

## **The three Ds of welfare reform: disability, disgust and deservingness**

**Karen Soldatic and Barbara Pini\***

Public policy discourses on disability frequently reference emotions such as shame or pity to describe the lived experience of disabled people. While sociological research within the emotional realm is re-emerging as a growing area of interest, little work appears to have explored the relationship of emotions in articulating notions of deservingness that are a significant part of public policy discourses on disability. This is curious, considering that normative conceptions of deservingness have been integral to the legislative process that seeks to either elaborate or constrain the rights of disabled people. Drawing on the Howard government's workfirst welfare reform agenda as a case study, this article explores the role of 'disgust' in constraining disabled people's rights. In particular, we suggest that the politics of disgust was drawn upon by the Howard government to shift public notions of justice, from rights to deserving.

### **Introduction**

Australia, like other Western liberal democracies, has undergone extensive social policy restructuring as a result of neoliberalism (Mendes 2003). While neo-liberalism had its genesis in the Hawke (1983–91) and Keating (1991–96) Labor governments, it secured the status of orthodoxy under the radical conservatism of the Liberal Coalition government (1996–2007). Under the leadership of Prime Minister John Howard, a widespread campaign was instigated to advance neoliberal social policy measures across all spheres of social life (Bessant et al 2006). As has been well documented within this journal, the intensification of neoliberalism during the Howard years of government resulted in the direct dismantling of a range of rights for many groups, including women, refugees, people with disabilities and Indigenous Australians (Carney 2003; 2006; Maddison 2008; Parker 2007; Penovic and Dastyari 2007; Nevile 2008).

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\* Karen Soldatic recently completed her PhD on disability policy restructuring during the Howard years of government and is now employed as the disability policy research fellow at the John Curtin Institute of Public Policy, Curtin University of Technology, Perth. Email: <kazzak@bigpond.com>.

Barbara Pini is a professor of sociology at the John Curtin Institute of public policy, Curtin University of Technology, Perth. She has published widely in the areas of public policy, sociology and gender studies. Email: <B.Pini@curtin.edu.au>.

The logic framing the Howard government's neoliberal restructuring of social policy has been well mapped out (see Bessant et al 2006; Bryan 2004; Burgess et al 2000; Carney 2006; Considine 2001; Harris 2002). Rather than continuing this discussion, this article considers the role of emotions in creating consent for a retracted welfare state during the Howard period of government. While this may appear an unusual endeavour in the consideration of public normative conceptions of, and acceptance for, citizenship rights, both nationally and internationally, a growing body of work has contemplated the role of emotions in (re)framing rights (Barbalet 1998; 2002; Miller 2004; Miller 1997; Nussbaum 2001; 2004; Sayer 2005; Skeggs 2004). Part of this analysis has involved the intrinsic (but typically unspoken) relationship between public notions of justice and deservingness, and emotions. Feather's (1999; 2006) work suggests that conceptualisations of deservingness are deeply connected to public notions of justice and that these are framed through the emotional realm. It has been well documented that part of the Howard government's consensual building project was to reframe publicly accepted notions of deservingness and their association to citizenship (Berns 2002). Some have even contended that one of the principle aims of the Howard government was to separate the so-called 'deserving from the undeserving poor' (Mendes 2003, 90).

Drawing on the findings of a large empirical study, this article will illustrate the role of 'disgust' in reframing public conceptions of 'deservingness' and citizenship rights for people with disabilities. To begin, the article will briefly outline the emergence of neoliberal workfare in the Australian context and locate 'disability' within these developments. Then, the article will provide an overview of recent literature on emotions, and particularly the emotion of disgust and its relationship to normative conceptions of justice and deservingness. Finally, drawing from the empirical findings of the study identified above, the article will illustrate the role of disgust in (re)framing disability social relations.

