



Ethics in the Global South

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Howard Harris,

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A SHORT HISTORY OF APPLIED ETHICS IN AUSTRALIA

Howard Harris

ABSTRACT

Various achievements of Australia in the field of applied ethics from the 1980s to 2016 are outlined. The review covers academic scholarship, research and teaching; the ethics of business and actions to build ethics into the structures of enterprises. This follows the 3-fold categorization developed by De George (2012). A brief account of the formation and history of the Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics is included, as is a selection of scandals involving Australian organisations. Australia is shown to have made a significant contribution to the academic discipline of applied ethics and to have been aware of its position, distant from the English-speaking West and in the midst of nations of the global south.

Keywords: Ethics; associations; Australia; history; scandals; professional ethics

This short account of the history of applied ethics in Australia includes a brief record of the Australian Association for Professional and Applied

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Ethics, acknowledgement of earlier accounts of applied ethics in Australia and reference to some of the events which have provided case studies for media and education. The timeline runs from 1980 to 2016, which is not to say that there was no interest in applied ethics before 1980 but recognises the first half of the 1980s as the birth of business ethics (De George, 2012; Grace & Cohen, 2010).

The objective is not a definitive history but in some respects a chronicle, a record so that the timeline and events and perhaps personalities will not be lost, a record that might be a useful resource for those who seek to write a more definitive history, whether of the discipline, or some aspect of it or of some organisation or enterprise within it. It is written in the context of a call for papers about ethics in the global south and in the Southern hemisphere.

Although the aim is not a history that reports every event, it is a history in the sense that ‘history means finding out by inquiry’ (Hancock, 1954), ‘to say how it really was’ in keeping with the discipline introduced into the writing of history by Ranke and his followers in the nineteenth century (Donnelly & Norton, 2011). In that approach to history, any writer of a history, even one that is short or incomplete, will ‘have to construct a frame of reference within which to discuss’ the available evidence, and that frame is ‘always determined by their own philosophical perspective and values’ (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1983). As this is a story mainly of business and professional ethics as distinct from bio-ethics, medical ethics and research ethics, it would seem appropriate to use a frame of reference widely used when presenting a history of business ethics to provide a core structure for this chapter. In that structure, developed by Richard De George (2012), the term ‘applied ethics’ has three distinct meanings – as a topic of academic scholarship, research and teaching; as the ethics of business and especially of the failures of business; as the name of a movement to build ethics into the structures of enterprises.

Australia is a nation of some 22 million people, in the Southern hemisphere, but it is not part of the ‘global south’, itself a notion that is fluid, contested, not amenable to rich/poor, north/south and black/white divides (Oldfield & Parnell, 2014). The aim in this chapter is to tell the story of applied ethics in Australia in a global context and especially in the context of the global south, whilst acknowledging that Australia is a developed economy, a member of both the OECD and the G20¹, even though it is geographically placed in the midst of less developed countries and in the midst of nations with non-Western heritage. New Zealand, near neighbour to Australia, is in a similar position.

ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP, RESEARCH AND TEACHING

The term ‘business ethics’ came into common use in the United States in the 1970s when its origin is found in the academy, in academic writings and meetings and in the development of a field of academic teaching, research and publication. This section of the study deals with the development and achievements of applied ethics in Australia from an academic perspective.

Australian Scholarly Contribution to Applied Ethics

A series of ‘region- and country-related reports on business ethics’ were published in the *Journal of Business Ethics* in 1997 (Enderle, 1997). As they deal more with the ethics of business than with academic scholarship, they are reported more fully in the section on the ethics of business in Australia. There was a single report on business ethics in Australia and New Zealand, written by an Australian academic. Whether Australia was included because of the weight of its (and New Zealand’s) academic contribution to applied ethics, or because of its economic clout or its unique geo-political location perhaps matters less than the example it provides of all three. Membership of the OECD and G20 recognise the economic status. The academic contribution of Australasian academics to the discipline of applied ethics is attested by a number of international surveys.

According to a survey of business ethics publications for the period 1999–2008 (Chan, Fung, & Yau, 2010) three Australian institutions – Curtin University, the University of Melbourne and the University of South Australia – ranked in the top 50 institutions in the world in terms of business ethics research, the only ones outside North America and Europe to do so. The contribution was quite broadly based, with 31 of the 38 Australian universities contributing publications. Indeed, publications from Australia in the major business ethics journals averaged 163 per year, better than all countries except Canada (207), the UK (457) and the United States (2,140). The only other countries with a national average of more than 100 articles per year were The Netherlands (156) and Spain (110) (Chan et al., 2010).

