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## **‘A long revolution’: The historical coverage of Queensland politics and government**

Chris Salisbury

Queensland is still a place that is much talked about but little understood. We have a history that is exciting, complex, surprising, nuanced and more than a little shocking. It does not lend itself easily to simplification. It still dances like a shimmering heat-haze at the edge of our present perceptions.<sup>1</sup>

– Raymond Evans, quoted in Burns (2013, 5)

### **Introduction: The decline in academic analysis of Queensland politics**

Owing to a recent decline in state-focused academic analysis and publication, the body of literature covering Queensland’s political history is not as substantial nor as current as was once the case. Contextual accounts are somewhat threadbare, being comprised largely of standard (and some now dated) texts in the field of Australian political history as

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<sup>1</sup> This series has historians offering contemporary analyses on, particularly, northern Queensland. For an earlier standout regional study, see Bolton (1963).

well as contemporary journalistic coverage. Despite Queensland boasting a proud record of expertise in this field – names such as Colin Hughes, Denis Murphy and Ross Fitzgerald come readily to mind – specifically state-based historical analysis of politics and government has lately suffered from a dearth of scholarly attention, not unlike other formerly prominent fields within the humanities and social sciences. Indeed, after something of a surge of publications on state political history during the middle to latter parts of the twentieth century – appearing, perhaps not coincidentally, at around the same time as the incumbency of Queensland’s longest-serving premier, Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen – interest and activity in state-based political analysis has since waned to an unsettling degree (Macintyre 2009, 87–90; Manwaring 2020). It seems that, as online media and television news coverage of local politics has steadily overwhelmed academic discussion around the field, and according to some even surpassed the state opposition in the role of chief scrutineer (Chamberlain 2011; see also Green 2017), public attention has increasingly been drawn to political happenings at the supposedly more compelling national level – especially when many news services are run from distant national offices interstate, exacerbating the decline or demise of state-produced current affairs programs (Young 2008; see also Williams 2020).

This preponderance of media reportage over scholarly discourse could possibly be an unintended consequence of Phil Dickie’s skilful investigative journalism for the *Courier-Mail* (and Chris Masters’s for the ABC’s *Four Corners*) in the late 1980s helping to bring about the ‘Fitzgerald Inquiry’ in Queensland. The inquiry’s public hearings provided a constant stream of lewd and scandalous news headlines, dished up daily by local media outlets to an incredulous but voracious public audience.<sup>2</sup> Since, it has fallen as much to the media, almost by dint of public expectation, to provide a level of scrutiny and analysis of the state’s political figures and events that once was largely the domain of academic observers and only the most senior print journalists, such as the influential and nationally circulated Hugh Lunn in *The Australian* and Tony Koch in the *Courier-Mail* (later of *The Australian*).<sup>3</sup> Bearing all of the above in mind, there is

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2 See Dickie (1989) for the journalist’s account of events surrounding and in the aftermath of the Fitzgerald Inquiry into official corruption, as portrayed in his and others’ print media columns of that time; and Masters (2008). See also Hede, Prasser and Neylan (1992) and Prasser, Wear and Nethercote (1990). For concise, more contemporary retrospectives on this turbulent period, see Beattie (2007) and Salisbury (2019).

3 See Koch’s comments regarding decreasing interest in state government affairs and ‘the media’s role’, in ASPG (2000, 16). See also Lunn (1987) and Miller and Koch (1983).

an apparent diminution in long-form academic analysis of Queensland's more recent political history, particularly in the contemporary 'modern Labor' era (not to ignore some recent scholarly journal attempts to redress this 'imbalance': see Williams 2011; Bowden 2013).

