**Ideas and Society**

**Julian Assange and WikiLeaks**

**John Scott Meeting House, La Trobe University**

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**Robert Manne**

Thank you all very much for coming. I just want to say a couple of things before Mary Kostakidis introduces the panel formally. I was very pleased when this was sent by Mary to me to have a look at, what you’ve just seen. Ideas and Society does various things. The purpose of tonight’s event is to examine various aspects of WikiLeaks and Julian Assange, but my expectation is that if a prosecution goes ahead in the United States after extradition, very little support will be given by whoever is the Australian government at that time, nor will the media give support and I wanted on this occasion not to have a debate about WikiLeaks, but an information session in which the philosophy of WikiLeaks, the legal plight of WikiLeaks, and the reason for a WikiLeaks Party in Australia is at least somewhere available to be seen. It will be on the La Trobe website, but it will also be I think on Slow TV. I want there to be a record of something to balance what I think might be the attitude of whoever is in government and we know who controls the media.

But with that if I could pass over to Mary.

**Mary Kostakidis**

Well, hello everyone. Thanks for joining us. If you’re watching it at home, you haven’t seen what we’ve just seen, which was a short video of a substantial number of public figures in the United States calling for WikiLeaks to be shut down, calling Julian Assange a cyber terrorist and calling for him to be killed. For copyright reasons, we weren’t able to run the video at the university for the webcast, but you can watch it on the WikiLeaks website and on YouTube.

Now, welcome to this Ideas and Society forum at Melbourne’s La Trobe University. Ideas and Society is a most appropriate context in which to discuss WikiLeaks and Julian Assange. The publisher and founder are at the centre of a battle over control of information and freedom of the press in the internet age, a battle spreading to the mainstream media as well as the Obama administration increasingly waves the espionage stick at journalists. The message seems to be, we don’t want to discourage you from soliciting information, but we will prosecute the hell out of you if you succeed.

The accessing of phone records I don’t think anyone believes is new, but doing it overtly is what is new. Tonight we’ll hear from our panel about the impact WikiLeaks has had in empowering citizens, the ire it has drawn and the consequences of that ire, and the ways in which it’s fighting back, including starting up a political party in Australia. And also consider some of the criticisms of the organisation and of its founder. By the way the hash tag for tonight is just Assange, if you want to tweet.

Now despite receiving a long list of international awards for journalism and human rights, including one of this country’s most prestigious awards for journalism, the Walkley Award for outstanding contribution to journalism, WikiLeaks and its founder are for some, an anathema. The financial blockade of WikiLeaks has been in force now for about two and a half years, the same amount of time that Julian Assange has been detained without charge. He’s been in the Ecuadorian Embassy for almost a year now, afraid that if he’s extradited to Sweden, he would be held until the US was ready to prosecute him.

Despite confirmation by the US Attorney General, and more recently by a spokesperson of the Department of Justice for the Eastern District of Virginia, that a criminal investigation and Grand Jury probe into WikiLeaks is ongoing, the Australian government is dismissive of it. Julian Assange’s government is adamant that he is trying to evade the consequences of serious sexual allegations. Yet, the Chief Justice of Sweden’s highest court seemed baffled himself as to why the Swedish prosecutor hasn’t interviewed Assange in London. A UK spy agency recently released to Assange some of their own records of comments about his case. It seems that agency staff, who are presumably trained to interpret such matters, believe that Assange has been framed, and whilst the agency of course has rushed to assure us that it is not their official view, it’s disturbing and reinforces the dangerous situation that the WikiLeaks publisher finds himself in.

A couple of months ago I spent several days at the Ecuadorian Embassy to see how Julian Assange is coping. I found someone intensely engaged in work, supported by a small team of highly intelligent, highly articulate, highly skilled, committed, courageous staff. Assange says he feels relatively safe where he is, and the warmth and generosity and support of the Ecuadorians, the Ambassador, the Consul, the staff, was palpable. There seems to be a constant stream of people from around the world visiting him on the hour – journalists, newspaper editors, stars, film makers, writers, and supporters.

My visit was a couple of weeks before WikiLeaks released a large number of documents and the amazing search engine that they’d been working on that gives unprecedented public access to an archive that will help us understand history, indeed it will help inform the historical record.