An evaluation of research in Australian universities is carried out from time to time. The review is called the ERA, Excellence in Research in Australia, and Applied Ethics is one of the discipline categories in the ERA (category 2201). In the 2015 assessment exercise, seven Australian universities were assessed as undertaking applied ethics research at or above world class level, up from five in the 2012 evaluation. The number of institutions with ‘above world class’ (ERA:4) ratings increased from 1 to 4 over the same period.

Against those rather positive findings comes the realisation that no Australian journal was included in the listing of top journals in the field, either in the initial study (Chan et al., 2010) or in subsequent studies (Sabrin, 2002; Serenko & Bontis 2009; Warnick, Rodrigo, Albrecht, & Stephens, 2014). There are no apparent Australian names in a study reported in 2014 which includes in the journal list not only business ethics journals but also some leading management journals, such as *Administrative Science Quarterly* and *Academy of Management Journal* (Warnick et al., 2014).

The hosting of international conferences in Australia is a further indication of international engagement in applied ethics by Australians. The international conference of Ethics in the Public Service: An International Network held its 5th meeting in Brisbane in 1996, the International Institute for Public Ethics held its 2002 meeting in Brisbane in conjunction with the annual conference of the Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics (AAPAE), The International Society of Business Economics and Ethics, ISBEE, held its world congress in Melbourne in 2004, the International Association for Business and Society, IABS, met in Sydney in 2015 (the first time it had met outside Europe and North America).

Australia's hosting of the ISBEE world congress is another indication of contribution to international business ethics, and it is especially relevant as ISBEE has been determinedly global in its activities, holding its congresses in Japan, Brazil, Australia, South Africa, Poland and China, never in North America or Western Europe. It is the first world-wide professional association to focus exclusively on the study of business, economics and ethics. Selected papers from the congress in Melbourne were published in a special issue of the *Australian Journal of Professional and Practical Ethics* (vol. 8(1), 2006). At the most recent, world congress Australians were elected to the positions of president and secretary. Two Australians spoke as journal editors at the 2016 congress.

The Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, CAPPE, commenced operations in 2000 as an Australian Research Council Special Research Centre. It had a concentration of applied philosophers across its divisions at Charles Sturt University and the University of Melbourne. The Australian National University was part of the grouping for a time and CAPPE claimed to be 'the world's largest concentration of applied philosophers' (ANU, n.d.). CAPPE ceased to exist at the end of 2016. Its purpose had been 'to connect rigorous philosophical thinking with policy input, community discussion and professional aims' (ANU, n.d.).

Australian universities had been involved in applied ethics before the formation of either CAPPE in 2000 or the Australian Association for

Professional and Applied Ethics in 1993 (more about this association is given below). Thompson's review of applied ethics in Australia (2010) draws attention to the work of John Anderson at Sydney in the middle of the twentieth century, on democracy, moralism, education, liberty and censorship, and to the influence of Peter Singer whose article on famine, affluence and morality appeared in 1972 ahead of his book *Animal Liberation* in 1985. Courses in applied ethics appeared in the 1990s and Thompson reports that a Centre for Human Bioethics was established at Monash University in 1980 (by Singer and Kuhse), and a Centre for Philosophy and Public Issues at the University of Melbourne in 1990 (by C. A. J. Coady). Singer later served as a professor at Princeton while another Australian, John Kleinig, became a professor at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York.

These activities and external reviews show that Australia has made a contribution to applied ethics in terms of academic scholarship and research.

The Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics

The AAPAE is the oldest continuously active professional body in Australia in the field of applied and professional ethics – barring the associations and registration boards associated with professions such as psychology, veterinarian science and teaching. A brief history of the AAPAE appears in *A Companion to Philosophy in Australia and New Zealand* and that account, written by the then President of AAPAE (Cohen, 2010), has provided the basis for the historical introduction in the next paragraph.

A Colloquium on Teaching Applied Ethics at the Women's College, University of Sydney, in November 1992 provided the impetus for the formation of what was to become the Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics. At that conference, academics and professionals from a number of different backgrounds found a great deal of common ground as they met together and saw benefit in meeting together on a regular basis. It was determined to form an association that could bring together people who might otherwise be separated by traditional discipline and professional boundaries so that the benefits of collegiality might continue. This led to the formation in 1993 of the AAPAE, a non-partisan, non-profit national umbrella organisation for all those concerned with applied ethics in its many forms. Each year since its inception, the AAPAE has held an annual conference, and it has published a selection of papers as either proceedings or in special issues of journals. A list of the conferences showing the location, host organisation and destination of published papers is provided in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Conferences of the AAPAE.

