Re-imagining the world: Australians’ engagement with post-nationalism Or Why the nation is the problem

Abstract: Academic debate around the need for global cooperation, the anachronism of national borders, and the necessity of nurturing a cosmopolitan ethic of care for all, has strengthened over the last two decades, but it is unclear the extent to which the general population has embraced such ideas. This paper explores Australians’ perspectives using data investigating whether Australians are moving towards postnational orientations and cosmopolitan identifications. Quantitative data demonstrates robust nationalism, although elements of a postnational outlook are also evident. Discursive analyses similarly suggest that while compassion towards others and openness to difference exist, the ideology of the nation-state remains strong, with postnational formations seen as impractical, and perceptions of the rights of others limited by nationalist thinking. The best characterisation of the Australian orientation is that of multicultural nationalism, an approach that celebrates internal diversity within limits, but remains hostile to postnational material formations and global cosmopolitan ideological formations.¹

Keywords: cosmopolitanism, postnationalism, Australia, nationalism

Introduction – Australian nationalism

Conservative Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, speaking recently about the Covid-19 corona virus and offering justification for a multibillion-dollar national wage subsidy and unemployment benefits scheme, opened his address with:

Today we act to protect Australia’s sovereignty. When Australian lives and livelihoods are threatened, when they are under attack, our nation's sovereignty is put at risk, and we must respond. ... Our sovereignty is measured in our capacity and freedom to live our lives as we

¹ The author would like to thank anonymous referees for their insightful comments.
choose in a free, open and democratic society. ...Above all, our sovereignty is sustained by what we believe as Australians, what we value and hold most dear: our principles, our way of life and our way of doing things. We will never surrender this. ...Today is about defending and protecting Australia’s national sovereignty. ... Protecting our sovereignty has always come at great cost, regardless of what form that threat takes, and today will be no different. ... As a nation we are working together nationally... Our country will look different on the other side, but Australians will always be Australians. We will pay the price needed to protect our sovereignty, and we will chart our way out. We will get through this together, Australia (Commonwealth 2020).

Morrison used the word Australia or Australian/s 37 times in his delivery, and the word ‘sovereignty’ nine times. So why is fighting a global pandemic a matter of state sovereignty, rather than international cooperation and a universally applied ethic of care for others? And how is it that the irony of invoking ‘our way of life’ and ‘our principles’ while approving (notably from a conservative government) a multibillion dollar rescue package incurring massive public debt, the imposition of lockdowns and the closure of non-essential services, the closure of beaches, and of state and international borders, the mandatory quarantine of Australian overseas travellers, the development of cooperative rather than oppositional politics, the partial re-nationalisation of the health (and other) systems, the lack of democratic process in taking these actions, and a range of other formerly unthinkable changes to that ‘way of life’ and of ‘doing things’, is not recognised?

What is going on here? Morrison’s rhetoric uses ‘dog whistle politics’ of the sort common among the conservative right, a call to the public to think ‘nation under threat’, rather than ‘people at risk’. It reinforces the nation-state as the entity that requires protection from a range of unspecified points of attack – the object needing ‘defence’, ‘protection’ and at risk of having to ‘surrender’, in Morrison’s words. The language used references other recent calls for national protection against ‘external threats’ such as asylum seekers arriving by boat, Muslims threatening ‘our way of life’,
terrorists in our midst, but also historically the metaphorical construction of migrants as contagion (Dunn et al. 2004; Hollinsworth 1998; Jupp 2002; Pickering 2001; Fozdar, 2017). It also neatly references the Chinese threat so deeply embedded in Australian risk discourse, and the enduring seam of racism which runs through the Australian psyche. It is about recruiting the power of the nation over the individual while reasserting the national boundary as the logical limit for personal and state responsibility and governance. It is, literally, a sovereignty narrative (see Moran, this issue), recruited in the context of a global pandemic.

But this paper is not about Australia’s nationalist response to the global Covid-19 crisis. Here, I use Australia as a case study to consider post-national formations and cosmopolitanism, exploring the extent to which and ways in which identity and attitude orientations are challenging national boundaries materially and ideationally. While focussing on Australia may appear to be committing the sin of methodological nationalism (Beck 2002), ignoring a global perspective to focus on a single case study and thereby taking for granted the very phenomenon being investigated, the goal here is to extrapolate from this particular case to understand how the nation-state perpetuates itself in the minds of its people.

Australia is perhaps an unusual case. As a colonial settler state which effectively decimated and then numerically overwhelmed the Indigenous inhabitants, only 3.3% of its population are Indigenous. This means it is a nation composed almost exclusively of migrants. Australia has the highest proportion of overseas-born in the Western world (around one in four), and almost half its population are first- or second-generation migrants (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2017). While for much of its short history the White Australia Policy excluded non-whites and valorised Anglo-Celtic culture (Hage 2000; Jupp 2002), since the early 1970s relatively non-discriminatory migration, together with settlement policies focussing on multiculturalism rather than assimilation, have changed the way Australians think about themselves (Brett and Moran 2011). Although most of those born overseas remain from British/Anglo-Saxon backgrounds, there is increasing visible
diversity in the population with a range of migrants from Asia, Africa, the Pacific and the Middle East.