### **The Australian experiment with neoliberal workfare: locating 'disability'**

One of the key domestic projects of neoliberal restructuring is what is referred to as 'workfare', a social policy measure that seeks to re-regulate the intersection of welfare and labour market policy (Peck 2001). In the latter part of the 20th century, workfare principles became hegemonic in policy discourses in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. This was also the case in Australia, where the nomenclature used has been 'welfare to work'. While this mantra informed a diverse range of social policies during the Howard era, it had particular ramifications in the field of disability policy, as can be evidenced by the changes wrought through the enactment of the Howard government's welfare and labour relations legislation.

In terms of welfare to work, Australia has largely followed global trends, but policies and programs that have been implemented have also remained locally distinct (Burgess et al 2000). These policies and programs can be traced back to the Hawke–Keating era (1983–96) (Beeson and Firth 1998), as evidenced by the document *Working Nation* (Commonwealth of Australia 1994), which reconfigured social policy issues in economic terms and linked citizenship discourses and social rights with labour market participation. Like the policies that followed it, *Working Nation* was strongly influenced by newly hegemonic discourses about ‘an active society model’ (Bessant et al 2006, 106–07). The active society model embodies notions of exchange in state–citizen relations, where access to social security is tied to participation in a range of state-sponsored labour market programs.<sup>1</sup> It is this model which largely informed disability social policy reform in the Hawke–Keating administrations as extensive changes were made to disability social security legislation, employment programs and community supports (Clear 2000).

Contradictorily, disability policy over the period of two successive Labor governments also emphasised social justice principles. The Hawke–Keating government’s statement on disability and social justice (1991) and the passage of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth), along with the establishment of disability open employment programs, progressed disabled people’s demands for citizenship rights and social inclusion (Clear and Gleeson 2001). Many of the progressive policy measures, however, sought to better integrate disability labour market supports with social security regulation (McElwaine and Ford 1994; Saltmarsh 1994). During this period, state fiscal resources generally targeted disabled people requiring the least support (Lindsay 1996), laying the path later taken during the Howard era.

Disability largely sat on the periphery of welfare to work measures during the Hawke–Keating era, but the period of the Howard government marked an intensification of neoliberal restructuring where disability became a central concern. Within months of the new government, disability labour market programs were subject to extensive reforms. The provision of program funding and access was restructured over a nine-year period to reflect the influence of neoliberal workfare orthodoxies. Many of the strategies disguised structural processes of disability disadvantage, inequality and exclusion, encouraging services to engage in practices of ‘creaming’ — targeting supports to ‘the most able of the disabled’.<sup>2</sup> Coupling the restructuring of disability labour market supports, a set of ‘curbing’ practices was initiated within the social

1 This notion of exchange was later epitomised by the Howard government’s mutual obligation policy, where certain classes of welfare recipients had to earn the right to access social security (Carney 2006; Carney and Ramia 2002; Goodin 2002; Moss 2006).

2 We borrow this term from Joyce Evans (1989, 249).

security assessment branch, Centrelink, to divert disabled people from disability social entitlements to unemployment benefits, a lower payment with diminished benefits. This all largely sat outside the regulatory process (Carney 2003).

In 1999 Senator Newman, the minister responsible at the time for the government's welfare to work agenda, made public its desire to restructure the Australian social security system in its totality (Maddison and Hamilton 2007, 89). The Australian public was deeply divided, and the proposals to distinguish between 'partially disabled' and 'severely disabled' were highly contentious. Even without broad public support, between 2001 and 2003 the Howard government attempted to slash the key disability work criteria through legislative change on three occasions, but to no avail (Bills Digest 2001; 2002; 2003).

In 2004, when the Howard Coalition government was re-elected and gained control of the Senate, it made public its desire to dispense with the old Disability Support Pension as an integral part of its neoliberal workfare agenda. Aware of the government's new power, the disability movement mobilised, hoping to win some concessions (Disability Participation Alliance 2005). Little, however, was gained when the key pieces of legislation were finally passed. The passage of the welfare to work legislation and WorkChoices, which significantly reconfigured the Australian industrial relations landscape, occurred almost simultaneously. The effect of the joint passage of both pieces of legislation instantiated the Howard government's ideological commitment to neoliberal workfare and wound back almost 100 years of worker protection (Teicher, Lambert and O'Rourke 2006). The workers' welfare state (Castles 1985) now privileged the rationality of market rule, rendering women with disabilities particularly disadvantaged (Salthouse 2005, 1).