Year	Location	Host, associated publication
1	1994	Adelaide Local working party <i>No proceedings volume</i>
2	1995	Brisbane St John's College, University of Queensland <i>Proceedings volume edited by Miller & Preston</i>
3	1996	Wagga Wagga Charles Sturt University <i>Proceedings volume edited by Alexandra, Collingridge and Miller</i>
4	1997	Melbourne Centre for Applied Philosophy & Public Ethics (CAPPE), University of Melbourne <i>Proceedings volume edited by Alexandra, Coady and Langtry</i>
5	1998	Sydney University of NSW <i>Business & Professional Ethics J 17(4), 1998 and Professional Ethics: A Multidisciplinary Journal 6(3&4), 1998</i>
6	1999	Canberra Charles Sturt University <i>BPEJ 18(3&4), 1999 and PE 7(3&4), 1999</i>
7	2000	Brisbane St John's College, University of Queensland <i>BEPJ 20(1), 2001 and PE 8(2), 2000</i>
8	2001	Adelaide School of International Business, University of South Australia <i>BEPJ 21(3&4), 2002</i>
9	2002	Brisbane International Institute for Public Ethics and AAPAE joint conference <i>No proceedings volume</i>
10	2003	Melbourne Victoria University, Centre for International Corporate Governance Research <i>Australian J Professional & Applied Ethics AJPAE 5(2), 2003</i>
11	2004	Hawkesbury University of Western Sydney, School of Education and Early Childhood Studies <i>Australian J Professional & Applied Ethics AJPAE 6(2), 2004</i>
12	2005	Adelaide University of South Australia, School of International Business <i>Proceedings CD and AJPAE 8(2), 2006</i>
13	2006	Sydney School of Philosophy, University of NSW <i>Proceedings CD and AJPAE 9(2), 2007</i>
14	2007	Melbourne Graduate School of Business, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University <i>AJPAE 10(1&2), 2010</i>
15	2008	Brisbane School of Justice, Queensland University of Technology <i>Electronic Journal of Business Ethics & Organization Studies 13(2), 2008</i>
16	2009	Goulburn School of Policing Studies, Charles Sturt University <i>AJPAE 11(1&2), 2010</i>
17	2010	Sydney University of Sydney, Faculty of Pharmacy <i>AJPAE 12(1&2), 2010</i>
18	2011	Hobart Department of Philosophy, University of Tasmania <i>Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations 8, 2012</i>
19	2012	Brisbane St John's College, University of Queensland <i>Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations 9, 2013</i>

Table 1. (Continued)

Year	Location	Host, associated publication
20	Fremantle	University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle campus <i>Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations 12, 2015</i>
21	Sydney	University of Notre Dame Australia, Institute for Ethics and Society <i>Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations 13, 2015</i>
22	Auckland	University of Auckland, School of Humanities: Philosophy <i>Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations 15, 2016</i>
23	Adelaide	University of South Australia, School of Management <i>Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations 17, 2017</i>
24	Sydney	University of Technology Sydney <i>Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations</i>

The AAPAE is an incorporated association under Australian law, registered in the state of New South Wales. The formal aims of the AAPAE, as stated in its constitution, are: to facilitate networking between individuals and institutions working or interested in the area of professional and applied ethics; to foster community discussion of issues related to professional and applied ethics; to encourage a focus on the teaching of professional and applied ethics; to facilitate research into ways to strengthen ethical practice; to facilitate the organisation of conferences, meetings and other events in order to fulfil the above aims and to develop and distribute publications, including a newsletter and conference proceedings. An executive committee is elected at the annual meeting and a list of the presidents of the association is given in [Table 2](#).

Table 2. Presidents of the AAPAE.

Year ^a	President	Affiliation
1994, 1995	Simon Longstaff	St James Ethics Centre, Sydney
1996, 1997	Noel Preston	Griffith University
1998, 1999	Stephen Cohen	University of NSW
2000, 2001	Bruce Langtry	University of Melbourne
2002, 2003	John Morgan	St John’s College, University of Queensland
2004, 2005	Chris Provis	University of South Australia
2006, 2007	Howard Harris	University of South Australia
2008–2010	Michael Schwartz	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University
2011	Betty Chaar	University of Sydney
2012	Stephen Cohen	University of New South Wales
2013–2016	Hugh Breakey	Griffith University

^aYear of election to the office.

Teaching, Publications and Other Activities

By 2011, there were 144 individual subjects with the word ‘ethics’ in the title being taught in business disciplines at Australian universities (counting only stand alone, for credit units) and a further 247 in profession-related programs including engineering and medicine (Kim, Harris, Hobson, & Fein, 2012). The great majority of these were focussed on teaching ethical theory.