Now to help us understand the WikiLeaks phenomenon, who better than our first panel speaker, Robert Manne. Robert retired last year as Professor of Politics at La Trobe University. He’s presently a Vice Chancellor’s Fellow and he is convenor of this program, Ideas and Society. Julian Assange recommended Manne’s 2011 article on WikiLeaks to his followers worldwide on Twitter, causing a brief meltdown of *The Monthly*’s website. Robert Manne.

**Robert Manne**

Thanks Mary. I should have said how delighted I am that you were able to come down for this event, how much I've admired your work for a very long time. Thank you very much.

What I'm going to do is present in fifteen minutes something which I think is not at all well understood, which is the basic political trajectory and philosophy of Assange and WikiLeaks. I don’t think that it’s ... even though hundreds of thousands of articles have been written, I don’t think it’s really remotely understood. So let me begin.

As many of you know, when he was a teenager, Julian Assange was involved in the Melbourne computer, very early hacking sub-culture. He was part of a group known as the International Subversives, which conducted audacious attacks on international military and commercial targets, as a hacktivist. The group was investigated by the Federal Police, Assange was charged with criminal offences, and eventually, after several years of what was for him, personal agony, fined and placed on a good behaviour bond. Later he recalled his state of mind at this time in these words “Prosecution and youth is a defining peak experience. To know the state for what it really is! True belief only begins with a jackboot at the door.” I actually think a somewhat elevated description of a fine and a good behaviour bond, but nevertheless I'm absolutely convinced that the five years of so he was waiting were an agony for him. I think he’s a person of heightened imagination.

Following his arrest, Assange’s chief political preoccupation seems to have been what he thought of as the extraordinary democratic possibilities of the information sharing, virtual communities across the globe, created by the internet, at that time, very young, and the threat to its freedom and its flourishing that was posed by censorious states, by greedy corporations, and by repressive laws. Clearly the young Assange had an interest in the role the new technology might play in the defence of those fighting for political freedoms and human rights.

In 1997, with others, he wrote *Rubberhose*, a piece of so-called deniable cryptography, whose purpose was to make it impossible for torturers, or their victims, to know whether or not all the encrypted data on a computer hard drive had been revealed. Assange was by now a committed member of the free software movement. Even more importantly, he was a member of a California-based group known as the Cypherpunks, which I want to talk. It was the Cypherpunks who provided Assange with his real political education. At the core of their philosophy was the belief that the great questions of politics in the age of the internet was whether the state would strangle individual freedom and privacy, through its capacity for electronic surveillance, or whether autonomous individuals would eventually undermine and even destroy the state through their deployment of electronic weapons, newly at hand.

Many Cypherpunks were optimistic that in the battle for the future of humankind between the state and the individual, the individual would ultimately triumph. Their optimism was based on the invention of unbreakable, what was called public key cryptography, essentially codes that individuals could communicate with each other through. At the time the Cypherpunks formed, the US government strongly opposed the free circulation of public key cryptography. It feared that making it available would strengthen the hands of the espionage agencies of America’s enemies abroad and of terrorists, drug dealers and pornographers at home. For the Cypherpunks, the question of whether cryptography would be free would determine the outcome of what they saw as the great battle of the age between the state and the individual.

Almost all the Cypherpunks were anarchists who regarded the state as the enemy. Most, but not all, were anarchists of the right, or in American parlance, libertarians, who supported unfettered, laisez-faire capitalism. Julian Assange’s Cypherpunk postings, which I've read scores of them, reveal that on social questions, Assange leant decidedly to the left, someone who defended trade unionists and human right activists, a defence that was very little seen in the Cypherpunks.

On the question of cryptographic freedom and hostility towards the surveillance state, Assange was however amongst the most extreme of the Cypherpunks, an enemy of those who displayed even the slightest tendency to compromise on the question of Big Brother. George Orwell was one of the heroes of the Cypherpunks. He was nonetheless repelled by the corrosive cynicism about human nature which was common in Cypherpunk ranks. Among the Cypherpunks, he stood out as a romantic and an idealist. Already he seems to have imagined the future as a struggle to the death between autocratic elites and electronic freedom fighters. In this struggle he believed that the freedom fighters could win.

WikiLeaks, which was his invention, took shape in the year between July 2006 and August 2007. Its enemy was not surprisingly the state. Unlike most of the Cypherpunks, Assange however extended his focus of attack to business corporations as well. He regarded power in western society as belonging to political and economic elites, offering ordinary people nothing more nourishing than a counterfeit conception of democracy, and a soul-destroying consumption culture.