Thus, the cumulative effects of the passage of the key pieces of legislation exemplify global neoliberal restructuring, re-regulating the nexus between welfare and the labour market. In the case of disability, the incoming legislation stratified disability entitlements into three classes. Disability was constructed around hours of work, consisting of people who can work more than 30 hours, those who can work between 15 and 30 hours, and those who can work the least or are deemed not able to work at all at less than 15 hours per week. Different entitlements to social security payments and social provisioning, as well as different mutual obligation requirements, were attached to each of the three categories (Costello 2005). Moreover, the legislation necessitated that some disabled people were now required to earn their citizenship entitlements, propelling many disabled people into a highly unregulated and unprotected labour market.

Initial promises of protecting those individuals already granted a disability pension prior to the new legislative round did not eventuate in practice (ACROD 2007).

Disabled people receiving social security entitlements under the previous regulatory regime who volunteered for work found that they had to endure new assessments to substantiate their disability claims and, in turn, place themselves at risk of being assessed as not really 'severely' disabled any longer. Consequently, many disabled people moved from voluntary employment to mandatory participation in order to maintain access to welfare payments and associated benefits.

During the 2007 national election campaign, significant public debate focused on the Howard government's deregulation of the labour market via WorkChoices (Spies-Butcher and Wilson 2008; Kelly 2008). However, the welfare to work changes enacted during the same time period appeared to be absent from public deliberations from both sides of politics. Indeed, to date, the welfare to work categorisations of disability have been largely uncontested in the mainstream public arena. In fact, it appears that the current Rudd Labor government has experienced limited pressure to reconsider the Howard government's welfare to work reforms in the area of disability categorisation, and its associated effects on citizens with disabilities accessing a range of social entitlements. This is despite the Rudd government recently ratifying the new United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Bill Shorten's (the Parliamentary Secretary responsible for Disability in Australia) expressed commitments towards disabled people and their rights more generally.<sup>3</sup> As commentators have noted, there are inherent tensions and contradictions between discourses of human rights and those which circulate around welfare to work. Parker (2007, 19), for example, argues that 'the trajectory of welfare reform in Australia poses significant challenges to enabling the promise of equality, rights and justice for citizens with a disability to be realised'. She explains that in the market-state, the identity of 'individual consumer' is elevated above that of 'citizen', and human rights are consequently marginalised. While Parker (2006; 2007) argues that the contestations surrounding the nexus between market agendas and human rights agendas should be cause for significant debate and concern, this has not occurred in the Australian body politic. This may be connected to what had been accomplished through a campaign of disgust directed at disabled people in the period leading up to the enactment of welfare to work. In order to elucidate this further, we turn now to briefly overview the broader literature on emotions and the emotional life of social policy.

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3 Even though the Howard government signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, it was the Rudd Government which undertook the ratification process on 17 July 2008 (<[www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=18&pid=257](http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?navid=18&pid=257)>). See Bill Shorten's recent press club address (Shorten 2009).

### **Understanding emotions in public life: disgust and deservingness**

There is a growing body of work arguing for the importance of understanding emotions in social life (Ahmed 2004; Bondi, Davidson and Smith 2005; Miller 2004; Nussbaum 2001; 2004; Sayer 2005; Skeggs 2004). This research suggests that emotions are more than just biological impulses or instinctive forces, but 'have a cognitive dimension, that they involve thought, judgement and evaluation' (Cates 2003, 326). Through this lens, emotions are not simply conceptualised only at the level of the individual or personal, but seen to be integral to shaping the social world and our experiences of it. Driven by sociological understandings, this research illustrates that emotions have a social life (Tiedens and Leach 2004) which is grounded in, and shaped by, relationships of power (Ahmed 2004; Bondi, Davidson and Smith 2005; Barbalet 1998; Sayer 2005; Skeggs 2004).