One of the first publications in the applied ethics field in Australia was the magazine *Res Publica*, founded in 1992 by the University of Melbourne’s Centre for Philosophy and Public Issues. Intended for a general readership with a focus on the application of philosophical skills and insights to public policy issues, it was widely distributed in hard copy and online. While refereed academic journals in various areas of professional and applied ethics had been established overseas (*Journal of Business Ethics* was first published in 1982; *Business Ethics Quarterly* in 1991; *Business Ethics: A European Review* in 1992), there was no such journal in Australia. At the 1998 conference of the AAPAE, Professor Seumas Miller proposed that the association should have a journal and the *Australian Journal of Professional and Applied Ethics* was established, to deal with the ‘wide spectrum of issues in the generic area of professional and applied ethics’ (Miller, 1999). Miller became the founding editor and the first issue appeared the following year. For many years, the journal published papers from the annual conferences of the AAPAE in special issues (see Table 1). *Research in Ethical Issues in Organizations* is now the journal of the Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics, publishing papers from the annual conferences in a guest-edited volume each year since the 2012 conference in Brisbane. The AAPAE also publishes a newsletter, *Australian Ethics*, and sponsored the book *Applied Ethics: Strengthening Ethical Practices* (Bowden, 2012). Given that Australians were publishing on average 163 business ethics articles a year in the top journals during 1999–2008 (as the Chan et al. review mentioned earlier showed), no attempt has been made to provide in this short history a list of all publications by Australians in the fields of applied ethics or business ethics. Many notable items, including ones dealing specifically with the global south, are thus left unmentioned.

The Australasian Business Ethics Network, ABEN, is a community of scholars and practitioners from a range of institutions across Australia, New Zealand and Oceania. It has hosted an annual conference each year since 2011. A number of groups associated with the humanistic management network (www.humanetwork.org) have held meetings in Australia, although there is no formal organisation. The Australian Bioethics Association held

its first conference in 1991, at the University of Melbourne. Peter Singer and others at the Monash Bioethics Centre had played a leading role in the establishment of the association. The technique of modern Socratic dialogue (van Hooft, 2001) has been used by academic staff at Deakin University in a variety of settings with professional groups, with the general public and with individuals, in the teaching of business ethics, as well as with students studying at secondary schools. Although not a specifically academic activity, the St James Ethics Centre (now simply The Ethics Centre), an independent service-oriented organisation, was founded in 1989. Simon Longstaff was the first executive director. The Ethics Centre of South Australia was formed in 2005, bringing together the three universities in Adelaide – Adelaide, Flinders and UniSA – and the South Australian Government in a formal cooperative organisation which would be a resource for business and government and a centre for collegial debate and collaborative education and research. The formal collaboration is no longer in place.

Another measure of the extent of engagement of applied ethics academics in Australia with activities in the global south can be seen from the extent to which applied ethics conferences in Australia have included people and topics from the global south in their programming. Almost one third of the presentations in the 2016 conference of the Australian Association for Professional and Applied Ethics had a link with the global south, including India, the Seychelles, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, South Africa and China.

ETHICS OF BUSINESS

As the term business ethics became more widely used in the media and public discourse in the latter part of the twentieth century, it often became equated with either business scandals or more broadly with ethics *in* business or the ethics *of* business. In this broader sense, the story of business ethics in Australia goes back to the beginnings of business in Australia. If business is taken in a broad sense, to mean commercial exchange as well as economic systems and the organisation of business enterprises, then the history of business in Australia goes back well beyond the first European settlements (McCarthy, 1939).

Ethics in Business

A survey of business ethics in 13 regions of the world was carried out in advance of the first ISBEE world congress in 1996. The 13 regional reports

included China, Philippines, India, Republic of South Africa, East & Southern Africa, the Middle East, Russia, Central & Eastern Central Europe and Latin America from the global south. There were reports on Australia and New Zealand, and Japan, and reports on business ethics in Western & Northern Europe, and in North America. The reports, subsequently published in the *Journal of Business Ethics* and in book form (Enderle, 1997, 1999), considered a wide range of challenges and activities of business ethics at national and regional levels, including the relevance of semantics, corruption, leadership, corporate responsibilities, the need for case studies, business ethics as a social institution and the question as to how important international issues really are.

The Australian report noted that Australians (and New Zealanders) had prided themselves ‘on being open fair and honest societies’ so that the scandals of the 1980s, with the ‘corruption and gross dereliction of duty’ that they had exposed to public view, had shaken this belief (Milton-Smith, 1997). The report found a perception that business was trying to do better, as the ‘can-do’ entrepreneurial style of the 1980s was replaced by a greater community expectation of corporate social responsibility. The entrepreneurial spirit had been widespread and much lauded in the decade before Milton-Smith’s report. All the features of boom and bust were there (Carnegie & O’Connell, 2011), and by the time of the report the need for additional attention to integrity and governance was widely accepted. Even so, Milton-Smith found that there was ‘moral confusion’ in the community and that there was little open discussion about values from business leaders, or any one much else for that matter. Despite the attribution as an open, fair and honest society, Australians are notable for their reluctance to speak about values, with Milton-Smith reporting that ‘relatively few people in senior positions speak out frequently, fluently and compellingly on ethical issues’ and others confirming the more general position (see, for instance, Frame, 2009).