Assange showed no particular interest in political institutions or economic arrangements. The revolution he spoke about and fought for was in essence moral. For Assange action had to be taken, not on a local, but a truly global scale. For him, the central political virtue was courage, as it has always been. For him, the great moving force in history or moving forces in history, were the need for love and the thirst for truth. He was, as I say, an idealist and a romantic. He believed that courageous and ethical action could re-fashion the world.

By the time WikiLeaks was founded, Assange had formulated its revolutionary theory. He is, in my view, a revolutionary, a moral revolutionary. The theory went like this. The world was at present dominated by the conspiratorial power of authoritarian governments and big business corporations. They maintained and entrenched their power through what he called conspiracy. For Assange the conspiracy involved was the maintenance of a network of links between the conspirators, communication. The conspirators relied entirely on maintaining an information flow to control their environment. As a consequence, he believed the conspiracy could be in his word, throttled, by cutting the information flows. How was this to be done? In essence, his conclusion was that world politics could be transformed by staunching the flow of information amongst corrupt power elites by making them ever more fearful of insider leaks. He believed he could achieve this by establishing an organisation that would allow whistle blowers of all countries to pass on their information, confident through encryption that their identities would not be able to be discovered.

He proposed that his organisation would then publish the information for the purpose of collective analysis so as to empower oppressed populations across the globe. The revolution Assange imagined would be non-violent. The agent of change would not be the assassin, the rifle, but the whistleblower. The method would not be the bullet, in other words, but the leak.

The evidence I've read surrounding WikiLeaks at the time of its foundation makes it abundantly clear that anti-Americanism was not Assange’s primary driving force. Time and again, in its internal documents, it argued that, and I quote: “its roots are dissident communities” and again I'm quoting: “its primary targets are those highly oppressive regimes in China, Russia and central Eurasia” end quote. China was at first the central focus. WikiLeaks had in its sights then, primarily authoritarian governments but also the increasingly authoritarian tendencies seen in the recent trajectory of the western democracies and the authoritarian nature of contemporary business corporations. He put his position with extreme elegance on the 3rd of January 2007, when a crisis arose and he needed to explain WikiLeaks to the world, some information required answering. I quote a long quote from him to give a sense of what he thought he was trying to do. I quote: “Principled leaking has changed the course of human history for the better; it can alter the course of history in the present; it can lead to a better future. Public scrutiny of otherwise unaccountable and secretive institutions pressures them to act ethically. What official will chance a secret corrupt transaction when the public is likely to find out? When the risks of embarrassment through openness and honesty increase, the tables are turned against conspiracy, corruption, exploitation and oppression. Instead of a couple of academic specialists, WikiLeaks will provide a forum for the entire global community to examine any document relentlessly for credibility, plausibility, veracity and falsifiability. WikiLeaks may become the most powerful intelligence agency on earth, an intelligence agency of the people. WikiLeaks will be an anvil at which beats the hammer of the collective conscience of humanity. WikiLeaks we hope, will be a new star in the political firmament of humanity.” End of quote.

In my view, Julian Assange is a wonderful writer, although he hasn’t written enough for that to be yet clear.

By late 2009, WikiLeaks had published documents leaked to it by whistleblowers concerning an Islamist assassination order in Somalia, massive corruption in Kenya, tax avoidance by the largest Swiss bank Julius Baer, the Guantanamo Bay prison operation manuals, suppressed films of dissent in Tibet, US intelligence reports on the Battle of Fallujah in Iraq and the loans book of the Icelandic Bank, Kaupthing. I'm sorry for my pronunciation if there are any Icelanders in the room.

Assange was puzzled by the world’s indifference to his leaks, which came one after another, and what he took to be the laziness and corruption of the mainstream media. I quote from him at this time: “What does it mean when only those facts about the world with economic powers behind them can be heard? When the truth lies naked before the world, and no one will be the first to speak without a bribe.” His mood was darkening as what he regarded as extraordinary information was not meeting with the response he thought in order.

Now while all this was happening, in Iraq a junior US intelligence analyst called Private Bradley Manning, had been following WikiLeaks’ activities with the greatest interest. He decided to download 93,000 logs from the Afghan War, 400,000 incident reports from the war in Iraq, and 260,000 State Department cables. One of the items Manning sent to WikiLeaks was a video of an apparently cold-blooded Apache helicopter attack on a group of Iraqis, where perhaps seventeen men were gunned down. Assange made the decision to concentrate the resources and energies of WikiLeaks in publishing it under the title “Collateral Murder”.

