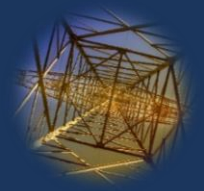
FPL Analysis

July - December 2018

Analysis

A risky business

Who are you trying to help?



No sector is safe from political risk; the lessons of the energy sector

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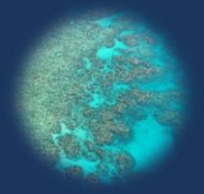

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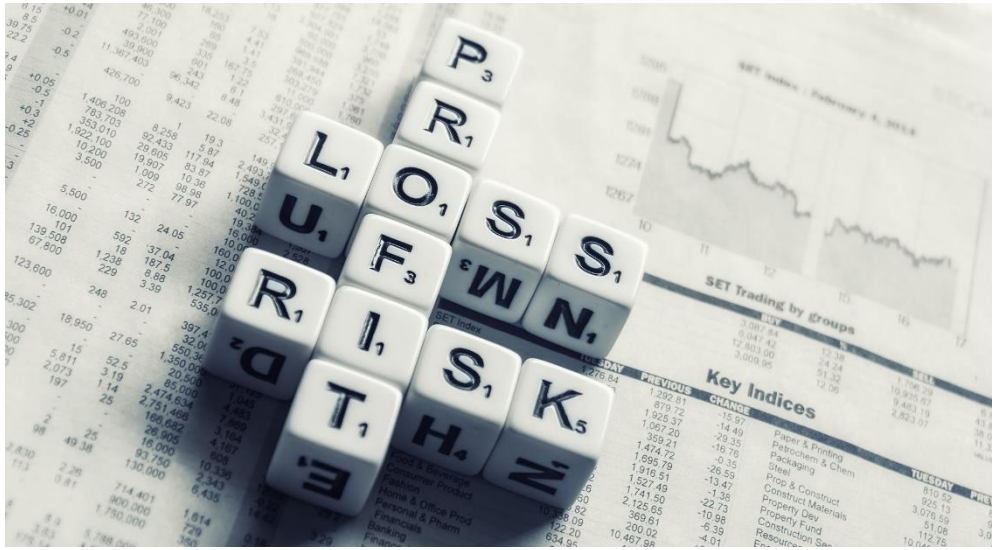


A risky business

Political risk has always existed, but now it is taking new and diverse forms. How we perceive and define this type of risk varies as the meaning has been inconsistent, reconstructed and changed over time. Broadly speaking, political risk is best thought of as the uncertainty that arises from political decisions, actions or events. This uncertainty complicates decision-making for businesses trying to shape their future with or against these oftentimes ambiguous forces influencing their external operating environment. This also has a flow-on effect to stakeholders, which is particularly problematic as the global economy becomes increasingly interconnected, and stakeholders become more numerous and interconnected themselves. The private sector is left scrambling down a path with no turnoff: political risk cannot be avoided and underestimating the link between government decision-making and business success can be disastrous. Australian businesses are currently experiencing elevated levels of political risk as China's "go-slow" policy toward Australian exports is causing up to two-month delays in products passing through Chinese customs. Business leaders have warned that this is a result of the Turnbull government implicating China in concerns over foreign interference, and that a souring bilateral relationship between the two nations is evidently threatening trade and investment.

Trade Minister Steven Ciobo has downplayed the severity of these trade risks, and insisted that Australia does not have to choose between national security and trade policy. In addition to hints of China putting up barriers to Australian beef exports, wine producers have indicated that up to six companies have experienced delays in getting products through Chinese customs. This has raised alarm bells since Australian wine exporters have created the first $1 billion market with new figures revealing a phenomenal 51% yearly growth in the Chinese market since the China-Australia Free Trade Agreement came into effect in 2015. While Mr Ciobo has maintained that the reason behind these delays are more "irritant" than "political", a Fairfax Media source revealed that two thirds of the export containers being held up at China's ports have been released for sale as a direct result of government efforts. The result is an uncertain trading landscape for Australian exporters in the Asian growth market and raises questions to the role of government decision-making in a rapidly changing risk environment.

While political risk has always existed, both changes in international relations and political change, at least in the US, Australia and Europe have tended to be either transparent and predictable, or slow and incremental. The past certainties have since vanished and have been replaced by increasing concern around trade policy, including changes in regulatory risk from tax reform, cross-border trade and currency inconvertibility as governments pursue their political agendas.

Leading companies have responded to the changing risk environment by expanding their risk management capabilities. Such changes involve utilizing technology to bring overarching governance of risk management into all parts of the company (a core tenet of the new ISO 31000:2018 risk management guidelines), connecting risk managers with government engagement experts or appointing the executive board with direct responsibility for mitigating (and creating opportunity in) political risk. Smaller Australian exporters may find this a challenge because of both capacity and capability constraints that limit how often and to what degree they can adopt the latest risk management best practice strategies. As a result, protecting Australian exporters from political vulnerability requires the Government to reassess the impact of its political activity on Australia's broader trade strategy in China.