Business Scandals

Business scandals have had a significant impact on what the community thinks of business ethics, as the Milton-Smith report noted. Scandals affected the professional standing of business executives and bank managers in Australia, and of business executives and bankers elsewhere, a point taken up more fully in the discussion below on applied ethics as seen by the community. The paragraphs below provide an eclectic selection of business failures in Australia in the period from the 1980s to the present. As any attempt at an exhaustive

listing would in all probability be very long and the definition of what constitutes a scandal will vary from reader to reader, from time to time and from profession to profession, no listing would be universally accepted. The eight examples selected are intended to provide a starting point for those who might want to examine the topic further and an indication of Australian responses to scandals which are, in form at least, seldom peculiarly Australian. The chosen examples come from the manufacturing, finance, development, media and government sectors of the economy, and include individuals ranging from board members to individual employees and members of the public. Longer lists of Australian business scandals can be found in [Sykes \(1988\)](#), [Milton-Smith \(1997\)](#) and [Carnegie and O'Donnell \(2011\)](#).

Two scandals involving the media are the hoax perpetrated by two announcers on a Sydney radio station 2DAY-FM in 2012 and the botched kidnap attempt in which a current affairs program crew were involved in 2016. In the first example, the Sydney-based announcers placed a phone call to the London hospital in which the Duchess of Cambridge had just given birth to a baby boy, Prince George, third in the line of succession to the British Crown. The announcers claimed to be the Duchess's grandmother, Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Charles, the baby's grandfather. It was the middle of the night in London and the announcers were connected to the nurse attending the Duchess. A conversation between nurse and announcers lasting about 2 minutes was later played on air. Another nurse, who was acting as switchboard operator at the time of the call, later committed suicide. The Australian media watchdog, the Australian Communications and Media Authority, found that the radio station had acted improperly in airing the recording of the phone conversation without the consent of the two nurses ([ACMA, 2015](#)). The television current affairs incident involves a couple involved in a custody dispute. The father took the child to Lebanon and the mother sought to retrieve the child with the assistance of an agent. She travelled to Lebanon and some activities were filmed by a television crew from the Australian current affairs program 60 minutes ([Cassin, 2016](#)). Charges were laid in Lebanon and the payment of large sums to facilitate various activities has been alleged.

Two men were convicted of insider trading in 2015 and gaol sentences imposed. In the scheme, said to be worth \$7 million, an employee of the National Australia Bank was receiving sensitive information from an employee of the Australian Bureau of Statistics. They were then using this information to enter into foreign exchange derivative products and profit from favourable movements in market prices ([ASIC, 2015](#)). Court-imposed penalties also resulted from the scandal involving the wheat exporter AWB and its sales to Iraq at a time when United Nations imposed sanctions were

in place. AWB was found to have paid commissions, outside and in contravention of the sanctions regime (Harris, 2007). The failure of a number of financial institutions in the late 1980s and early 1990s was attributed in part to the failure of corporate executives and board members to act with due diligence in the performance of their fiduciary duties, in some cases to understand what those duties were. Carnegie and O'Connell (2011) provide a listing of accounting scandals, and the report into the collapse of the Victorian Economic Development Corporation (VEDC) provides a concise insight into the issues (Ryan, 1988).

In the land development dispute relating to the Hindmarsh Island Bridge, there were competing claims of potential environmental damage and economic benefit. There were also claims of potential damage to indigenous values and sacred sites. The hesitation of the Ngarrindjeri women to tell of their beliefs about water around Hindmarsh Island demonstrated the problem of competing cultures, values and systems of justice (Bourke, 1997). The term 'secret women's business' was widely used to describe the situation. It was a practical example of doing business in a plural society, with business interests, religious values, human rights, privacy and transparency involved, made the more confronting and difficult by the moral confusion of a nation without clear values. With pluralism, there are differing views of truth, beauty and goodness and quite possibly no way of establishing a shared definition of beauty or goodness (Gardner, 2011).

Exposure to asbestos can lead to a range of respiratory illnesses, many of which are fatal. James Hardie Industries, an Australian public company, used asbestos in its products from the 1930s until 1987. In 2001, James Hardie Industries allocated \$293 million to a Medical Research and Compensation Foundation, at the same time moving its operations to the Netherlands and allegedly limiting itself from asbestos-related liabilities (Puncheva, 2008). There have been subsequent investigations regarding the adequacy of the Fund and whether or not the directors realised the Fund would be inadequate at the time when the Fund was established.