Australia should therefore be the ultimate candidate for a cosmopolitan vision. While its Indigenous peoples have been custodians of the land for at least 60,000 years, none of its non-Indigenous population has been here long – five or six generations at most, having been transplanted in the Antipodes from across the world. Many hold dual citizenship and maintain ongoing transnational connections with countries of origin. Yet instead of cosmopolitanism, Australians are among the most nationalistic people globally (Ariely 2012). They have been said to be obsessed with national identity, while simultaneously confused about what that identity might actually be (Austin and Fozdar 2018a; Hage 2000). This may partly result from the colonial history of dispossession and incomplete nationalisation stemming from the exclusion of Australia’s Indigenous peoples (Hollinsworth, 1998); together with a vague ‘imposter syndrome’ as a basically European nation located in the middle of the Pacific. In their meta-analysis, Smith and Phillips (2006: 825) found there is not a singular national identity binding Australians together, but “a set of overlapping, evolving and contested themes” engaged with by the population in its self-construction. National identity revolves around either inclusive/civic orientations or exclusive/ethno-nationalist ones: the former driven by attachment to an ill-defined Australia, achieved identity and civic values; the latter being nativist, focussed on innate, historically determined characteristics, and a sense of threat from those seen as Other.

In this paper I seek to explore elements of this nationalism and the extent to which more postnational orientations or cosmopolitan identities are becoming common. To do so, I offer a series of snapshots of findings from five related studies. The results suggest that the nation remains the taken-for-granted category in articulations and representations of identity among Australians, even while the ‘imagining’ of Australia is sometimes inclusive, even cosmopolitan (or more accurately ‘multicultural’) and that this stance is fundamentally exclusionary.
Cosmopolitanism and postnationalism

Academic interest in cosmopolitanism has taken off over the last two decades, with monographs, edited collections, articles, and special issues published. Much of the work has been conceptual and theoretical, with limited studies actually mapping changes in identities, attitudes and behaviours among the general population, although this empirical gap is rapidly closing.

Beginning with the theoretical work, Cohen and Fine (2002) see the current cosmopolitan turn as one of four historic moments. They argue cosmopolitanism as a value orientation and identity regularly surfaces throughout history, but is always quashed because it cannot provide a total antidote to extreme nationalism and the various forms of exclusion associated with it. The Ancient Greek Cynic philosopher Diogenes, who, in the fourth century BCE, declared: ‘I am a citizen of the world [kosmopolitês]’, is often credited with being the first cosmopolitan. This notion was developed in the second moment by the Stoics and later Kant, and was seen as the solution to the ills of nationalism, emphasising the universal over the particular, and humanity over a specific local community. Yet Kant is criticised for his own personal racial prejudices, demonstrating that such lofty ideals are perhaps more difficult to sustain in practice. In the third period, cosmopolitanism made a comeback in response to the extreme denial of humanity evident in Fascism, Stalinism and Nazism. The Nuremberg trials proceeded under the assumption that the principle of national sovereignty did not apply to war crimes that constitute ‘crimes against humanity’, and that all, national allegiance aside, are responsible to fight against evil perpetrated on others. But this too faded into the background of the Cold War and post-war nation-building. The most recent phase, Fine and Cohen argue, is often tracked to Martha Nussbaum’s (1994) critique of the blatant nationalism built into American students’ education. Her influential paper has resulted in significant dialogue among scholars, if not the general public, about the value of the nation (diverse/plural/multicultural as it might be) as opposed to cosmopolitan values and postnational structures, a debate which has continued for the last three decades.
While this four era account of the history of cosmopolitan thought has been criticised for its Eurocentrism (Benhabib 2008; Zubaida 1999), in terms of the Western tradition it maps the contours of significant cosmopolitan points in time, one of which we are currently living within (or perhaps on the outer edge of, given resurgent nationalism globally).

This most recent body of work identifies problems with the structure of the nation-state in a globalised world, criticising, among other things, attempts to control movements of people between countries (Beck 2006; Held 2003; Inglis 2014; Sassen 2006; Soysal 1994). Theorists have long recognised that the nation-state is not ‘real’ in any essentialist sense, but an ideological construct, with a relatively recent history stemming from the Treaty of Westphalia, less than 400 years ago (Anderson 1991; Anderson et al. 2009). Nation-state border control is an even more recent twentieth century phenomenon (Salazar 2016). Challenging national borders, we have seen growing complexity in political processes, increasing mobility of capital, material, people, ideas, social movements (Urry 2016), the growth of the network society (Castells 2004), flexible citizenship (Ong 1999), and civic nationalism replacing ethno nationalism (Anderson, 1991; Gellner, 2008). These processes of globalisation should have created a more global consciousness among individuals, and political structures and institutions that facilitate movement and social, political and economic cooperation.

Indeed Held (2003: 465) argues globalisation has changed the contours of global politics fundamentally, suggesting “nationalism and statism provide inadequate political resources to meet the problems posed by a more global age”. Overlapping networks of power and interaction cut across territorial boundaries, making the current world order obsolete. Traditional geopolitical concerns such as power, security, and trade, as well as vital social and ecological questions, and ultimately moral questions, require global solutions, he argues.