Reassessing political activity does not mean creating a false dichotomy between choosing the region, the US or a Sino-focused strategy. The choice should instead be on what terms Australia participates in each trade policy or agreement, which is only becoming more complex as the US-China tariff debate rages on and the risk of a domino effect to Australia of distorted global demand and supply becomes more likely and severe.

For government this could mean maintaining China and Indonesia as Australia's most important bilateral trading partners, but also establishing multiple regional trading agreements. A multi-pronged trade strategy is not a new idea and requires significant analysis, but it at least ensures that Australian businesses are not dependent on a single regional trading bloc. On the other side of the coin, for businesses, the expectations of both investors and government is changing and the importance of including political risk as a critical component of a broader risk management strategy is evident. This should not be limited to pure analysis, but also requires actionable steps in the short- and long-term. Since these steps are not always clear, it is worth asking, did management explicitly take action following the result of risk analysis? The answer often reveals that political risk management is not just about accuracy, but also about persuasiveness. Business leaders can at least feel some relief in that while political risk may be inevitable, it can also be managed.

Allana Ferguson

Who are you trying to help?

Supporting responses to insecure work

FPL Advisory has conducted a review of the academic literature and public debates around insecure work in Australia, and we now present our Occasional Paper on Insecurity in the Australia Labour Force. In the Paper, we explore the impacts of non-standard work on different cohorts of people, focusing on the most marginal types of work. As a result of this process we hope to shed further light on the issue of insecure work and the people it can harm.

Through researching, writing and then consulting on this project, we have seen that there are groups that are qualitatively different in terms of their experience of insecure work. A policy response to insecurity should not be equally concerned for a government administrator on six figures and a two-year contract as it does of a low-skilled, ageing worker stringing together café jobs. With this in mind, we propose the Four Cohort Model of Security at Work.

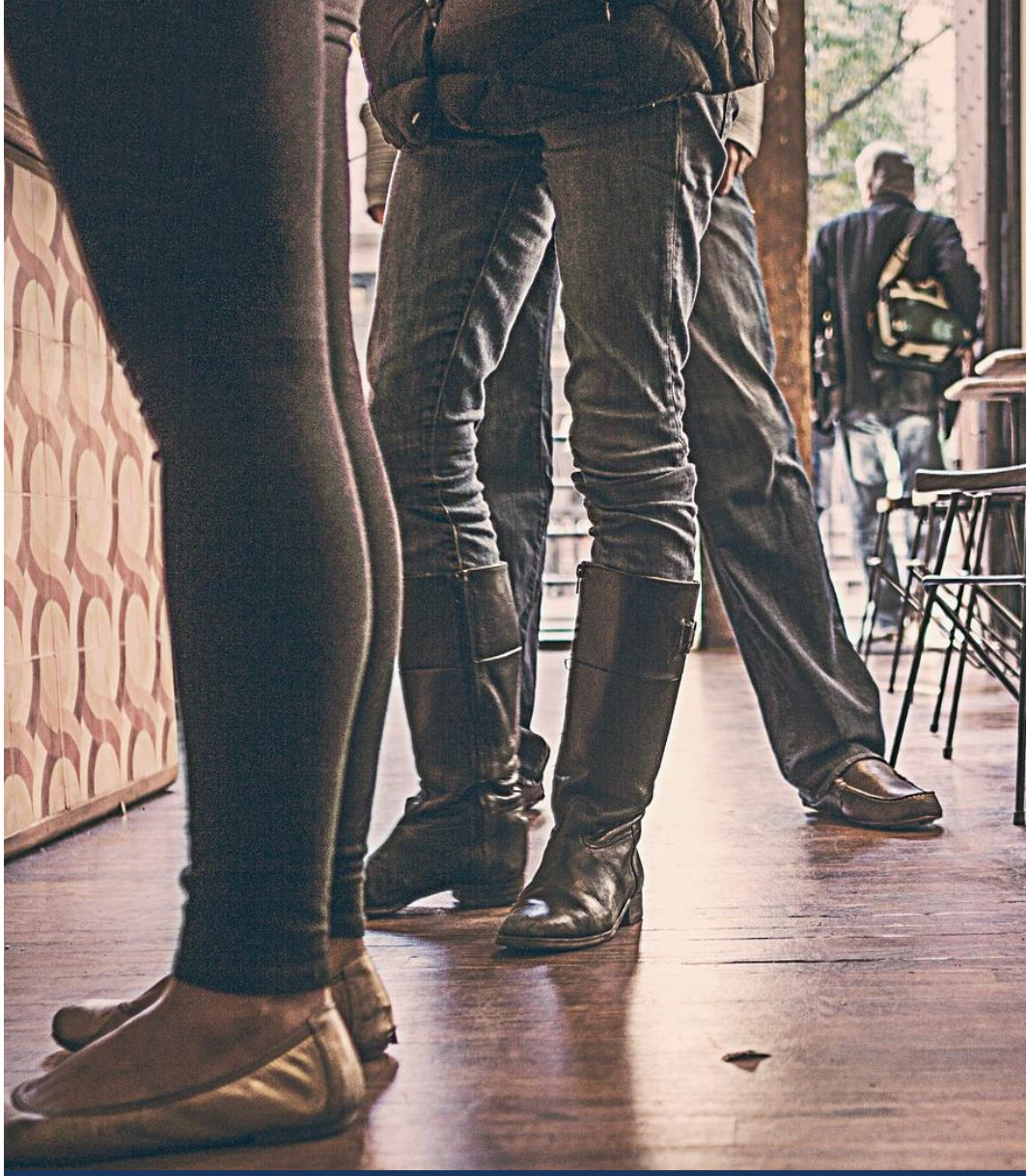
The Model places different types of work into four categories ranging from "Cohort 1: dependable work and income" to "Cohort 4: highly unreliable work and income". This allows us to sort types of work into categories more appropriate for policymaking than the single criterium of whether or not a job is "secure". This is first and foremost a practical tool for targeting policy that balances concern for the wellbeing of insecure workers in a generic sense with the need to match policy instruments with the reality on the ground.