## Past academic study of Queensland politics

As diminished as this scholarly field of enquiry might have become recently, there is a long and robust track record of critical academic analysis surrounding Queensland's history, and in particular its political history. From the media-based and largely internet-driven scrutiny of more recent times to past scholarly analysis and serialised reportage of the state's and the nation's political heritage, Queensland's historical background and seemingly distinct political culture have encouraged several eminent local observers to pen a long line of esteemed works in this field. John Wanna, at The Australian National University and now again at Griffith University, a long-time keen observer of Queensland politics, depicted this considerable output in positive terms as 'a long revolution' of recorded historiography (Wanna 1990).<sup>4</sup> This tradition stretches back as far as the earliest chroniclers of the colony's foundation in 1859, from which time there began to appear serialised publications such as *Pugh's Almanac* and *The Queenslander* – the latter of which in December 1899 broke news of the world's first Labour Government in Queensland with the 'measured' headline, 'POLITICAL CRISIS' (*The Queenslander* 1899; Fitzgerald 1999). Following later in the nineteenth century came monthly journals representing sectional, and increasingly politically active, interests within Queensland's developing colonial society – *The Shearer's Record* and *The Worker* being prime examples – and then early in the twentieth century appeared Queensland's longest established serial, the *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*. This august publication's somewhat conservative editorial perspective has evolved over time – and with it a change of name in 2008 to the *Queensland History Journal* – extending beyond heroic pioneering accounts of 'taming the

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4 For broad coverage of generalised through to more specialised historiography relating to Queensland's post-colonisation development, including some of the earliest monographs in this field, see Johnston and Zerner (1985), Thorpe (1987) and Metcalf (2010).

land’ to include the broader social and political context of Queensland’s postcolonial development (see ‘Editorial’ 1963; Rechner 1994; see also Bernays 1920; Megarrity 2004).<sup>5</sup>

## The 1950s and 1960s

Critical scholarly treatment of local historical and political themes increased noticeably between the mid-1950s and early 1960s, probably stimulated by the government-endorsed hoopla surrounding Queensland’s 1959 centenary of separation from New South Wales – an event worth celebrating ‘triumphantly’, according to the book commissioned to mark the occasion (Cilento and Lack 1959; Lack 1959; Lack 1962). The earlier founding of the University of Queensland Press (UQP) in 1948 also contributed to this increase in locally focused, scholarly publications. Additionally, one cannot dismiss the impact that a change in government – a relatively infrequent occurrence in Queensland’s past – has had upon the production of political commentary and analysis; this was observed around the time of the Labor Party’s split and the Country Party’s ascendancy in 1957, and then the National Party’s demise 32 years later, as well as either side of the one-term Newman Liberal–National Party Government from 2012 to 2015 (Wanna 1990, 139; see Higgins 1960; Yarrow 2015; Coaldrake 1990a; Reynolds 1990; Whip and Hughes 1991; Salisbury 2020; Prasser 2012; Williams 2018b).<sup>6</sup>

From 1955, extensive coverage and analysis of important events and significant issues of the day appeared in new journals such as the then UQP-published *Australian Journal of Politics and History* (*AJPH*), including its excellent biannual series of ‘Political Chronicles’ providing expert summation of recently transpired happenings in the state and federal spheres (a disclaimer: I am now an associate editor for the *AJPH*, responsible for editing ‘Political Chronicles’ entries). In 1964 came *Queensland Heritage*, later renamed the *John Oxley Journal* and produced by the State Library of Queensland. The most substantial and arguably influential of the mid-century monographs emerged in 1960 when Solomon Davis, a Reader in Political Science at the University

5 For digitised copies of these and other early print publications detailing Queensland history and events, see Centre for the Government of Queensland, *Text Queensland*, available at: [www.textqueensland.com.au](http://www.textqueensland.com.au).

6 As a rule, elections of course provide regular opportunity for political and (sometimes) historically contextual analysis; see, for instance, Scott (2016), Salisbury (2018) and Williams (2018a, 2018c).

of Queensland (UQ), edited a collection of fine scholarly essays about government in each of the Australian states (Davis 1960). From that time, the field of politically themed historical enquiry generated significant interest and a growing following. In Australia, the *AJPH* represents the best sustained intellectual interaction between historians and political scientists; apart from this forum, these disciplines have in recent times gone their separate ways in terms of publication avenues. In the decades since the publication of Davis's edited book, taking up this line of state-based enquiry – and applying it especially to Queensland's example – have been some of this state's and the nation's most eminent scholars and prolific historical writers of succeeding generations.

