says the effectiveness of the ICAC model is recognised internationally and copied around the world. It is helped by the fact that NSW has developed world-class whistleblower legislation in the form of the Protected Disclosure Act, which is crucial to rooting out corruption.

Corruption commissions operate only in some states. “In the context of the major outsourcing plans proposed in the 2014 budget, it is time to think about creating a national corruption watchdog.”
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