In other words, the Model seeks to support policymakers in treating different problems separately, and deliberately divides a complex spectrum into a series of general categories in order to facilitate this. The Model involves a number of value judgements as to which category a type of work is allocated, for example we consider that a casual worker with marketable and in-demand skills (say, a recent engineering graduate) is not exposed to the same long-term consequences of uncertainty as a casual worker who is unskilled or low skilled. We look forward to public feedback and will continue to refine the Model over time.

Our focus on Cohort 4 is not to say that other kinds of work are otherwise perfect. Efforts to improve the working conditions of insecure workers in other ways are still pursuing a worthy policy goal.

The evidence we've seen indicates that insecurity is a persistent issue in the workforce but it is not a broad and monolithic issue that can be resolved with sweeping reforms. Targeted action that has a clear target audience and established outcomes is needed. We hope that our Occasional Paper adds to the public's understanding of this issue and helps to inform effective policy solutions.

Sam Perkins



The FPL Advisory *Occasional Paper - Insecurity in the Australian Labour Force* is now available from our site or by requesting a copy.

No sector is safe from political risk

Lessons from the energy sector

If you got in a time machine and told someone in 2008 that a decade in the future, energy policy would be the number one political risk issue at a national level, they would've written you off as a doomsayer. The energy sector has traditionally been safe and consistent, a picture of stable policy and long-term investment. Now, it's a case study of what happens when political risk smashes into your business planning like a wrecking ball.

As the media frenzy over the successive energy policies of the last decade rolled on, market analysts have had their attention dragged back to national political news as they try to make sense of what is going on. Political risk, once a niche issue for heavily regulated or controversial industries, has received far more attention than it has in the past. This provides an opportunity for other traditionally safe industries to reflect and try to imagine future high-impact scenarios which they might have otherwise never considered.

Government risk is the effect of uncertainties that arise from government decision-making, actions or events on your business. It is an unavoidable part of occupying space in an open market. Governments respond to different incentives and on different timelines to the private sector, but it is a mistake to assume that this means they occupy different worlds. Every market is a fusion of private initiative and risk-taking, bureaucratic support and/or resistance, and sporadic involvement of political staffers or even ministers.

Understanding how risks influence the market day-to-day is core business for executives and managers, but understanding how the rules of the game can change overnight and throw out all your old assumptions is a skill that many business leaders undervalue.

The lack of investment in the energy sector has been identified by AEMO as a key contributor to rising wholesale energy prices, alongside the smaller impacts of poorly managed regulation and privatisation, and the cost of green energy schemes. A key component of this lack of crucial investment has been a lack of confidence in the sector around the policy settings determined by successive federal governments. A market will adapt to new rules, whatever they are, but constantly changing rules will mean investors cannot determine what returns they may make, and so will look elsewhere to make their investments. The fact that this has not happened in your industry before does not mean that it won't be the case in the future. Where once it was the case that successive governments maintained a steady policy environment, maybe due to the sector's reasonably static technology use, issues like the energy generation mix are now hugely controversial.

Now that it is clear to risk professionals in every industry that risks stemming from government action (or inaction) can be enormous if unplanned for, senior business leaders should ensure they are across these risks as part of their core responsibilities as company directors. In the same way that a director must consider legal liability or compliance with regulatory standards, issues which can materially impact a firm, directors must show they have considered the potential impacts of government risk.