In 1968 Colin Hughes, who took up residence as a leading academic in UQ's School of Government, co-produced the first issue of his much-utilised, ongoing series analysing the governments, politics and elections of the state and national jurisdictions, spanning events from before federation up to the mid-1960s (Hughes and Graham 1968: see also updated editions produced in 1977, 1986 and 2002). Subsequent volumes cover periods of a decade or longer until, by the time of the final instalment in 2002, the minutiae of the nation's electoral and political history throughout the twentieth century had been compiled and studied in impressive detail. Hughes followed this earlier effort with one of his finest works on Queensland politics, and indeed one of the first comprehensive election studies in Australia, expertly analysing successive state elections in the mid-1960s (see Hughes's [1969] work, in which he argued persuasively that politics in Queensland was largely 'bluster and noise' but with little change evident at election time when results were calculated). Among other works, Hughes also added one of the most definitive assessments of governance and parliamentary representation in Queensland's political past, standing equal amid a conclusive series, of which he was the general editor, analysing the governments of each Australian state and territory (Hughes 1980). This theme of 'state by state' examination was adopted and given further impetus by academic writers in other corners of the nation, such as John Rorke at the University of Sydney and Brian Galligan, a Queenslander by birth and education, at La Trobe University (Galligan 1986; Rorke 1970; see also Eccleston 2009;

Joyce 1977).<sup>7</sup> Hughes's efforts are still standouts, though, and retain the perceptive insights of works written close at hand to events; for this, and more, they are of enduring value.

## Moving on to the 1980s and 1990s

Perhaps inspired by Hughes's example, the field of political history in Queensland was bolstered subsequently by the works of other eminent scholarly observers – including Margaret Cribb, Roger Joyce, Denis Murphy, Peter Coaldrake, Paul Reynolds, Rae Wear, Ray Evans and Ross Fitzgerald – all having held senior academic posts at UQ and other Queensland universities over the past 40 years or more. Indeed, the last two historians mentioned above made significant contributions to the field in recent years, the latter with two diligent co-authors, both publishing accomplished works broadly analysing Queensland's political, social and cultural make-up.<sup>8</sup> While Fitzgerald, Megarrity and Symons's effort drew mixed reactions from some, this concerned more the circumstances in which the book had been commissioned by Peter Beattie's Premier's Department, to mark the sesquicentenary of responsible government in Queensland. In any event, the work – including the efforts of Fitzgerald's co-authors – stands as a well-researched and smartly presented examination of Queensland's history and prehistory, albeit one that delves a little less deeply into critical reflection than Evans's work.<sup>9</sup> This latter text is thoroughly researched and engagingly written, and is in many regards the standout work on Queensland's history – social, political and otherwise – from the last two decades.

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7 For a standout account of the coal-driven political economy of 1960s–70s Queensland, see Galligan (1989). For a selection of astute analyses of industrial relations, political activism, racial exploitation and wartime state intervention in Queensland's economy, see Bowden et al. (2009), Brennan (1992), Cameron (1997), Evans (1988), Evans and Ferrier (2004), Evans, Saunders and Cronin (1993), Gough et al. (1964), Harris (1984), Lewis (1973), May (1994), Megarrity (2018), Menghetti (1981), Munro (1995), Murphy (1968), Murphy (1983), Ørsted-Jensen (2011), which makes the convincing argument that Queensland's colonial era history and politics needs revisiting and renewed scholarly scrutiny, Piccini (2010), Richards (2008), Saunders (1993, 2011b), Svensen (1989) and Thorpe (1996).

8 For complementary and almost coinciding accounts of Queensland's history, see Evans (2007) and Fitzgerald, Megarrity and Symons (2009).

9 In this respect Fitzgerald's book, building upon the combined premises of two of his earlier works, does not quite match the focus or acclaim of its predecessors: see Fitzgerald (1985, 1986). For further discussion of Fitzgerald, Megarrity and Symons's (2009) commissioned history, see Saunders (2011a).