Some actions may be legal but unethical, and the expense claims of elected politicians (and sometimes of business people) can fall into that category – the expenditure is permitted under the rules, but is seen by outside observers as inappropriate use of public or corporate funds and unethical. In 2015, the then Speaker of the Australian House of Representatives, Bronwyn Bishop, chartered a helicopter at government expense for the final leg of a journey to attend an event in Geelong. She was forced from office after refusing to explain or apologise for her abuse of travel entitlements (Wanna, 2016).

The inclusion of scandals in this short history of applied ethics in Australia helps to illustrate the ethical challenges faced. It recognises that ethics is learnt by practice and example, that case studies can be used to help us understand how others make decisions (O'Donovan, 2002), and perhaps to 'lead us to better understand the variety of things in the world and their relations to one another' (Hancock, 1954).

Applied Ethics as Seen by the Australian Community

Australians saw some professionals as meriting trust. In this, they confirmed the notion that being professional has to do with acting with integrity and with regard for the community above self (Cowton, 2009; Davis, 1998). An annual survey to determine the image of the professions in Australia was begun by the Roy Morgan polling organisation in 1987; respondents are asked how highly trusted they considered each of 20 (now 30) professions, returning ratings for 'ethics and honesty'. Nurses have been the most respected profession every year since their admission to the list in 1994 (Morgan Poll, 2015). The next most highly ranked in the 2016 survey are pharmacists, doctors, school teachers, engineers and dentists.

Over the 30 surveys, there have been some significant changes in ranking, with bank managers falling from a ranking of 58% for high or very high in ethics and honesty in the first survey to a rating of 30% in 2016, little more than half the initial score. The fall from third place (behind doctors and dentists) in 1987 to the middle of the list (14 in 2015, 16 in 2016) may well be related to scandals involving banks, both in Australia and globally. The ethics and honesty ratings of bank managers fell 9 points from 49 in the 1990 survey to 40 in the 1991 survey at a time when a number of financial institutions failed around Australia, including collapse in 1990 of the State Bank of Victoria and the Pyramid Building Society (Gizycki & Lowe, 2000). In the United States, a similar survey showed a 12-point drop in the rating for bankers between 2007 and 2008, across the main events of the Global Financial Crisis (Gallup, 2016). The fall in ranking of ministers of religion may also be related to scandal. They were ranked at 6 when they were first included in the survey in 1996, headed only by the medical professions and school teachers, but widespread media coverage of child abuse in the Christian church in Australia 'undermine[d the] trust, reputation and legitimacy of the professionals working in the field' (Lonne & Parton, 2014) and ministers of religion had fallen to the middle of the list by 2016. The ethics and honesty rating had fallen from 59% in 1996 to 35% in 2016. The opinions of Australians as to

the ethics and honesty of Australian politicians over the period from 1976 to 2000 is discussed in [Leigh \(2002\)](#).

Australians do have a view of the ethics of business, a view formed in part by reaction to scandal, in part by the open, fair and honest society, in part by the actions for good of Australian businesses and in part by the activities of those interested in applied ethics and integrity.

THE MOVEMENT FOR ETHICS IN ENTERPRISES

The third category of business ethics to be considered is that where business ethics is seen as a movement to enhance ethics in business or a movement to explicitly build ethics into the structures of corporations in the form of ethics codes, ethics officers, ethics committees and ethics training. This has been particularly apparent in the United States where provisions of the Federal Sentencing Guidelines meant that the penalty for certain offenses would be reduced if the corporation could demonstrate that it had an ethics program in place ([Ferrell et al., 1998](#)). Governments took a different approach in Australia and a comprehensive program to ensure that Australia's corporate laws met the challenges of changing conditions was introduced in 1997. Called the Corporate Law Economic Reform Program (CLERP), it was designed to protect integrity and enhance economic efficiency. Although it is hard to identify a 'movement' for business ethics in Australia, the activity surrounding the substantial reforms to corporate governance, transparency and accountability introduced by that part of the reform program known as CLERP 9 show that there has been extensive community and professional involvement in the process. The Commonwealth Government issued a discussion paper in 2002 and received over 60 submissions in response. Parliamentary Committees conducted reviews. Many commentators saw the proposals as response to a high profile corporate collapses ([Dellaportas et al., 2005](#))². Substantial reforms were effected by the resulting legislation, the *Corporate Law Economic Reform Program (Audit Reform & Corporate Disclosure) Act 2004*.