Sam Perkins

Is government risky?

"Frankly I think there is some naivety in the idea that governments can largely eliminate uncertainty or should even try."

- *Minister for Energy Angus Taylor, 30th August 2018*

In Australia, despite recent leadership chaos we are fortunate that our governments are relatively stable, consistent and operate within known boundaries in a rules-based order. This seems at odds with the stunning quote above which conflicts with why government exists in the first place but in general, our governing institutions provide a measure of comfortable predictability. Nonetheless, government risk is everywhere. We define 'government risk' as the uncertainty that flows from changes in government decision-making and the continual evolution of policy, programs and politics.
Government risk manifests through political dynamics dictating unexpected policy changes, sudden regulatory impositions increasing compliance challenges and over-the-top public reactions from government due to a need to be seen to be 'doing something' in response to poor industry behaviour.

Examples of events that elevate government risk include the looming Victorian and NSW State elections and the ditching of the National Energy Guarantee. By their nature, elections create uncertainty (polling for both elections is showing a tight race in both, elevating uncertainty even further). The NEG collapsed after months of work due to internal political dynamics of the Coalition Government. This latter issue, when combined with the ugly leadership challenge and change of Prime Minister, exposes several risks around the capacity and priorities of the Government to deliver reform and make hard decisions. This has knock on effects such as on the potential willingness of Australian Government departments to implement executive government decisions since there is potentially a sense of the inevitability of change from bureaucrats tasked with implementing such reforms.

The Financial Services Royal Commission laid bare a range of reputational and conduct risks that the financial services sector has been carrying for some time. The sector can expect a new host of risks and a significant reaction from government to 'fix the mess' through a regulatory and compliance approach because the industry was unwilling to fix it themselves. In this regard, the financial services sector is no innocent bystander impacted by the 'dead hand of government' – the behaviour and deliberate lack of action by many players has ultimately left it up to government to publicly shame the sector followed by an enforcement and regulatory blitz.

The recently announced Royal Commission into the Aged Care sector is further demonstration of a sector facing government risk and the energy sector is also staring down the barrel of a threatened Royal Commission due to government claims of price gouging (this latter proposed inquiry has a sniff of political expediency as opposed to seeking to use the Royal Commission process for genuine reform).

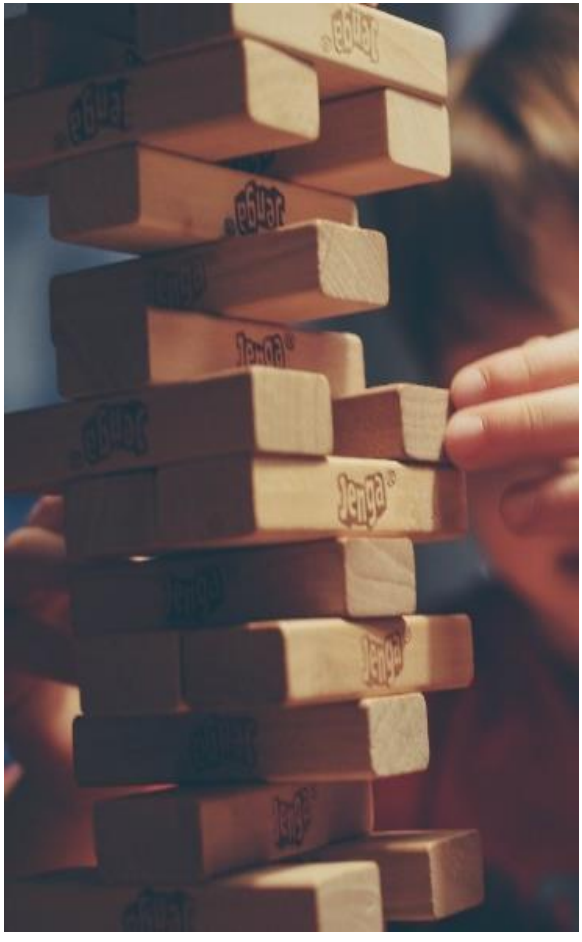
There is another side to the ledger - the risk of lost upside. When organisations have limited awareness of their government stakeholders or have not taken steps to position themselves as front of mind, there is a risk of missing opportunities for government partnership or new program co-design. Experience also shows us that not having a seat at the table increases the chance of being surprised by less than favourable policy or regulatory outcomes.