Over time, this esteemed cohort mentioned above, and their contemporaries, provided specialist analysis of all points of Queensland's political spectrum. Cribb was a noteworthy chronicler of the development of the Country Party (later National Party) and conservative political trends in Queensland, improving on the partisan writings of some of those before her such as Ulrich Ellis (Ellis 1963; Cribb and Boyce 1980; see also Wear 2009; Hunt 2009; Cockfield 2020; Scott and Ford 2014). Murphy was a renowned labour historian and academic who, in practical terms, notably helped reform the Queensland branch of the Australian Labor Party (ALP), then represented it briefly in the state's parliament prior to his untimely death in 1984 (Costar 1988; see also Saunders and Costar 2006; Bongiorno 2006). Earlier, Murphy and colleagues published an influential collection of vignettes on Queensland's premiers, providing engaging characterisations of the state's prominent and sometimes idiosyncratic leaders, revised and updated twice after Murphy's death (and the deaths of co-editors Cribb and Joyce) (Murphy, Joyce and Cribb 2003).<sup>10</sup> Fitzgerald also added his impressions of the ALP's place in Queensland's political landscape, co-writing a noted study of a century of the state's Labor Party history, released just prior to the Goss Labor Government taking office in 1989 (Fitzgerald and Thornton 1989; see Murphy 1975; Murphy and Cross 1985; Murphy, Joyce and Hughes 1970; Murphy, Joyce and Hughes 1980). Yet, in spite of their expertise, many of these otherwise respected scholars and their peers in the 'commentariat' were often regarded with suspicion and derision in certain quarters of the political arena, let alone by an at times unappreciative or uninterested public. Politicians' scorn and their shying from critical attention long kept academic analysis of the state's political milieu largely confined to the halls of its universities. Despite this, the practice of local scholarly political analysis did not expire.

## More recent decades

Added to it since are the works of other notable contributors and long-time UQ academics of recent decades, including Ross Johnston, whose standout edited collection of significant documentary sources from Queensland's

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<sup>10</sup> See also Kerr (2001), Murphy and Joyce (1978), including portraits of colonial-era Queensland premiers, less of whom feature in Murphy, Joyce and Cribb's later (2003) revised collection; and Cribb's and Murphy's several biographical entries on, respectively, conservative and Labor politicians in the National Centre of Biography's *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Australian National University, available at: [adb.anu.edu.au](http://adb.anu.edu.au).

past continues to be a signpost for researchers today (Johnston 1988);<sup>11</sup> and Rae Wear (2002), whose deft political biography of Joh Bjelke-Petersen, alongside Reynolds's (2002) similarly fine work on Mike Ahern, rate among the recent best of their kind in a genre that has sometimes focused more on the off-beat dimensions of the state's political leaders (Bastian 2009; Beanland 2013; Fitzgerald 1994, 1997; Joyce 1984; Megarrity 2017; Murphy 1990; Walker 1995; Weller 2014; Young 1971).<sup>12</sup> In a similar style, albeit a genre that it pays to approach with a degree of circumspection, is the relatively recent preponderance (in this country) of the political memoir or autobiography. Queensland's political leaders and even influential senior bureaucrats have not been immune to this exercise in (usually, though not in every case) post-career self-reflection; it might not surprise to learn that the notable local examples begin with Bjelke-Petersen's aptly titled contribution (Bjelke-Petersen 1990; Beattie 1990, 2005; Bligh 2015; Hielscher 2014; Rudd 2017; see also Button 2006). On a related tack, Paul Davey, a former journalist and senior National Party officeholder at state and federal levels, recently published his insider's memoir of the politically disruptive 'Joh for PM' campaign of 1987 and the ill-judged attempt to install Bjelke-Petersen as federal Nationals leader (Davey 2015).<sup>13</sup> Other observers from outside Queensland, such as Swinburne University's Brian Costar, have also provided interesting and enlightened commentary on the more distinctive elements of the state's political culture (Costar 2006; Brett 2019; Megalogenis 2010).<sup>14</sup> In the last two decades, this of course has incorporated several scholarly and journalistic attempts to fathom the appearance – and then later 'unlikely' revival – of the modern Queensland political phenomenon that is Pauline Hanson and the One Nation Party (Manne 1998; Leach, Stokes and Ward 2000; Kingston 2001; Salisbury 2010b; Broinowski 2017; Scott 2017; see also Grant, Moore and Lynch 2019). As such, there undoubtedly exists a significant and reputable body of scholarly and other literature on the longer political history of Queensland.