Ulrich Beck goes further, referring to the process of cosmopolitanization as resulting in “the disappearance of the closed society for good” (Beck 2006: 109) – the closed society being the nation-
state. He suggests current thinking has been left behind by global realities, asking: “What remains national? Thought! What is no longer national? Reality!” (Beck 2006: 102). The nation-state, once prized for its ability to unify and protect its members (see Wickham, this volume), is now coming to be recognised as fundamentally selfish in its exclusion of others.

In practice, the European Union represents the beginnings of alternative models of political, economic and social organisation (Dinan 1999); likewise the African Union. And despite criticisms, the United Nations and associated international bodies also demonstrate that international cooperation is possible, although they continue to rely on representation from nation-states, ironically reinforcing the nation’s material and symbolic power. The rise of ‘non-state actors’ working across nations (Stone 2013) demonstrates the potential of supra-national, meso level organisation. The ability of individuals to hold dual, even multiple, citizenships, suggests the logic of the nation-state, and its demand for exclusive allegiance, is breaking down. Growing transnationalism, where dual identities and belonging are becoming the new norm, is making such demands anachronistic (Hannerz 1996; Vertovec 2001). At a personal level, scholars such as Audi (2009) argue that regardless of birthplace and citizenship, all people should share the same basic rights to work, education and healthcare, but also freedom of movement across national boundaries, based on egalitarian principles of justice, fairness, and equality of opportunity. The premise is that people should not be disadvantaged in their life opportunities by the arbitrary fact of their birthplace.

For these scholars, a post national world is the next natural step in political, economic and social evolution. In 2020 this is evident in the inadequacy of the response to Covid-19, which, rather than a globally oriented and coordinated strategy, has seen nations acting in their own citizens’ interests and enacting policy designed to maximise national outcomes, resulting in disparities in access to healthcare and vital resources.
Counter arguments maintain that the nation still matters. Anthony Appiah (2006) appears to endorse cosmopolitanism, advocating that our moral universe should extend beyond co-nationals to a cosmopolitan concern for the welfare of all humans. But he also argues the nation-state remains necessary as a foundation for personal identity, and to protect human rights, and suggests that the alternative, a world government or global state, is impractical. Importantly, scholars more generally argue that the nation remains valuable as the only political structure through which human rights can be asserted and enforced (Calhoun 2007; Sassen 2006; Soysal 1994). There is also a significant positive emotional element to membership, Skey (2013) contends, in terms of affective bonds and a sense of belonging for members. Calhoun (2007) concludes it is premature, even dangerous, to pursue a postnational politics, and that what is needed to remedy the problematic features of the nation-state is a transformation of nationalism.

As well as these defences of the nation-state, there is criticism of the cosmopolitan. Cosmopolitanism is seen as selfishly individualistic, and most likely to be espoused by a privileged elite who feel no obligation to the state, including paying taxes and civic engagement (Lasch 1995). Cosmopolitanism has been called the class consciousness of the frequent traveller (Calhoun 2002), a mindset available only to those who can afford it. And, like Appiah on cosmopolitans, Hedetoft and Hjort (2002: xv) claim postnationals, “in spite of their assumption of belonging everywhere and nowhere in particular...base their outlook, confidence, and global interventionalism on embeddedness in particular national contexts”. Thus, the argument goes, cosmopolitans can only be cosmopolitan because they are grounded in the nation-state.

Others have argued that in a globalised context we maintain multiple allegiances, national, transnational and cosmopolitan (Robbins 1998), and that cosmopolitanism may simply be one of a range of orientations that can be ‘sampled’ in selected ‘cosmoscapes’, “a set of structurally grounded and locatable discursive resources available to social actors ... variably deployed to deal with emergent agendas and issues” (Kendall et al, 2009:108). These allegiances and orientations, it is
argued, should not be seen as being in competition with each other, or incompatible, but as situational and context-dependent resources.

It is not my place here to argue against these positions, although some will be challenged in the empirical section of the paper.

So far I have used the terms postnationalism and cosmopolitanism interchangeably. Is there a distinction between the two? Soysal (2011) sees cosmopolitanism as having a more normative implication than postnationalism. Postnationalism describes the fact of the breakdown of national barriers, while presuming the nation-state formation is what is being moved beyond (Delanty 2006) – literally post-national. Cosmopolitanism explicitly carries the moral obligation of care for others beyond the nation: “allegiance to the world community of humankind … defined in contrast to nationalism, because national boundaries remain the chief mechanism for separating ‘us’ from ‘them’, and for hierarchizing various people along some kind of moral scale” (Lamont and Aksartova 2002: 2). It is an ethical stance of openness, entailing “a distinct ethical orientation towards selflessness, worldiness, and communitarianism” (Kendall et al, 2009:22). In some renderings, cosmopolitanism has come to be less about world citizenship and more about openness to diversity within a nation (e.g. Brett and Moran 2011) or about episodic ‘cosmopolitan encounters (e.g. Plage et al. 2017a, b), but it is unclear how this differs from multiculturalism or interculturalism, since such definitions still valorise the nation.