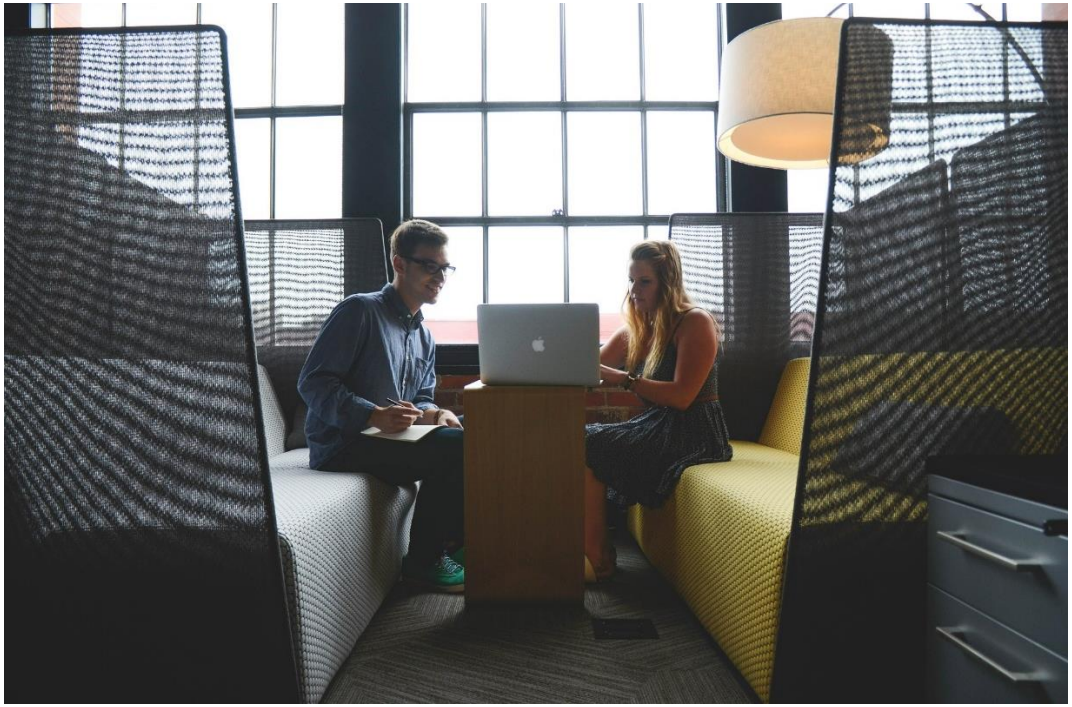
Exposure to these risks is not limited to external actors (business, non-profits, the community) but also government itself in the form of departments and agencies. New service delivery activity or reform projects can be significantly impacted by rising levels of uncertainty. With expectations from stakeholders both internal and external to government, agencies tread a fine line of being accountable for delivering on government policy whilst dealing with many government risk factors outside of their immediate control. These can harm implementation of projects, cause political headaches for ministers who then intervene (by accident or design), or otherwise work against the stated aims of a department or agency.

Having a comprehensive understanding of the government risk profile is one thing – managing that risk is another. Whilst many aspects of government risk are outside the control of an impacted organisation, steps can be taken to hedge against these risks. Like any form of risk management, understanding the government risk profile and potential impacts on an organisation is the first step. From there, risk mitigation planning that includes understanding how and from where those risks could manifest will provide the outline of what to do about them. Making sure no stone is left unturned in terms of preparing robust arguments and policy positions and getting in front of the right decision makers early and often before risk becomes reality is crucial.

Government is not risky – but the inherent uncertainty that exists due to so many factors influencing how government makes decisions does increase government risk.

Steve Cusworth





Ins and outs of internships

As a former intern turned policy analyst, Sam Perkins takes us through the ins and outs of internships and how to make sure your company is providing the kind of opportunity that people want.

Striking the right balance with an internship arrangement can be a tricky proposition for potential interns and firms. Rightly, unpaid internships that have inexperienced workers carry out productive work are roundly condemned and give the word “internships” a bad connotation. The question that remains for firms that genuinely want to provide educational opportunities for interested but inexperienced young people is; what guidelines should be followed to make sure the arrangement is beneficial for the intern? Key characteristics of a fair internship program should include the following;

1. The internship is directed by the intern

Internships get a bad reputation when they are used as a means for firms to obtain free labour. Far from a learning experience, these “opportunities” only serve to pad resumes. To avoid this, internships should be based around a clear view from the intern about what they want to learn and what activities they want to be involved in. Basing the design of an internship (or just some form of ongoing monitoring) is a better way of supporting the intern’s objectives than a one-size-fits-all approach that sees an intern thrown into a pile of work with little guidance or agency.

2. The internship is based around a set of skills or professional development

Internships carrying out unskilled tasks or which fill a role of a junior worker are unlikely to provide the benefits of a real internship. This also goes for fetching coffee or doing the photocopying, archetypal markers of an exploitative internship. A real internship will see the intern walk in with some level of formal education or knowledge about the subject matter the firm deals with, and is there to expand that body of knowledge through practical experience and to gain advice or guidance about subsequent steps they should take in their career.