11 For a 'landmark' environmental study of the land's influence upon Queensland's post-colonisation history, see Johnston (1982).

12 For biographies and studies in the 'larger than life' (or sometimes hagiographic) style, see: Cameron (1998), King (2015), Parnell (2013) and Townsend (1983). See also Brett (2003), Bolton (2006) and Walter (2009).

13 While offering some interesting correlations with Clive Palmer's cash-heavy foray into federal politics in recent years, Davey's account does not reveal much in the way of new insights beyond a generally sympathetic view of Bjelke-Petersen's federal ambitions.

14 The reader can find several references to Queensland's past political figures, episodes and details in Davison, Hirst and Macintyre (2001), Galligan and Roberts (2008), and Macintyre (1991).

In fact, respected analysts and commentators such as John Wanna and, more recently, Griffith University's Paul Williams, have extended this important work by contributing to the contemporary coverage of state and national political affairs in the *AJPH's* biannual 'Political Chronicles' series, as well as in other forums (Wanna 2004; Williams 2012; see also Wanna 2000, 2017; Mickel and Wanna 2020; Wanna and Williams 2005; Williams 2007, 2009, 2019). Wanna recently supplemented these efforts with a remarkably detailed and voluble monograph, co-written with Griffith University colleague Tracey Arklay, focusing on Queensland's parliamentary history during the long period of conservative governments from the 1950s to 1980s (Wanna and Arklay 2010). This work provides a unique insight into the workings – and sometimes the failings – of Queensland's unicameral parliamentary system as it operated under the leadership of National Party premiers. But it stops short of placing subsequent Labor administrations under a similar focus, leaving open the question of whether the state's parliament and governance functions operated any differently or even better in later years. So this valuable scholarly output focused on government performance and political activity, as already mentioned, can still do with further addition. With more critical accounts from observers of Queensland's governance machinery and distinctive politics in the modern era providing some foundations – notable works by Peter Charlton (1987), Peter Coaldrake (1989) and Evan Whitton (1993), among others, readily come to mind (Caulfield and Wanna 1995; Cork 2006; Davis 1995; Stevens and Wanna 1993) – there is a body of pertinent, informative background material from the last few decades to draw upon and contrast with the relatively fewer recent scholarly observations in this field.

It is worth recognising that some of these earlier monographs are positioned firmly within a framework that depicts Queensland as different to the rest of the nation, particularly in its political culture and the way that it is governed – Charlton's work obviously fits this billing, if in a somewhat superficial, almost cartoonish way, complete with caricatures by noted cartoonist Alan Moir. While there are certainly aspects of difference to Queensland, much as there are to the other states, the argument that Queensland's difference has somehow seen it develop a peculiarly aberrant culture compared to its fellow states has been debated often and refuted by many observers, including some not born as Queenslanders (Morrison 1960; Murphy 1978; see also Fitzgerald 1985, 250–252; Harrison 2006; Head 1986; Hughes 1973; Reynolds 1986; Scott et al. 1986; Schultz

2008; Spearritt 2010; Wear 2010). It pays to recall that many works subscribing to the ‘difference’ treatise emerged either during the time of the Bjelke-Petersen Government’s excesses and the Fitzgerald Inquiry that exposed them (Lunn 1980; Metcalf 1984; Smith 1985; Wells 1979; see also Coaldrake 1990b; Coaldrake and Wanna 1988; McQueen 1979), or in the reformist period of Wayne Goss’s government immediately following. Little since then has so obviously followed this line, although a very recent compilation of local recollections of the Bjelke-Petersen era could revive the theme (Shaw 2019).<sup>15</sup> Subsequent additions, from political science exponents predominantly (although not exclusively), focus more on broader themes of governance, reform, political leadership or policymaking (Ahamed and Davis 2009; Bell and Hindmoor 2009; Coaldrake and Nethercote 1989; Coaldrake, Davis and Shand 1992; Colley 2006; Davis 2002; Davis and Weller 2001; Gibney, Copeland and Murie 2009; Head, Wanna and Williams 2005; Kefford and McDonnell 2016; Madison and Dennis 2009; Orr and Levy 2009; Walter 2010; Weller 2005). These works complement the Queensland-specific literature and extend analysis of the state government’s performance in such areas.