In early April 2010, he flew to Washington to launch it. Shortly after, Assange decided to publish all the Bradley Manning material. This was an act, in my view, of extraordinary political courage. He had, as it were, taken on the might of the US state. You’ve seen its response.

Julian Assange’s frustration with the indifference of the world was now, to put it mildly, at an end. What Assange has experienced over the past three years is public knowledge and I hardly need analyse it. What is less well known is the way in which as a consequence of the many campaigns mounted against him and WikiLeaks, his political vision has in recent years, or in recent months at least, darkened. Recently he published a book entitled *CypherPunks: Freedom and the Future of the Internet*, published only a few weeks ago. Here is its opening passage. I quote: “The world is not sliding but galloping into a new transnational dystopia. This development has not been properly recognised outside of national security circles. The internet, our greatest tool of emancipation, has been transformed into the most dangerous facilitator of totalitarianism we have ever seen. The internet is a threat to human civilisation. We, [and he must mean WikiLeaks,] we have met the enemy. We know the new surveillance state from an insider’s perspective because we have had to protect our people, our finances and our sources from it. “

To resist this coming totalitarianism, for Assange, there is only one source of hope. Encryption. I quote: “It is easier to encrypt information than to decrypt it.” End of quote. Only through the encryption of information then can the capacity of the internet and I quote again: “ to merge global humanity into one giant grid of mass surveillance and mass control be resisted”. He says, in effect, it is time to take arms. I quote again: “our task is to secure self-determination where we can, to hold back the coming dystopia where we cannot, and if all else fails, to accelerate its self-destruction”. In other words, Assange has now in my view, returned to the place from where he began, with these two differences – Assange was once confident that in the struggle between the individual and the state, the internet would prove to be an anti-state tool of human emancipation. He is now, as far as I can see, more pessimistic, seeing the internet as a powerful weapon in the hands of the state.

Secondly, as a teenage member of the international subversives, for his hacking he was punished by a fine and a good behaviour bond. As the Editor in Chief of WikiLeaks, for his publication of hundreds of thousands of secret US diplomatic and military cables, he faces the possible prospect of half a lifetime in a US jail.

Thank you.

**Mary Kostakidis**

Thank you Robert for those insights into Julian Assange’s motivation and the philosophical basis of WikiLeaks. And I like forward to discussing those issues further.

And now for a legal perspective on their plight. Many of you will know Julian Burnside, JA and JB, Julian Burnside. He is a barrister specialising in commercial law, an author and a human rights advocate. He is known for his staunch opposition to the mandatory detention of asylum seekers and has acted pro bono in many human rights cases.

Burnside has been immortalised in a television series for his role in defending the Maritime Workers Union in what has become a legendary waterfront dispute in this country. Among his many accolades, he has been made an Officer of the Order of Australia, and has been voted a national living treasure. He is Julian Assange’s lawyer in Australia. Julian Burnside.

**Julian Burnside**

In the interests of accuracy, let me say I'm not giving you a legal perspective at all, sorry Mary. I should have chatted about it. But I do speak as a lawyer so I suppose it’s sort of a legal perspective. I was in Adelaide on the same stage with the senior Swedish judge that Mary referred to, Justice Stefan Lindskog, who is the President of the Supreme Court of Sweden. It was an interesting talk that he gave. It included the observation that it should never be a crime to reveal the crimes of the state and I endorse that sentiment completely.

Lindskog left us with a sort of fairly optimistic impression about how things might work out for Assange. And my purpose this evening is to persuade you not to be complacent about what lies ahead of Assange. I think in Australia in the last two years, public concern for Assange has diminished. That is to be regretted, and I'll explain why.

There are many circumstances, I think, which give real reason for concern for what faces him, and the start and finish of it, I think, is this. He embarrassed the American government, and the fact is, if you embarrass the largest country in the free world, then you are likely to suffer at their hands.

Now, prominent Americans have been calling for his assassination. They’ve been calling for him to be tried for espionage and those of you watching this online will not have seen the brief video that we saw before it. In the meantime, in fact almost simultaneously, Sweden has issued a warrant for his extradition to that country. Now, Sweden, and here’s an important point, Sweden has got, in its extradition treaty with the United States, Sweden has got what’s called a Witness Surrender Protocol. If the Swedish authorities have a person in custody who is desired as a witness in America, then the Americans merely have to ask for that person to be surrendered and they will be taken directly to America for that purpose. So the question that is at the foundation of the present difficulties facing Assange is this: is he justified in thinking that if he goes to Sweden, he will in fact end up in America? And I don’t think you need to have a great imagination to understand what lies in front of him if he ends up in America.