3. Involvement in, but not doing work for, projects

Being involved in work for clients or on a range of projects is much of the draw for interns. This is also where the finest line is found; how do you get an intern to be involved with a project without having them do some of the work that staff would otherwise do? Some combination of work shadowing and mentoring is likely the way to go, where the intern sits in and observes, does ancillary research or has a first run at analysis that senior staff will then carry out anyway and provide feedback about. This way the intern gets to see some of what these processes look like without their work being leaned upon by other staff.

4. Intangible benefits for the host firm

Small firms setting up internships like this get the benefit of extra perspectives on the issues under discussion, an extra voice in the office and a means of broadening networks among young people that could result in employment later on (as it did for me). By checking that the activities being carried out by the intern aren’t contributing materially to the actual work programs of full employees, and in most cases actually adding to their workload owing to the time spent mentoring or teaching, firms can be more sure that they are offering a fair internship.

5. Flexibility around working hours

Since the intern isn’t doing work that keeps projects or the company going, when and how often they come in is largely arbitrary. For the sake of consistency and a means of promoting self-discipline, a weekly schedule is best where the intern comes in perhaps every Monday. Keeping it as flexible as practical also means it is easier to fit around work and study, making sure internship opportunities aren’t closed off for students who work alongside study or who face other time imposts preventing them from rigidly adhering to a Monday to Friday arrangement.

In short, it is not difficult to provide the kind of internship that can be highly beneficial for students and those looking for a break into a tight industry. Being careful to offer an opportunity built around the benefit to the intern is the key, and without ongoing monitoring the whole exercise is too reliant on what implementation issues may arise and the risks inherent there. These kinds of internships should be encouraged and firms unsure of how to offer them should seek out advice on doing it properly.

Sam Perkins

Loving nature

Sustainable nature-based tourism development in national parks

"Like music and art, love of nature is a common language that can transcend political or social boundaries."

—Jimmy Carter

It is easy to argue for strict and pristine protection of our natural landscapes as the most environmentally friendly measure to ensure their ongoing environmental quality. Many would suggest locking away significant swathes of our landscape and excluding as many people from these areas as possible. However, this turns a blind eye to the costs of environmental protection, mitigation and remediation required to face new threats such as species invasion and climate change. It also fundamentally ignores the value of appropriate development in delivering access and therefore appreciation and broad support for environmental values across all sectors of society. Appropriate development within national parks can provide the means for individuals to connect with the environment and to better understand its intrinsic value.

Despite sustained environmental pressure throughout the last two centuries, Australia has maintained large areas of pristine natural environments across some of the most diverse landforms. The coast, desert, tropics, bushland and ranges cater for a variety of ecosystems which in turn provide clean air and water for both basic human needs and the wider productive capacity of our land. But the continual biodiversity loss due to insufficient acknowledgement, funding, and effort allocated to ensure protection and remediation threatens their future. We undervalue these resources because they are freely available and do not notice or allocate appropriate concern to their loss. Preventing biodiversity decline requires an appreciation of the need to protect these resources coupled with an increase in funding for mitigation and remediation.
With stronger connections and a better understanding of value, there is a stronger protective response from the community which generates the political will to channel public funding to protection. For instance, commercial operators provide tourists and locals with access to the Great Barrier Reef giving it a world-renowned status and strong contribution to the local economy. They were also some of the first to draw media and public attention to coral bleaching largely due to their direct need to prevent such events in future.

However, development must weigh the potential gains with the real environmental costs and ensure good outcomes for local communities. It must be planned in such a way as to ensure ongoing and enhanced conservation as the primary objective. On the Great Barrier Reef, we may have gone too far, possibly reaching beyond the bounds of appropriate tourism development in national parks. Tourism activity has provided a level of accessibility that has overcome the natural barrier to physical access. We are seeing implications of sheer volumes of tourists visiting, for instance in the reef-damaging sunscreen coming off individuals' skin when they swim. We can also see implications in the focus on the reef as an icon rather than as part of holistic environmental concern. This focus is then an easy escape for pressure at a political level, resulting in knee-jerk (rather than carefully considered) policy responses such as the enormous yet ill-defined $444 million grant allocation to a small organisation which does not appear to be the best use of that funding.

Increasing access to national parks by establishing or upgrading roads, accommodation or other service activities, can also provide opportunities for highly regulated access that carefully balances a range of competing priorities. Access to Cradle Mountain for instance provides significant revenue to maintain the park through park fees while also applying strict boundaries, limiting the number of people and cars with access. In some ways this access restriction adds to the perception of scarcity and therefore value and underpins further appreciation of the park itself. It is important however that this access is limited in terms of volume with the primary purpose to manage environmental outcomes, not exclusive access determined by private business to manage revenue and profit which can have detrimental impacts on social outcomes particularly for local communities.