How are these various formations articulated? Anderson famously identified the nation as an imagined community, existing in the mind, but for Homi Bhabha nations are narrated – they are talked into being and perpetuated through constant narration (Bhabha 2013). Wodak and Reisigl (2009) track the ways in which the construction and perpetuation of the nation occurs at the everyday level of discursive acts. The forgoing suggests we are beginning to see evidence of such strategies being used to talk beyond the nation, and perhaps even to challenge or deconstruct it (see Fozdar 2017; Plage et al, 2017a; Lamont and Aksartova 2002; Werbner 1999).
While there are a range of publications focussed on cosmopolitanism, until recently they have tended to be theoretical rather than empirical. Over a decade ago, Phillips and Smith (2008: 392) suggested cosmopolitan research was “on the cusp of an empirical moment” where the research agenda must move beyond ‘methodological nationalism’ to investigate the “cosmopolitan condition of real people” (Beck and Sznaider 2006: 9). As a result of theoretical and empirical work, we have seen a proliferation of adjectives describing different types of cosmopolitanisms of real people - elitist, everyday, rooted, patriotic, subaltern, ghetto, indigenous, diasporic, vernacular, ambivalent and so on, each using a slightly different lens or population.

Of these, I am interested in everyday, ordinary, vernacular cosmopolitanism. There are a growing number of studies of the everyday, person in the street’s, engagement with cosmopolitan ideas and practices, demonstrating that it is not just an elite thought-bubble, but part of the lived experience and identity of a range of people around the world. Two well-known examples are studies of working-class cosmopolitanisms. Lamont and Aksartova (2002) explored ordinary cosmopolitanism among working class men in the US and France, finding differences in anti-racist cultural repertoires, based on national context and structural location, generating ‘multiple ordinary cosmopolitanisms’. Werbner (1999) countered the stereotype that cosmopolitan sensibilities and practices are the domain of the elite in a study of working-class cosmopolitanism among Pakistani Muslim workers in the Middle East and their diverse transnational networks. Another study of Eastern European construction workers in London (Datta 2009) demonstrated a similar working class cosmopolitanism shaped by transnational histories, personal nationalistic sentiment and access to social and cultural capital, developing in everyday places such as building sites and shared houses. These studies demonstrate that vernacular cosmopolitanism is perhaps more common than previously thought, but also has a range of local inflections among the working class.

In the Australian context, both nationalist and cosmopolitan sentiments and practices have been tracked. Woodward et al. (2008) report 64% agree with the statement ‘I regard myself as a citizen of
the world as well as an Australian citizen’, but simultaneously 90% ‘...would rather be a citizen of Australia than any other country’. Similarly, data from the 2012 World Values Survey reports that 96% of Australians are very or quite proud to be Australian, among the highest in the world, and Australians feel connected to the nation, with 96.6% agreeing or strongly agreeing that “I see myself as part of the Australian nation”. But simultaneously, 79.5% agree or strongly agree “I see myself as a world citizen”. These studies suggest an apparently ‘banal cosmopolitanism’ (Beck 2002) is experienced by around three quarters of Australians; but that world citizenship appears not to be incompatible with national, and indeed nationalist, citizenship, just as Appiah, Hedetoft and Hjort, and others, would have it.

Qualitative work by Skrbis, Woodward and colleagues on Australian cosmopolitanism identifies ambivalence in its articulation, illuminating this apparent contradiction. Skrbis and Woodward (2007: 730) used focus groups to understand the extent to which ordinary Australians articulate a global consciousness, using a definition which allows for cosmopolitan nationalism: “‘openness’ toward others, people, things and experiences whose origin is non-local”. They found cosmopolitanism is not a fundamental characteristic of specific individuals, but rather is an idea recruited by different people in different contexts. Australians use cosmopolitan sentiments as discursive tools, available both to those with a global consciousness but also to committed localists. These sentiments were always balanced by localist or nationalist ones however (eg. a sense of the need to protect the local economy and culture; concern about the risks involved in increased mobility). Rather than an identity or attitude, cosmopolitanism is thus a set of “...discursive practical resources available to social actors to deal with emergent, everyday global agendas and issues, related to things like cultural diversity, the global, and otherness”, they argue (Skrbis and Woodward 2007: 734-735).

Brett and Moran (2011) make a similar point, seeing Australian nationalism as cosmopolitan in nature, a way ordinary folk make sense of internal diversity by seeing it as embedded within multicultural or cosmopolitan nationalism (something Cohen and Fine (2002: 161) characterise as
oxymoronic). Here, inclusivity is framed in terms of the nation-state, whereby the nation provides for the safe expression of cosmopolitan attitudes (Brett and Moran 2011).