## **Government publications, retrospectives and digitised content**

Such works are supplemented by the ever-increasing output of the state government itself, which in recent times has become nearly as prolific as the academic fraternity in publishing its own reports and accounts (‘objective’, naturally) of major policy initiatives and programs in any given year. While this might be viewed by some as emblematic of modern government’s – and allegedly Labor’s – obsession with ‘spin-doctoring’ and ‘style over substance’, the practice has precedents from earlier administrations. The Bjelke-Petersen Government pioneered in Queensland the brash self-promotion so readily associated with today’s professional administrative operations, engaging former ABC journalist Allen Callaghan as press secretary in the early 1970s to assist the premier ‘glad-handle’ the media. To the consternation of a perpetually underfunded opposition, Bjelke-Petersen’s government even procured with taxpayer

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15 For an alternative – if highly personalised and, occasionally, debatable – account to the ‘difference’ theme, which posits instead that the rest of the Australian polity is becoming more like Queensland (which, thus, is no longer so different), see Bahnisch (2015).

funds its own promotional television slot – titled ‘Queensland Unlimited’ – which aired on Sunday evenings five minutes before 6pm news bulletins, beaming the premier’s face into lounge rooms in little more than a public relations exercise. Bjelke-Petersen’s government duly established its own media units and photographic teams (as other jurisdictions were doing, to be fair), and seconded public servants to author documents that were often little more than party promotional material or marketing merchandise; some proposed publications, sadly perhaps for later scholars, never made it past the planning stage.<sup>16</sup>

Some of the more recent administrative documentation, published and slickly packaged by well-resourced ‘corporate information’ offices within government departments – and a till recently state-owned printing facility – can at least be cross-checked against a recent work of scholarly critique that draws heavily on departmental records, ministerial notes and private papers. Appealingly turned out by UQP, the weighty *Engine Room of Government* by the University of the Sunshine Coast’s Joanne Scott and colleagues is a considered attempt to bring to light the past undertakings and centralised workings of Queensland’s Premier’s Department over the period of the state’s self-administration (Scott et al. 2001).<sup>17</sup> Like Fitzgerald’s later collaborative work mentioned previously, the book received government funding as a Centenary of Federation project and features a foreword by premier Beattie; it is, regardless, a valuable resource of anecdotal and recorded source data. However, even a tome such as this cannot entirely do justice to, or hope to compete with, the extent of government material that has been generated over recent decades. Among these materials, none are more telling than the strategic policy documents emanating from the Premier’s Department; although not neglecting the numerous publications from other Queensland or Commonwealth agencies, as well as the valuable – and now digitised – transcripts of parliamentary debates recorded in ‘Hansard’ (Queensland Government 2002, 2005; see also Australian Government 2001; Queensland Government 2004; Queensland Parliament 2020). Considered examination of this extensive stockpile of published administrative records can add considerably to the

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16 One proposal that never saw publication was a piece to be titled ‘Queensland: Australia’s Superstate’, originally commissioned by the Premier’s Department and receiving cabinet approval in late 1979. It aimed to build a ‘corporate image’ for the state government and afford Queensland a ‘newly acquired prestige’. See Salisbury (2010a).

17 An interesting, if not exactly scholarly, recent addition to this retrospective theme can be found in Office of the Queensland Governor (2016); see also Queensland Parliament (2018).

understanding of coordinated policy platforms and political agendas, especially as witnessed recently in Queensland (Sullivan Mort and Roan 2003; Bowden 2011; Salisbury 2011).

In further terms of ‘non-standard’ resources of political and historical analysis or data, it will have escaped nobody’s attention that, increasingly, such source material can be found online and in digitised format. A leading example is the large assemblage of novel research material contained in the testimonies of past political and bureaucratic leaders, recorded in interviews for the ‘Queensland Speaks’ oral history project. These annotated recordings address issues of governance, policymaking and political decision-making in Queensland over the last half century; they are publicly accessible through a website produced by UQ’s now defunct Centre for the Government of Queensland (a disclaimer: I was a member of this project’s research and interviewing team).<sup>18</sup> It should not be overlooked, however, that much worthy source material can still be gleaned from the printed word, including texts situated outside strictly ‘political history’ confines but also comprising works of social and cultural history. Thankfully, there are very recent and leading examples of these sources as well.