Bondi, Davidson and Smith (2005, 7) suggest that emotions offer a 'promising avenue through which to advance understandings of dynamic geographies of difference, exclusion and oppression'. From this standpoint, emotions can thus explain processes of 'othering', where they are intricately attached to processes of moralisation that devalue and debase certain identity groups (Miller 2004, 153). For example, a rich body of literature is emerging revealing the affective dimensions of class and the ways in which class differences are inscribed and reinscribed through evaluative emotional judgments around notions such as shame and repulsion or pride and respect (for example, Sayer 2005). In a similar respect, disabled people can testify to the relational role of emotions that mark out their bodies as different which then become moralised, devalued and excluded. Pity, fear, shame and disgust have been central to these discussions (Charlton 1998; Garland-Thomson 2002; Shapiro 1993).

Soldatic (2007), in particular, has extensively developed the relationship between sociological accounts of disgust and sociologies of disability. Drawing on the work of Bashford (2004), Miller (2004) and Nussbaum (2004), Soldatic illustrates the complex inter-relationship that ties the presence of disgust to disability, where disabled bodies are marked out and excluded. Disgust symbolises disability exclusion, where bodies are spatialised to minimise biological, moral, cultural and social contamination. In a desire to minimise moral contagion, disability is separated, excluded and then bounded outside the public sphere. Soldatic therefore suggests that disgust has been central to the modern state and disability relations, particularly in regard to the way that states establish classes of disability, where rights and entitlements are 'attached' accordingly. The modern state draws upon the emotion disgust to shape public normative conceptions of justice which inscribe disabled bodies with value and, in turn, inform normative responses to disability.

Soldatic's argument resonates with the growing body of empirical work examining the role of emotions in public life. This body of work suggests that as social norms change, defining what is acceptable within the public and private spheres, so do socio-emotional responses. Nussbaum (2004, 46–48) provides numerous illustrations of this phenomenon in her book *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law*, highlighting that changes in judicial rulings in cases relating to women and people with a disability reflect changes in dominant attitudes and norms and the emotional evaluations that these entail. Thus, normative assumptions and evaluations are assigned an affect. The affect given impinges upon the perceived 'publicly available reality' which 'may be manifested in the way people assign blame and culpability and in a general belief that there is an overarching, governing force in the world that delivers justice so that people get what they deserve' (Feather 1999, 88). In this respect, notions of deserving and undeserving thus involve the attribution of value and worth which are, in effect, central to considerations of affect (Feather 1999; 2006). Applebaum's (2001) examination of the political psychology of social policy measures illustrates this position, as she demonstrates that normative notions of deservingness frame and shape the distributional politics of social policy measures. Feather's (1999; 2006) work on the social psychology of distributional justice confirms Applebaum's findings, illustrating the tying of affect to normative conceptions of deserving. This sense of 'the deserving' is conceptualised through notions of achievement, where individuals are evaluated and assessed according to a hierarchy of 'deservingness'. Public notions of deservingness are coupled with social normative conceptions of justice, and affect moderates this relationship.

While Feather's (1999; 2006) work has mostly focused upon the Australian 'tall poppy' syndrome to build a conceptual link between emotions and normative conceptualisations of the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving', his analysis is insightful as it elucidates the role of emotions within the political sphere and the way that emotions can be harnessed to achieve particular political and ideological ends. Distinguishing between the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving' poor has been central to the moral framework of distributive justice and social welfare within the modern liberal state. Conley (1982) and Berns (2002) have traced public policy discourses of deserving back to the Elizabethan Poor Laws of 1834. Fox's (2000) historical work on unemployment in Australia during the Great Depression also exemplifies this moral affective framework. The role of affect has been to morally reframe structural disadvantage as a result of individual behaviour. The position of inequality becomes internal to the individual, and responsibility for the individual's social outcomes is thus borne by the poor, the disadvantaged and those marked as 'other' (Applebaum 2001). Individualising structural disadvantage is a necessary contingency to inscribing bodies as 'un/worthy' and thus 'un/deserving' of just rewards accordingly (see Sayer 2005; Skeggs 2004).