In further Australian empirical work, Hersi and colleagues (2020: 166) explore ‘minority cosmopolitanism’ in the ‘little Africa’ region of an Australian capital city, demonstrating how cosmopolitan practices are “based on an ethics of sharing, cultural experiences and generating connections”. They point to the ways in which both minorities and White majority Australians must surrender the “cultural upper hand” in encounters to engage productively across difference. In another qualitative study focussed on interactions rather than identities, Plage et al. (2017a: 5) explore the potential of “encounters that are unpleasant, cause frictions or require notable efforts to bridge differences” as occasions that catalyse reflexive engagement, generating “cosmopolitan moments”. Many of their respondents expressed contradictory orientations to engagements with diverse others and their own sense of themselves as not cosmopolitan, experiencing convivial encounters with difference not by choice or necessarily guided by cosmopolitan ideals. Thus they found some individuals’ practices lag behind their professed cosmopolitan outlook, while others who did not see themselves as ‘cosmopolitan’, in practice successfully negotiated such encounters. In another paper from the same research, Plage et al (2017b) analyse how repertoires of cosmopolitanism and nationalism are interwoven and compete when Australians encounter diversity. A version of Australianness founded on the civic virtues of fairness, openness and egalitarianism enhances ‘cosmopolitan outlooks’, but is simultaneously mobilized to rationalize the failure to enact cosmopolitan practice in their everyday lives and to justify criticism and exclusion of certain categories of people. Thus while the ‘Australian’ value of the ‘fair-go’ appears to overlap with cosmopolitan ethics, in practice it is just as easily turned to exclusionary ends. Thus “national and cosmopolitan values overlap only partially and national narratives often serve to rationalize boundaries rather than bridge experiences” (Plage et al, 2017b:331). They found the application of cosmopolitanism was conditional on economic or civic notions of fairness, enabling exclusion while avoiding explicitly having to justify such exclusion in terms of culture or ethnicity.
These studies demonstrate that cosmopolitan engagements may be difficult, and challenge the utopian picture of, as REM would put it, ‘shiny happy people holding hands’. They are far more conflicted, episodic, contradictory, limited, contingent, ambivalent and uncomfortable.

These re-configurations of cosmopolitanism as a form of multicultural nationalism, or as encounters or moments, rather than an ongoing commitment to engagement with others regardless of national membership, appear to ignore, or perhaps sidestep, the fundamental definition of cosmopolitanism, and repurpose the concept for nationalist ends.

Here I provide some further snapshots of attitudes and identity-talk among Australians to understand whether and how the ideas and language of cosmopolitanism are finding their way into the Australian public sphere and how they link up with multicultural nationalism. First, using statistical data from a representative sample, I consider how widespread postnational, as opposed to national, identifications and attitudes are, demonstrating both strong nationalism but also some evidence of a more global orientation. To tease out how these apparently contradictory orientations are articulated in practice, I then provide evidence of nationalism and cosmopolitanism in the public sphere. Two case studies are offered, to demonstrate the ways in which nationalism is used to include ‘outsiders’ rather than exclude – an analysis of cartoons about ‘Team Australia’, and analysis of submissions to a government panel on asylum seeking. A third case study considers how a set of apparently cosmopolitan values are identified and supported as ‘Australian values’, again promoting nationalism, but this time to exclude. Finally Australians’ responses to the prospect of a world without national borders are discussed, demonstrating both qualitatively and quantitatively that Australians remain, for the majority, strongly nationalist. My key argument, in outlining these findings, is that the problem remains the nation, even the multicultural or cosmopolitan nation, because it continues to reinforce categories of insiders and outsiders.

Method
The following snapshots are outcomes of an Australian Research Council funded Future Fellowship on the state of Australian identity and orientations to cosmopolitanism and postnationalism. They are taken from three sub projects - a national survey (n=1636)\textsuperscript{ii}, focus groups conducted nationally (27 groups, n=233), and analyses of publicly available media and online data.

**Attitudes to patriotism and cosmopolitanism**

The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AUSSA) collects cross-sectional data on the social attitudes and behaviour of Australians biennially. I added a number of items focussed on nationalism, cosmopolitanism and postnationalism, to the 2013-14 AUSSA survey. For the statement from the general survey, ‘I would rather be a citizen of Australia than of any other country in the world’ (n=1636), 81.7% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed. In the context of a globalizing world, I was interested to identify whether this sort of strong patriotism is seen as a positive thing. Table 1 suggests it is.

**Table 1: Attitudes to patriotism (n=772)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much do you agree or disagree that strong patriotic feelings in Australia...</th>
<th>Agree strongly</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree strongly</th>
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<tr>
<td>strengthen Australia's place in the world.</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lead to intolerance in Australia.</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are needed for Australia to remain united.</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lead to negative attitudes towards immigrants in Australia.</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Around 70% see strong patriotic commitment as strengthening Australia’s place in the world and as important for remaining united. However, there is also some recognition of the exclusionary potential of strong patriotic feelings, with around a third agreeing it leads to intolerance and negative attitudes towards migrants. A third disagree, and another quarter are unsure about these statements however, suggesting a lack of consensus. Clearly there is some ambivalence towards strong patriotism.

It should be pointed out that the content of this patriotism is unclear. While it may be an exclusionary form of nationalism, it is also possible that respondents are supporting a more cosmopolitan version of patriotism such as that outlined by Brett and Moran (2011), a celebration of Australia as a multicultural nation.

In the same survey, over a third of respondents (38.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that children should be taught to be patriotic rather than to think of themselves as global citizens. But almost 36% disagreed, suggesting again a bifurcation in attitudes (actually trifurcation, given those neither agreeing nor disagreeing), with a significant minority of Australians who would like to see a more global orientation encouraged.