Shareholder activism has risen with advantage taken of the opportunity, introduced through CLERP 9, to express discontent about the appointment and remuneration of directors. Ethical investment funds have grown such that by the end of 2015, almost half of the assets under management in managed funds in Australia was in responsible investment, meaning investment that systematically considers environmental, social and governance (ESG) and/or ethical factors in investment decision making while around 8% or

some AUD51 billion was in the narrowly defined category of core responsible investment (RIAA, 2016). The use of international norms by the local industry body, the Responsible Investment Association Australasia (RIAA) is further evidence of global engagement by Australian enterprises. An Australian bank, Westpac, was one of the inaugural signatories to the Equator Principles, and all major Australian banks are now signatories.

Corruption occurs in government and the public service as well as in business, and many jurisdictions in Australia moved to implement special bodies, often independent of political control to investigate claims of corruption and wrong-doing. All established education units which undertook, and continue to undertake, programmes aimed at community awareness in the field of organisational ethics. Some of the bodies are limited to investigation of activity in the public sector, some include elected representatives in their scope some have a remit that extends to business, some have a capacity to instigate prosecutions. Table 3 shows the names and formation dates of the bodies in the Australian states and territories. These bodies were formed to enhance ethics in business and government and to build ethics into the structures of enterprises in the form of ethics codes, ethics officers, ethics committees and ethics training. They have often provided examples to business of good practice in ethical behaviour and education.

The establishment of the St James Ethics Centre in 1989 was perhaps the most visible of the moves in the 1980s to provide ethics services to business and the wider community. The Centre was launched by the Anglican parish of St James King Street in the city of Sydney. Now known as The Ethics Centre, it became independent of the parish in 1996. Also in the 1980s, a corporate ethics program under the auspices of St Paul’s Centre, an ecumenical Christian group in Adelaide,

Table 3. Anti-Corruption Bodies.

Year ^a	State	Long Title	Acronym
1988	NSW	Independent Commission Against Corruption	ICAC
1989	Queensland	Criminal Justice Commission	CJC
2004	WA	Corruption and Crime Commission	CCC
2010	Tasmania	Integrity Commission	
2012	Victoria	Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission	IBAC
2013	SA	Independent Commissioner Against Corruption	ICAC
2018 ^b	N Territory	Independent Commissioner Against Corruption	ICAC
–	ACT	No similar body in Australian Capital Territory	

^a Year of first operation.

^b Expected start.

began to hold regular events in Adelaide for business leaders. Some business organisations established in-house capability in ethics. Those with links to U.S.-based parent companies often had access to materials and services developed by the parent companies in response to provisions introduced into the Federal Sentencing Guidelines in 1991 under which companies that could show that they had an effective compliance and ethics program would face reduced fines for certain offenses (De George, 2010). The consultancy arms of the major accounting firms were also active in the field and some individual practices emerged. Some universities and professional organisations also undertook consultancy assignments. Privacy concerns, the large numbers of potential providers and recipients and the absence of any mandatory reporting framework make it difficult to collect data about the extent of applied ethics consultancy work in Australia.

Some government-funded initiatives to educate people about ethics have reached large numbers of people. In New South Wales, 'special education in ethics' has been available to primary (elementary) school students in government schools since 2011. One aspect of the classes has been that 'students had to discuss their reasoning' (Hurst, 2010). Primary school children are also the focus of an initiative based on the work of British philosopher and educationalist Peter Vardy who has visited Australia a number of times in support of the initiative. The activity is called religion and values education (RAVE) in some school systems. Given the general reluctance of Australians to discuss ethical topics (Bouma, 2003; Frame, 2009), the greater experience in discussion about values that these activities bring should prove advantageous in developing a capacity in applied ethics in Australia, and for Australians discussing applied ethics topics with those from the global south.

The movement for ethics in enterprises, the third element in De George's description of the business ethics field, has been diverse in Australia, involving not only business, but also governments, schools and activists. Taken together, the activities are aimed at greater public awareness and an enhanced capacity to engage in ethical discourse. The community, including professional associations, academics and elected representatives, has been engaged in the process of enhancing ethical regimes in business.

DISCUSSION

This section looks at the evidence about applied ethics in Australia provided so far in three ways: looking at the effectiveness of the De George classification of applied ethics, examining the relevance of the material for an evaluation of Australia's engagement with the global south, and as history.

Applied Ethics

De George (2012) proposed a threefold division of the field of business ethics, referring to ‘three intertwined strands’ – the first is the application of ethical norms to business or ethics in business; the second is the academic activity in the field of business ethics and the third is the incorporation of ethics into business. This classification has been used in this short history as a classification for applied ethics (with the order changed to put the academic strand first). Applied ethics is a wider term than business ethics, although neither has rigid boundaries. Bioethics and research ethics are applied ethics but not business ethics, except when the questions concern the business of biotechnology or research. The academic strand is put first in this study. It deals with applied ethics and is broader in scope than the section dealing with ethics in business. De George described the third strand as the adoption of ethics within businesses. The third section of this short history has a wider, applied ethics, scope, encompassing activities by the government and the wider community to embed ethical behaviour in all public activity, not only in business as shown in the section title but also the adoption of ethics by enterprises.