Both nationally and internationally, research has demonstrated the ways in which neoliberal agendas relating to the retraction of welfare have relied upon the state mobilising a range of negative emotions to position the welfare subject. Illustrative of such work is Hancock's (2004) comprehensive critique of public discourse surrounding the passing of the *Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996* in the United States. Implicit in the title of Hancock's book, *The Politics of Disgust: The Public Identity of the Welfare Queen*, is the author's key thesis — that is, during the welfare reform debates of 1995 and 1996, a specific public identity of 'welfare Queen' was constructed and deployed in relation to single African-American mothers, and that strongly infusing this identity was the notion of disgust. While their own voices were marginalised in the discursive realm of the media and Congress, poor African-American single mothers were positioned as lazy, over-fertile and dishonest. Importantly, this denigration and demonising is demonstrated to underscore the policy option of workfare.

In this article we follow Hancock's lead, but take as our case study disability policy in the Australian state under the Howard Coalition government. Like Hancock, we are concerned with the introduction of the pieces of key neo-liberal legislation around welfare to work and the ways in which the debates connected to these acts configured disabled people in emotionally charged and negative terms. Before we embark on this analysis, we provide a brief overview of the methodology of the study.

## Methodology

Increasingly, policy studies reveal the multifaceted discursive dependency of social, political and cultural texts to elucidate the role of government discourse as a network of discourse practices across a range of social spheres (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). As our interest is in exploring the way 'disability' and disabled people were emotionally positioned within the welfare to work debates and how these emotions created consent for Howard government's welfare to work agenda for disabled people, we drew upon documents and public policy consultations that largely represented key historical moments from its public conceptualisation (September 1999) through to its regulatory enactment with the final passage of legislation (December 2005). For example, texts traversed the parliamentary Hansard that recorded the extensive debates on welfare reform from 1999 to the highly scripted national information briefings conducted by bureaucrats immediately after the announcement of the overhaul of Australia's welfare system in the 2005–06 Budget statement. Given that commentators have highlighted the critical role played by the media in the Howard government's consensus building project (Archer 2007; Ester 2007; Warhurst 2002; Young 2008), government media releases relating to the welfare to work agenda were also examined.



Overall, in keeping with the theoretical orientation of the study and its emphasis on socially constructed identities and emotion, analysis focused on identifying key storylines and the subject positions constructed by dominant narratives and the role of emotions in this process (Alvesson 2002). In examining discursive patterns, convergences and differences, a particular configuration of the 'welfare recipient' as 'other' and as 'disgusting' emerged as central across the texts.

### **Exploring the evidence: disability, disgust and deservingness**

This process of creating a negative identity for disabled people and situating that in a politics of affect began with the initial announcement of the Howard government's welfare reform agenda and the ensuing debates which occurred in the national Parliament. A key discursive strategy at this early stage was the creation of the categories of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' welfare recipients. Illustrative of this is the following comment from Senator Knowles, a Western Australian senator of the Howard government:

My question is also addressed to the Minister for Family and Community Services, Senator Newman. The Howard government is committed to a strong and compassionate welfare safety net so that the money actually goes to those in real need. [Senate Hansard (1999) 9144.]

In this relational categorical grouping, there is the legitimate, authentic and genuine welfare subject and the illegitimate, inauthentic and fake welfare subject. Each is imbued in emotionally charged terms as either positive or negative. Those in the category of 'deserving' are entitled to a welfare system that is 'strong and compassionate', but the repugnant and abhorrent 'undeserving' are entitled to no such consideration in terms of welfare. Thus, while disgust is omitted from Senator Knowles's narrative, it is overwhelmingly present. In the quotation, Senator Knowles also articulates the message of moral disgust by drawing on normative arguments which resemble those embedded within the moral hygiene and eugenics movement in the early 20th century. Depicting a 'biopolitical state' (Bashford 2004, 164) which has withdrawn from its moral responsibilities of administering regulatory practices to contain the sexual reproduction of the biologically and morally inferior subject,<sup>4</sup> Senator Knowles stated further: 'It is ... a system of intergenerational welfare dependency, where people would go from the cradle to the grave never having earned a dollar other than welfare' (Senate Hansard (1999), 9158).