In terms of whether Australians hold what has been called a cosmopolitan ethics of sharing (Appiah 2006; Nussbaum 1994; Plage et al. 2017a), 32.6% agreed or strongly agreed that they ‘...would be willing to have a lower standard of living if it meant other people’s lives would improve’. Again, there was a three-way split in responses, with equal proportions for, against and unsure. The question did not specify whether the ‘people’ being referred to were Australians or others. Still, at least some of the population appear to have a general sense of compassion that would see themselves less well-off for the benefit of others. The fact that two thirds did not agree, however, suggests this is not generalised cosmopolitanism. Interestingly, almost half the respondents (47.3 %) agreed that ‘other people have as much right as me to live in Australia’ (with another almost 20% unsure). Again, it is
unclear how this question was interpreted – the result is very high given the wealth of research suggesting a large minority of Australians are critical of immigration. Given that only 12% agreed or strongly agreed that ‘it would be better if the world didn’t have national borders’, the idea that others have the right to live in Australia may have simply been interpreted as referring to others already in the country or arriving through an ‘orderly’ migration process. Finally, in response to the statement ‘I feel more like a citizen of the world than of any country’ (n=1636), only around one in five agreed or strongly agreed, suggesting most Australians do not fit Diogenes’ definition of cosmopolitans.

Overall, the responses to these questions suggest that while Australians are generally patriotic, there is some disagreement on whether patriotism is a good thing, and just as Skrbis and colleagues’ research found, they also appear to wish to reach out to the wider world, to assist those less fortunate, and to share what they are lucky enough to have, although very few endorse the idea of a world without nation-states. We see contradictory, ambivalent, middling responses.

In a range of qualitative studies, the ways in which this ambivalence or contradiction is articulated have been mapped. Here I rehearse two examples of my and colleagues’ work that demonstrate firstly, how arguments regarding national identity are framed to include those currently being ‘othered’; and secondly, the ways in which the (diverse) nation is actually valorised through a cosmopolitan discursive frame. The result is cosmopolitan nationalism, used for inclusionary ends.

In 2014, the then Prime Minister Tony Abbott called for migrants, and Muslims in particular (on the invalid assumption that most Muslims are migrants), to demonstrate that they are part of ‘Team Australia’ (see Austin and Fozdar 2017). This was in the context of announcing new counterterrorism measures. He said that “when it comes to counter-terrorism... everyone has got to be on Team Australia ... everyone has got to put this country, its interests, its values and its people first, and you don’t migrate to this country unless you want to join our team”. Resisting the exclusion implicit in this framing, political cartoonists challenged Abbott’s version of ‘Team Australia’, suggesting it
worked against core aspects of Australianness, such as mateship, multiculturalism and the ‘fair-go’. The cartoons framed Abbott’s ‘Team Australia’ as exclusionary, anti-multicultural, indeed ‘un-Australian’, by representing diverse people as belonging in Australia; drawing on elements of Australian values that emphasise inclusion; pointing out how a range of people are already excluded from the ‘Team’; or ridiculing the notion of a ‘team’ altogether. But in doing so, they relied on another version of Australia as the rallying point, thus simultaneously pursuing a nationalist project.

A similar pattern was found in an analysis of submissions to an expert panel established to determine an appropriate response to the several thousand asylum seekers arriving in Australia by boat. For much of the first decade and a half of the twenty first century, Australia experienced a growing moral panic about this issue, fuelled by nationalist political rhetoric. When faced with the question of why it was seen as a matter of national sovereignty necessitating the push-back of boats, the standard response from commentators was ‘Well, you can’t just let them in’. This self-sufficient argument silenced criticism of push-back, refoulement and incarceration policies. Echoing Audi (2009), Australian actor Hugh Jackman, when publicly commenting on these policies, made the cosmopolitan point that access to safety and resources should not be dependent on where one happens to be born. His point was that we can, indeed should, ‘just let them in’.

Analysis of submissions to the expert panel (Austin and Fozdar 2018b) found that many used arguments in favour of asylum seekers based on cosmopolitan values. However once again, they grounded these values in Australian nationalism, with a ‘we’re better than this’ discourse.

Arguments supportive of asylum seekers were constructed around nationalism, regionalism and globalism. Australia was variously framed as having an alternative national character from that promoted by politicians, as having a key regional leadership role, and as a global citizen with obligations to others. Each frame served as a vehicle through which progressive arguments were articulated. But each also relied on a strong national identification, and implied that the morality
associated with an ethics of care was somehow Australian, rather than universal. Two illustrative examples are included below (emphasis added):

Now is the time to ‘reset’ the policy discussion as a humanitarian and human rights challenge. This will clarify the policy choices, and benefit not only asylum seekers, but the broader Australian community, by reasserting the national values of decency and a ‘fair go’

[Refugee Advocacy Network]

We urge the Panel to make recommendations that follow the morals and human rights laws that we as Australians wish to uphold [Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace]

Here, supporting people’s human rights is seen as a benefit to Australia, and as reflecting Australian national values. Thus, the apparently cosmopolitan impulse is framed within a nationalist purview. This sort of cosmopolitan nationalism has been argued to be a positive example of how civic or liberal forms of nationalism can function in inclusive ways (Brett and Moran 2011; Delanty 2006; Kendall et al. 2009). However, there remains a problem if the articulation of an ethics of care is framed this way. It is hardly the enacting of “pure and absolute hospitality toward the Other” (Acharya 2016: 38). Instead, it reinforces, and indeed valorises, the idea of a specific national character.