Finding the balance between economic gains and environmental protection requires not only a case by case assessment but also the political will to encourage development for economic gain while also enforcing boundaries and environmental values. It's a particularly difficult tightrope to walk, but one we must push our political leaders to take if we are to overcome our history of draining Australia's stock of natural resources. We must fight for balance that can drive access into achieving environmental gains through appropriate, tightly regulated but open access to national parks.

For the love of nature, we must find the path to achieving our Cradle Mountains, and find a way back from our dive into the Great Barrier Reef.

Catriona McNaughton

Acronyms of attracting sustainable investment

The SDG agenda as a strategic planning and risk management tool in the age of ESG investment.

Adherence against Sustainable Development Goals is driving investment decisions. Unlike previous lukewarm efforts on CSR or 'greenwashing', companies are actively taking SDGs seriously. However, the ambitious breadth of the 169 SDG targets create risk.

Activist investors, once known for their laser focus on rewriting an organisation's future direction and management for the purpose of seeking ever elusive profits, are now expanding their aim and exploring new paths including ensuring environment, social and governance (ESG) factors become the core of business operations. ESG investing, a term first coined in 2005 and based on the idea that these factors impact on profit and revenue and therefore should be considered alongside more traditional measure, is now driving more than one-quarter of investments in AUM globally. Navigating and implementing such principles can be treacherous as evidenced by the disastrous approach from major supermarkets in banning plastic bags this year.

The 2030 United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda presents a possible framework for business and organisations to map, plan and report on ESG. In September 2015, 193 countries signed on to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which consists of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SGDs) and 169 associated targets. While building on the previous Millennium Development Goals, the new SDGs were developed in consultation with business, and business is therefore given a greater responsibility in delivery alongside government. Despite early criticism that the goals were too broad and unwieldy to direct real change, too expansive to feel like anything is being accomplished and too complex to sell to the public, many organisations, communities and government bodies are now adopting them and driving action towards their achievement. In line with greater business responsibility and an increased focus on ESG investing, it is not unreasonable to foresee that large corporates and even smaller companies may increasingly be assessed in the public sphere through the lens of their contribution towards achieving the SDGs.

The breadth of the SDGs creates both threats and opportunities for achieving and demonstrating commitment to ESG factors. The sheer volume of targets under the SDGs provides opportunities for business in that there is an almost never-ending list of prospects to demonstrate contribution to the goals; from clean energy to jobs and gender equality, many current business practices are likely to align with contributing towards some goals and only need to be expanded. The SDGs also pose risk: current efforts focused on a single area may lose their weight if a broader scope is not taken; removing palm oil from products may no longer be good enough if you are not also reducing waste, removing other forms of exploitation from all supply chains or any number of other activities identified.

This is the issue Australia as a country currently faces. In the 2018 SDG Index, Australia ranks 37th (a significant slip from 20th in 2016). The top 40 are predominantly European countries with only exceptions, in addition to Australia, being Japan (15) New Zealand (17) Republic of Korea (19) and Canada (20) Costa Rica (33) and the United States (35). The 2018 Index highlights that no G20 country is on track to achieve all of the goals by 2030, largely as a result of not meeting one or more specific goals. Australia, while performing well across a number of indicators particularly those under SDG 1 – No Poverty, SDG 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing and SDG 4 – Quality Education, is performing particularly poorly among others such as those under SDG 13 – Climate Action and SDG 15 – Life on Land. We have become stuck in alignment rather than action as we assess how our current actions/policy/priorities contribute to the SDGs.

The real step to make change requires us to identify where we are lagging and create new action towards this. At the business level, this means changing the focus from current policies in this space, such as those that might promote employee wellbeing or equality in hiring, to assessing operations at a broader scale, such as encouraging and providing for employees to avoid cars for short trips by supplying bikes or public transport cards or assessing fair wages across your entire supply chain (both geographically but also in contractors and supplier inputs to goods and services).

In addition to providing a framework of options for progressing ESG factors, the comprehensive nature of the SDGs also provides context for assessing potential future business risk by identifying current issues, opportunities and threats which may contribute to both market trends and government policy. Over the course of the agenda to 2030 each of the countries committed to reviewing their progress towards to goals, with Australia's first review submitted this year. The number of successive governments operating between now and 2030 will of course each take their own approach to meeting these goals, and as we progress towards a deadline the pressure will only increase. We can expect a carrot and stick approach regardless of the government's specific agenda and those businesses prepared and progressing towards these goals will be best position to maximise the benefits of incentives and avoid the costs of new restrictions. They will also be best positioned to attract activist investors, as more business seek to achieve this and as community awareness and public scrutiny grows market trends will follow.