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4 We draw from Carolyn Bashford's (2004, 164–85) argument here on sexual reproduction, contagion and the role of the state in controlling the reproductive sphere during the early 20th century in Australia.

In the parliamentary debates of this period, Howard government ministers not only worked to create a binary between the 'deserving' and the 'undeserving' welfare subject. There is also evidence of the way in which Coalition members created a dualism between 'Australians' and welfare recipients. Importantly, texts demonstrate the ways in which the descriptor 'Australians' was never used to describe welfare recipients in the debates. They were sometimes 'people' or 'groups', but always clearly excluded from the class of people deemed 'Australians'. As such, the welfare subject was positioned as a moral site of contagion, not just against individuals, but against the nation itself. Indicative of this type of framing of a binary between the deserving welfare recipient/Australian and the undeserving welfare recipient/people is the following statement by Senator Kay Patterson (2003, np): 'Australians want to see that people get what they are entitled to; no more and no less.'

While parliamentary debates were a key means for promulgating a discourse of disgust, the most common device used by the Howard government to reframe the welfare recipient as untrustworthy, lazy and morally deficient was the media release. For the period between the initial launch of the welfare reform project by Senator Newman in September 1999 and the successful passage of the *Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Amendment (Welfare to Work and Other Measures) Act 2005* (Cth) in December 2005, a search on the Factiva database reveals over 3125 media publications that directly linked welfare, social security, Centrelink or pensions to fraudulent claims and welfare 'cheats'. As a crude measure, this represents approximately 1.47 newspaper articles across the country daily.<sup>5</sup> Much of the media campaign was fed by the political elite in order to mark out the welfare recipient as unworthy of redistributive public welfare. The notion of the disgusting 'welfare fraudster' (Vanstone 2002, 1) was repeated extensively through the ruling party's term in office. Consistent repetitive moral discourses of fraud spanned several years and acted to criminalise the welfare recipient:

And while one welfare cheat will now be spending time behind bars, Centrelink has been tracking down more welfare fraudsters in Queensland. In the Bundaberg area, a successful two-day joint operation targeting the harvesting industry, involving Centrelink, the Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, and the Queensland

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5 This study was not designed as a comparative project and therefore it is not possible to contrast the volume and type of media releases made in this period by the Howard government with the previous Labor administration. As outlined earlier, neo-liberal principles were first taken up in the federal sphere by Prime Ministers Hawke and Keating (Pusey 1991). At the same time, more recent work has argued that during the Howard administration the neo-liberal agenda intensified (Hamilton and Maddison 2007).

State Police, has resulted in Centrelink cancelling or suspending the payments of 14 customers. [Vanstone 2003, 1.]

In the following quotation from Senator Kay Patterson, the same echoes are heard of the welfare recipient as fraudster, along with the boundary marking the division between deserving welfare recipient or 'Australians' and the undeserving welfare recipient who are simply 'people':

... the social security system in Australia was in a state of neglect when we came to government, but one of the things that we were able to do was reduce fraud and overpayments — and not by taking money away from social welfare recipients who needed it or who required the safety net. The situation was that people who had got a job and who were still on social security said, 'I won't ring Social Security for a couple of weeks because they don't ever bother chasing you up. I'll take the money and then I'll ring them in a few weeks.' [Senate Hansard 1999, 9160.]

This quotation is also notable as it highlights the way in which negative framing of welfare recipients acted to mobilise public consensus for a restructured neoliberal workfare state that would enact punitive legislative measures as regulatory tools of moral purity. At the institutional level, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) argued that the success of workfare program measures is ultimately dependent on regulatory enforced participation, as individuals cannot be trusted to participate of their own volition, stating that: 'the voluntary nature of many of the *Australians Working Together* measures suggests that greater increases in participation rates may depend on the introduction of compulsory requirements' (DEWR 2005, 28).