This leads to the question of what this national character is, and what are the values associated with it.

**Australian values**

Australia has a long history of suspicion of those seen as having different values from the Australian norm. In 1921, arguing against Asian migration, the *Sydney Morning Herald* newspaper reported the need to ‘safeguard’ “against the incursion of peoples whose basic social, economic, and political

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2 Plage et al (2017b) similarly found the ‘fair go’ principle being framed, and enacted, in nationalist terms, in their case enabling exclusion.
ideas and standards are sufficiently different to make their presence in any large numbers...a danger to that social order” (Hall 1921). A hundred years later we see the same basic ideas about the threat implied by those whose ‘values’ differ from ‘ours’, challenging the presumed social cohesion of a presumed homogenous society. This is not only the opposite of cosmopolitan openness, it actually contradicts the rhetoric of multicultural nationalism.

Since the early 2000s attempts have been made to codify and enforce a particular set of national values, based on these concerns. In 2007 a revised Australian Citizenship test included a set of values questions that aspiring citizens must answer correctly, and in the same year ‘the Australian Values Statement’ was introduced for all long-term and some short-term visitors to sign on entering the country. These governance instruments were introduced in the context of fear of a loss of culture, to protect national identities from putative ‘threats’ such as terrorism, Muslims, asylum seekers, and globalisation more generally, and to ensure social cohesion in a context of global migration. Here, belonging to the nation is no longer framed as being about civic rights, but as a commitment to a particular way of living (Chisari 2015), a particular set of attitudes, beliefs and practices. And it is clear, in this framing, that the governing power sits with the charter/majority/white group that does the ‘tolerating’ of difference and decides the limits to that tolerance (Hage 2012). That group is equated with the nation.

The Australian Values Statement identifies these values as follows:

Australian society values respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, freedom of religion, commitment to the rule of law, Parliamentary democracy, equality of men and women, and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their cultures.

3 Most recently, Acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Service and Multicultural Affairs Alan Tudge announced on August 28th 2020 that to “enhance social cohesion” during the Covid-19 crisis, the citizenship test will be updated to include new Australian values questions, saying “the stronger focus on Australian values...will be an important part of helping protect our social cohesion into the future”. The Australian Values Statement will also be updated to emphasise “the importance we place on the values that define and shape our country and culture”. There is no evidence that lack of commitment to these values by migrants has had any effect whatsoever on the public health crisis or social cohesion more generally.
women and a spirit of egalitarianism that embraces mutual respect, tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need and pursuit of the public good.

Australian society values equality of opportunity for individuals, regardless of their race, religion or ethnic background.

The English language, as the national language, is an important unifying element of Australian society.

These are admirable, perhaps aspirational values, but it is not clear what is particularly Australian about them. The use of the phrase ‘Australian society’ three times in the short statement reinforces the idea that these are somehow associated with Australian-ness. And indeed, when I asked, in the AUSSA survey mentioned earlier, whether participants felt the statement reflects Australian values, 89% agreed. 79% also agreed that migrants should be required to sign the statement, and, almost half (49%) thought that migrants should be deported if they breached the values. So Australians appear to put great store in migrants following these values. Yet, contradictorily, 49% also agreed that these values should be adapted, if migrants can improve them. Similarly, in a recent survey conducted by the ABC (Crabb, 2019), a significant majority of respondents, around 80%, agreed that migrants may retain their cultural values and still be ‘Australian’.

These quantitative results suggest a degree of confusion about the notion of values, the imperative to adopt them, and the prospect of changing them. They do, however, also suggest that what are essentially cosmopolitan values (respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, gender equality, egalitarianism, mutual respect, tolerance, fair play, compassion for those in need and pursuit of the public good) have been effectively turned to nationalist ends by being defined as Australian and applied to determine belonging to Australia. As such, they are being recruited to exclude.

No borders
As noted, there have been a range of political science and philosophical arguments offered in support of open borders. But there have also been scholarly arguments against. A common response to the idea of removing national borders and allowing the free movement of people is that it is unrealistic. Appiah (2006), Cohen and Fine (2002) and Slaughter (2010) outline the range of arguments against a postnational world, including its impossibility or impracticality. The argument is generally around the lack of existing structures to realize such a dramatic change transcending the nation-state as the primary form of governance; as well as the ongoing strength of nationalism. As Slaughter says “while cosmopolitan democracy offers a compelling ethical stance in relation to realizing global justice, it is not clear where the power needed for transforming global politics is to come from or how this approach is going to generate this political power” (2010: 189). Basically he asks: Who is going to turn these ideas into practice, arguing states remain key sources of identity and allegiance and “active architects of the contemporary global flows of resources and ideas” (2010: 191). Thus, these scholars contend, cosmopolitanism, and its structural embodiment, postnationalism, have neither the institutional power nor the political consciousness to be successful, and it is unclear who (or what) will change this.

In essence, these arguments amount to stating that cosmopolitan consciousness and political structures do not exist, therefore they cannot exist. They also tend to reify the current state of affairs, presuming contemporary national borders are somehow sacrosanct.