## Related popular history

Starting with *Three Crooked Kings*, journalist and author Matthew Condon’s best-selling trilogy on corruption in Queensland in the postwar decades tells in stark detail how closely government and law enforcement in this state became entwined (Condon 2013, 2014, 2015; see also Dillon 2016). Containing some stunning revelations previously unaired outside select ‘insider’ circles, Condon’s works exposed for many the tawdry extent of dishonest policing and politics in pre-Fitzgerald Queensland, albeit in sometimes journalistic, almost lurid style. Andrew Stafford’s rightly popular and evocative *Pig City* resonates especially with many who were resident in Queensland during the years of the Bjelke-Petersen Government. His account records the development of Brisbane’s ‘subterranean’ popular

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18 See Centre for the Government of Queensland, *Queensland Speaks*, University of Queensland, [www.queenslandspeaks.com.au](http://www.queenslandspeaks.com.au), last updated April 2015. See also Centre for the Government of Queensland, *Queensland Historical Atlas*, University of Queensland, [www.qhatlas.com.au](http://www.qhatlas.com.au), last updated April 2015, for thematic and typically map-based historical analyses of Queensland’s (often political) past.

culture – in the guise of its prolific and brash music scene – which thrived despite, or perhaps partly in response to, the authoritarian bent of the local constabulary (Stafford 2014; see also Walker 2005). In a comparable vein, Jackie Ryan's award-winning and similarly evocative account of 1988's World Expo in Brisbane reveals the behind-the-scenes political dealings of Queensland gaining the event's hosting rights. The book fondly recalls the months-long festival that many Queenslanders consider transformed their capital to a modern metropolis – all while the Fitzgerald Inquiry aired its damning revelations of government corruption and police vice (Ryan 2018; see also Carroll 1991). These recent, acclaimed accounts attest to Ray Evans's assertion cited previously that Queensland's political history is indeed 'exciting, complex, surprising, nuanced and more than a little shocking'.

## Conclusion

As is evident above, there has been considerable output over some time – what John Wanna called 'a long revolution' – of academic analysis of Queensland's politics. Current scholars and readers outside the academy alike are blessed with a rich and diverse body of literature that, from varying perspectives, is being added to still. Yet, this robust record of past analysis notwithstanding, it is disappointingly clear that there is now a comparative lack of more recent scholarly attention to Queensland's political history. Besides the valuable contributions of eminent scholars such as Wanna, as well as his peers and predecessors, those lately devoting attention and outputs of their own to this field are fewer in number and finding their 'impact' somewhat crowded out by other, more in-demand areas of inquiry. This scholarly decline relates particularly to study of the contemporary period of Queensland's politics, although also it can be argued to newer studies of earlier periods of state and colonial administration.

The reasons for this are many, and too complex to expand upon here. Certainly, though, a key factor in recent years is our universities' budgetary reliance on a growing cohort of international students, with humanities faculties and schools giving more credence (and prominence in the curriculum) to courses of study and research activity in national, international and transnational politics and history. Accordingly, academic focus on state-based political analysis and historical contextualising has

waned noticeably in the last two decades. However, this development has not gone unnoticed or unlamented; as a very recent *AJPH* special issue highlighted, there is need for and interest in ‘fresh examination of [this] rather neglected aspect of Australian politics’ (Manwaring 2020). As long as Queensland remains, in Evans’s words, ‘much talked about but little understood’ – and recent reaction to high-profile political and electoral events would seem to reinforce that impression (Blaine 2019) – there will be room and reason for new scholarly additions to this esteemed body of literature.

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This text is taken from *Politics, Policy and Public Administration in Theory and Practice: Essays in Honour of Professor John Wanna*, edited by Andrew Podger, Michael de Percy and Sam Vincent, published 2021 by ANU Press, The Australian National University, Canberra, Australia.

[doi.org/10.22459/PPPATP.2021.07](https://doi.org/10.22459/PPPATP.2021.07)