For the most part, the Howard government presented the 'undeserving and unworthy welfare subject' as a homogenised subject. In the above-quoted media release from Senator Vanstone (2003), however, the state begins to subtly differentiate between different types of undeserving welfare subjects. In particular, we see the way in which the undeserving welfare subject was also racialised, requiring extensive state regulation of external border controls along with internal administrative measures to control unruly corporealities in order to protect the moral purity of the nation. Disability again collides, merges and intersects with biological hierarchies of the body as social formation. The involvement of the welfare department, along with the immigration department and the police, illustrates the intersections of the constitutive regulatory practices of a workfare state — that is, the regime of governing institutional structures 'by the state in civil society to alter social and market forces' (O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 1999, 12). Included within the moral community are able-bodied whites, revealing the historical lineage of discourses

from the early formation of the nation to the state's restructured neoliberal formation (Soldatic and Fiske 2009).

The announcement of the forthcoming welfare to work legislation within the 2005–06 Federal Budget shifted the discursive into the realm of practice. The silent, 'homogenised' welfare subject had become stratified into numerous administrative categories. Disability was clearly marked out as a site of moral contagion. A set of highly prescriptive practice measures was implemented. Employment services had a role not only in surveilling the disabled welfare subject, but also in monitoring the disabled welfare subject's progress in moving to a state of public respectability. The policy elite articulated this message in public information forums held immediately after the 2005–06 Budget release in Perth:

The first specifies the job seeker's obligations which must be met in order to continue to receive income support. For example, it might be to actively participate in the DOES program. The second element sets out the assistance or intervention plan agreed between the provider and the job seeker. Based on the job seeker's employment goals this will include the disability employment assistance to be provided and will be tailored to the individual's needs. This element to the activity agreement will continue to be developed over time as circumstances change and milestones are achieved. DOES' providers will be required to submit a report to Centrelink if a job seeker fails to meet their obligations without good reason as outlined in their activity agreement. [DEWR Bureaucrat, Welfare to Work 2005–06 Budget Information Sessions, May 2005.]

The policy elite at these public information forums clearly depicted the disabled welfare subject as historically shirking their civic responsibilities, thus requiring extensive surveillance and monitoring to ensure that they were no longer able to defraud the system. Disgust had finally stuck, and the normative realm of deservingness had been categorically reclassified and reconstituted to depict a new class of disabled citizens as inherently undeserving of state welfare. The morally deficient and deviant disabled welfare subject now had a range of responsibilities, including civic obligations, in addition to undertaking individual behavioural modification through specifically targeted interventions. Workability was no longer singular, but was coupled with moral normative assumptions of respectability, which required the disabled welfare subject to earn the right to deserve state welfare incrementally.

## **Conclusion**

In this article we have drawn on a case study of recent disability policy in Australia which potently illustrates Anderson and Smith's (2001, 9) assertion that 'emotions are an intensely political issue'. The empirical findings reveal the ways in which

the subject position 'morally untrustworthy welfare recipient' was produced and reproduced. With each repetition, powerful moral discourses eventually became accepted as unquestioned social truths in the Australian public sphere (Soldatic and Fiske 2009). Ultimately, disgust aroused the public senses to haunt, disturb and disrupt the established normative notions of deserving tied to disability entitlements. Disgust, with its insidious stickiness, oozed subtlety (see Ahmed 2004; Lawler 2005), underpinning and emerging within public discourses on the welfare subject, thus forming the 'glue' required to combine the range of necessary contingencies to shift the public understandings of distributive justice and social rights. Disgust was used to mark out, separate and exclude a particular class of disabled citizens to redefine them as 'undeserving'. The strategic intent of these discursive representations of disability was, as Mendes (2003) suggests, to shift the public imaginary of disability, rendering some bodies as not really disabled enough to deserve disability entitlements. In this respect, this research provides further evidence of Nussbaum's claims about the critical role of emotions in mediating legislation and policy that are intrinsic to furthering the rights of specific stigmatised groups within society. While international treaties might provide promise to guarantee the rights of people with a disability, these can be undermined or negated by market-based agendas and the emotions embedded within them. ●

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