By distinguishing the three aspects of applied ethics, only one of which is academic, the classification has strengthened the focus on *applied* ethics. The inclusion of the third category, concerned as it is with the enhancement of ethical capacity within organisations and society, has ensured that the actions and examples included are not all negative. The use of a levels-of-analysis approach considering applied ethics at the individual, organisational and systemic levels might not have achieved the same balance between positive and negative aspects.

Global South

The paper is submitted to a volume concerned with applied ethics in the global south and Southern hemisphere. There have been other books, special issues and projects which have examined aspects of applied ethics on an international scale. The collection of regional reports in the *Worldwide Survey of Business Ethics* (Enderle, 1997) is one example, another is the various attempts to examine perceived differences of approach between Europe and North America (see, for instance, Albrecht, Thompson, Hoopes, & Rodrigo, 2010; Enderle, 1996). A declared aim in this short history is to examine the impact of applied ethics activity in Australia on applied ethics in the global south. What basis should be used for such an analysis? No consistent basis

for comparison has emerged from the prior work. The evaluation could be based on the principles of colonial or post-colonial studies, on the particular ethical theories used, on some principles or characteristics widely accepted as representative of the global south or on some quantitative economic criteria. Designation of individuals and nations as colonial or post-colonial seems fraught with danger and uncertainty (Banerjee, 2011). An evaluation of ethical theory seems too academic in the context. The absence of an agreed definition of the global south (Oldfield & Parnell, 2014) makes any comparison on that basis problematic. As to comparisons on some numerical basis, very different results would emerge depending on whether the comparison was based on population, geographical area or national wealth. The basis adopted for the comparisons made in this study is to seek evidence of engagement between Australia and the global south to establish patterns of participation and to better understand the interactions among participants in a situation where those involved are at significantly different levels of development (Huggins & Johnston, 2009). It can be viewed as a form of network analysis and a similar approach has been adopted in assessing regional knowledge flows (Corral de Zubielqui, Jones, & Statsenko, 2016).

History

This is a history rather than a chronicle, because it does not set out to provide a listing of events, and especially not a listing of events in chronological order. It is partial, not in the sense of taking the side of a particular party, rather in that there are aspects left out. It is not an account of the experiences of a particular group, nor a social history focussed on art, human rights or some other theme, nor the presentation of the views of the people affected by the achievements or failures of applied ethics in Australia. To some extent it is a snapshot to be viewed in conjunction with other snapshots, including those of Chan et al. (2010), Milton-Smith (1997) and the relevant entries in *A Companion to Philosophy in Australia and New Zealand* (2010).

That it is history is shown in the concern for the legitimacy of sources, transparency in declaring the sources of information, and the use of a conceptual framework within which the subject is examined. When writing history, the author 'must use theory of some kind or another when...formulating...questions and pressing them home' (Hancock, 1954). The description of business ethics by De George provides the 'theory of some kind' for the study.

Like many histories which are accounts of particular industries, localities and endeavours one aim is to ensure that there is a record for posterity without in any way claiming to be the complete record nor having the promotion of a cause as the prime purpose. Hopefully, it points to possible avenues for further investigation and provides some indications of where further information might be found.

CONCLUSION

To assess the contribution of Australian activity in the field of applied ethics in the context of the global south and of Australia's position in the Southern hemisphere, a history of Australian activity in applied ethics has been provided, using the threefold categorisation of De George to assemble the material. The contributions by Australian individuals and organisations to applied ethics in the period from the 1980s to 2016, outlined above, show both an engagement with the global south and a contribution at a global level.

Evidence has been provided to show that Australian academics have contributed to the global discipline and have been hosts to and guests of those from the global south. Business in Australia has had its share of scandals and the community has responded by revising its opinions of the honesty and ethics of particular professions. The community, including professional associations, academics and elected representatives, have been engaged in the process of enhancing ethical regimes in business.

NOTES

1. OECD, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, a group of 35 countries mainly from Europe and North America but including Chile, Mexico, Japan and Korea, but not China or Russia (www.oecd.org). G20, Group of Twenty, an international forum for the governments and central bank governors from 20 major economies. The European Union is a member together with 19 individual nations including Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea and Turkey (www.g20.org).

2. Many commentators made specific reference to the collapse of HIH and the phrase 'high profile corporate collapses' was widely used in the media in relation to CLERP 9. See, for instance, a Deloitte Touche Tomatsu advice note, 'Re-modeled CLERP 9 lifts the bar on corporate governance', of 19 July 2004 and the note 'CLERP 9: Accounting and Auditing Reform' by Colin Parker, Stockford Ltd, released February 2003.

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