In a fine-grained discursive analysis of how everyday Australians feel about the idea of a borderless world (Fozdar 2017), focus group participants were found to respond similarly. Although some used arguments analogous to those of cosmopolitan theorists to support the idea of universal personhood, the right to freedom of movement, principles of equal justice, and the inconsistency of current border regimes, the majority were adept at using the principle/practical rhetorical device (‘it might be a great idea, but it could never work’) to shut down discussion about the possibility of a borderless world, often calling it utopian. Among the objections raised were a range of barriers,
including human nature (greed and corruption as natural states making lofty ideals such as postnationalism impossible); governance issues (lack of a clear pathway to governance that doesn’t involve nations); collective interests (based on the presumption that the natural collective of shared interest is the nation-state); cultural differences (again, presuming nations have single cultures which are unique, essential and incommensurable); resourcing (presuming a greater cost to global governance); and the need for the nation to ‘get it right’ first (assuming a sort of socio-political evolutionary process is in play). Thus, like the scholars quoted above, a borderless world is simply impossible to imagine, and therefore, impossible.

So ironically, simultaneous with growing disillusionment with the current political situation, Australians happily revert to a position of confidence in the nation-state when offered the concept of a borderless postnational formation, requiring cosmopolitan inclusion, as an alternative.

**Conclusion**

This paper began with a recent example of how national sovereignty narratives are used in political discourse to rally the collective imaginings of Australians, in the context of the global Covid-19 pandemic. Similar to the sentiments expressed in the Prime Minister’s speech, rather than a re-imagining of the world beyond nation-state structures and with a cosmopolitan commitment to humankind, in the data discussed above we see a strong positive orientation to the nation and its people. The orientation is national rather than postnational (to a world without borders) or cosmopolitan (to an identity as world citizen). Where a cosmopolitan ethic of openness to others is applied, it is applied in a nationalistic way – for example, by making the case for a broader definition of who belongs in ‘Team Australia’, or for more humane treatment of asylum seekers, as befits our national character and regional leadership. Indeed, cosmopolitan values are espoused as ‘Australian values’, which become a tool to exclude those suspected of not subscribing to them (see also Plage et al, 2017b). And while some can see the potential of a postnational global formation – a world without national borders – most shout it down as impossible due to human nature being naturally
national in orientation, governance structures being naturally nation-state based, and cultural
difference and collective interests being national, by nature.

Skrbis and Woodward (2007) note that cosmopolitanism arises in everyday Australians’ discourses,
but only at a shallow level, such as in statements that recognise the increasing interconnection of
the world, and appreciation of material or experiential opportunities for engaging with diversity.
They found that “the more difficult aspects of openness such as showing hospitality to strangers, or
accepting human interest ahead of perceived national interests” (2007: 730) are absent. I have
outlined similar findings above. Yet elsewhere, Skrbis, Woodward and Kendall argue the nation-state
should not be seen as an impediment to the development of cosmopolitan cultures. Rather they
assert “the nation state is the enabler and supporter of cosmopolitanism more than its natural
adversary’ (Kendall et al. 2009: 152). Like Appiah, Hedetoft and Hjort and others, the commitment to
the local and familiar, they suggest, is necessary to enable the transfer of feelings of commitment
and compassion to the non-local and foreign.

I wish to argue against this proposition. In recruiting the nation as the logical formation within which
belonging, fellow feeling, and responsibility, lie, both politicians and the common person reinforce
borders, perpetuate difference, and close off, rather than opening up, engagement. This necessarily
means that those outside this formation remain ‘other’. Returning to Covid-19, we see a situation
where countries have closed down borders and instituted a range of measures to protect their own
citizens, while leaving others to fend for themselves, indeed turning non-citizens away. An example
is the Australian Prime Minister’s instruction to international students (on whom the viability of
Australia’s tertiary education sector depends) to ‘go home’ if they cannot support themselves in
Australia, as Australia’s economic safety net is necessarily restricted to its own citizens. Rather than
global cooperation in diagnosis, treatment and management, policy settings have focussed on
protecting the nation-state and its citizens. And while the World Health Organization has counselled
nations to share knowledge and the technology associated with vaccination, there is little evidence
that nation-states are heeding this advice. Once again, in a context where global cooperation is literally a matter of life and death, it is the nation that wins. This paper has provided further evidence of how the constant reinforcing of the idea of the nation through everyday narratives and political discourse, even where these support the multicultural nation, make thinking beyond the national formation, re-imagining the world, difficult, if not impossible.

References


See Inglis (2014) for a critique of this history, where he argues “the narrative of Greece–Rome–Enlightenment–1945–Now, while useful as a ground-setting fable, threatens to turn into unexamined ‘truth’.

ii The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes (AUSSA) is a random sample mailed survey conducted annually which is a key source of quantitative data on the social attitudes, beliefs and opinions of Australians (see https://www.acspri.org.au/aussa). It contains some questions from the International Social Survey Project (ISSP). In 2013-14 I added a number of questions about cosmopolitan attitudes and practices. Responses to these questions have a smaller n of 775 as they were only included in two waves of the four wave survey.