Businesses should drive into the SDG agenda as a both a strategic planning and risk management tool. Those that don't will find their efforts fall short of growing investment trends, public expectations and the policy agenda. Those that do will find themselves as industry leaders not only progressing their business forward but also making a significant contribution to Australia's ongoing progress towards achieving the goals by 2030.

Catriona McNaughton

Case studies

Fixing trade barriers

A major food manufacturer in Australia that had been exporting their goods to China for many years were hit with a sudden export blockage. Their shipping containers were prevented from passing through ports and into the market due to an alleged phytosanitary risk. The company was both concerned and surprised as this had never happened to their previous shipping containers. Their in-country consultants reported that the blockage was due to the containers not being on an 'approved list' and it would take two years to return to their normal exporting process in the Chinese market. We were then engaged to provide a second opinion.

Read more:
http://www.fpladvisory.com.au/blog/case-study-fixing-trade-barriers

Communicating from the inside out

A university-based research institute was looking to understand where and how their communications resources could be best deployed to expand their external profile and visibility. The institute sought support to understand their external communications activity, benchmark this against peer organisations in both domestic and international markets and identify barriers or missed opportunities to execution of external communication.

Read more:
http://www.fpladvisory.com.au/blog/case-study-communicating-from-the-inside-out

ASX 200 firm risk review

The corporate affairs team of an ASX200 company was stretched to capacity and required a renewed analysis of risks to the business with respect to government decision-making in their external operating environment. The team had recently expanded and was looking to provide the new senior member with an independent and holistic assessment of how government could impact the organisation and the broader sector. Increasing regulatory burdens from ongoing legislative reform and an upcoming state election had created an uncertain environment that was challenging their forward planning.

Read more:
http://www.fpladvisory.com.au/blog/case-study-asx-200-firm-risk-review

Realising data asset value

A multinational consumer vehicle fleet operator had ownership of a rich and growing data set of vehicle usage information. After learning of the comprehensive datasets being collected daily, FPL was of the view that this data would be of significant value to policy makers and we were engaged to test this assumption. Our client had access to a trove of integrated data going back a number of years. This presented opportunities for data-driven policymaking across a number of portfolios including road safety and tourism.

Read more:
http://www.fpladvisory.com.au/blog/case-study-realising-data-asset-value

About Us

FPL Advisory is a team of specialists resolving risks and creating opportunities with respect to government. We work with public sector and corporate clients to execute strategies for owning and managing change.

We help organisations in uncertain or changing environments identify strategic goals and potential risks, and undertake analysis to develop robust policy positions. We also assist in engaging with key stakeholders including government decision makers, communicating policy positions and securing project and policy outcomes.

As trusted advisors, we work closely with the senior level of organisations to deeply understand the issues, provide subject matter expertise and advice and to both lead and support reform programs.

Our expert team has an intuitive understanding of both private and public sector processes and priorities, and a reputation for working with the right people to get things done on time, within budget and with integrity.

Our experience includes project managing complex policy initiatives, delivering and leading long term stakeholder engagement programs, providing advice on emerging issues and preparing detailed policy submissions. Importantly, we invest in building deep corporate knowledge about client dynamics and issues which ensures we provide proactive and value-added advice and client support and develop long term client relationships.

Our case studies demonstrate what we do and how we go about our business.

Facts. Policy. Leadership. FPL. Trusted Advisors.

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The Team

Steve Cusworth leads the range of activities and advisory services undertaken by FPL Advisory for clients in the private, government and not-for-profit sectors. Steve has a comprehensive understanding of the tensions and demands across the government, business and not-for-profit divide. With deep knowledge and experience across a range of public policy goals and commercial drivers, Steve provides strategic leadership, advice, risk management and execution support for government and non-government clients.

Catriona McNaughton is a communications professional, supporting the broad range of stakeholder engagement activity at FPL Advisory. Building on her interests in economics, environmental management, tourism and urban planning, Catriona understands the need for communications to support policy outcomes.

Allana Ferguson is a specialist in the processes and practices of contemporary public policy in Australia. Allana has experience in research and analysis in the design, delivery and evaluation of effective public policy to enhance the capability of each clients' network so that it is agile, modern and sustainable. She utilises a strategic methodology to identify emerging problems and recommend options for practical solutions.

Grace Coleman is a Policy Analyst with experience in economics and open access education. Grace thinks both creatively and pragmatically when it comes to complex issues. Her strong political and analytical skills provide key insights for clients to deliver effective results. She understands the elaborate networks involved in policymaking and works flexibly to provide solutions to suit client's needs. She has a particular interest in economic policy, specifically those that address inequality.

Sam Perkins is a public policy specialist with experience across political risk, research and policy change management. His strong policy research and political, legislative and regulatory analysis skills provide foundational support for clients working in local, state and federal government jurisdictions.