Now the official line from Sweden is, they want him to go to Sweden so they can ask him questions about what might have been a low level sexual assault. Now I don’t want to diminish sexual assault in any way. Please don’t understand it that way. But the allegation about which they want to question him, they certainly haven’t charged him. The allegation they want to question him about is, that during consensual intercourse, he continued having sex, knowing that the condom had broken. Okay, that’s what it is. That’s what it’s about in Sweden, according to them. And according to Sweden the whole extradition thing is so they can take him to Sweden and ask him questions about that. So is that true? That’s the big question.

Let me give you a little chronology to see if you can form some tentative views about what’s really going on.

5th of April 2010, he released the Collateral Murder video that Rob mentioned. 25th July 2010 he released the Afghan War Logs. 3rd of August 2010, Mark Teeson who was a speechwriter for George W Bush of recent memory, called WikiLeaks a ‘criminal enterprise’. Just days after the Afghan War Logs leaked. On the 14th of August 2010, and on the 25th of August 2010, Julian Assange was interviewed in Sweden by the Swedish Prosecutor, the Swedish Prosecutor determined that the second of the two allegations did not amount to a criminal offence, even if the facts were there, and subsequently said that he could leave Sweden and go to Britain. That was on the 15th of September. Then in November of 2010, Cablegate happened. He released 390,000 documents, he disclosed 66,000 civilian casualties in the war in Iraq that had been kept secret by the Americans, and he leaked, or rather published, 250,000 documents from US embassies.

Within days after Cablegate, the leak of all these documents, the onslaught of American hostility began, which people online didn’t see, but let me just remind you of one or two of the lowlights of that.

30th of November 2010, Bill Kristol, a sort of American Andrew Bolt, “why can’t we act forcibly against WikiLeaks? Why can’t we use our various assets to harass, snatch or neutralise Julian Assange and his collaborators, whoever they are? Why can’t we disrupt and destroy WikiLeaks in both cyberspace and physical space to the extent possible? Why can’t we warn others of the repercussions from assisting this criminal enterprise, hostile to the United States?” Same day, Kathleen McFarland, a Fox News national security analyst: “WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange isn’t some well-meaning anti-war protestor leaking documents in hopes of ending an unpopular war, he’s waging cyber war on the United States. He should be prosecuted as such”.

3rd of December 2010, Jeffrey Kuhner, columnist in the *Washington Times*: “Julian Assange poses a clear and present danger to American national security. The WikiLeaks founder is more than a reckless provocateur – he is aiding and abetting terrorists in their war against America.” That’s the great thing about a war against an abstract noun – you can draw anyone in, whenever you like. “The administration must take care of the problem, effectively and permanently”.

5th of December 2010, Newt Gingrich: “Julian Assange is engaged in warfare, information terrorism which leads to people getting killed is terrorism and Julian Assange is engaged in terrorism”. He suggested he should be treated as an enemy combatant and WikiLeaks should be closed down permanently and decisively.

A few days before this, US representative Peter King, Chair of the Homeland Security Committee, said: “Regarding labelling WikiLeaks as a terrorist organisation. The benefit of that is, we’d be able to seize their assets. We’d be able to stop anyone from helping them in any way”. Just remember the economic blockade that they have faced.

It’s no accident that in the wake of the embarrassing revelations, given great currency, don’t forget, by the Murdoch press, by the mainstream press right around the world. All of this same stuff may have attracted very much less attention it if hadn’t been re-published by the mainstream press. But I've not heard of any suggestions that the owners and publishers in the mainstream press should be treated the way Julian Assange is being treated.

In any event, on the 2nd of December 2010, during this fusillade of threats, the European arrest warrant was issued by the Swedish government, the Swedish government who’d said earlier in September that he could return to England. They then issued a European arrest warrant to have him extradited from Britain to Sweden. Two weeks after that Joe Biden called Assange a ‘cyber terrorist’.

Now, standing back from all of this, what do we see? We’ve got a person who is wanted by the Swedish authorities for questioning about the quality of apparent consent to a sexual encounter. The Swedish Prosecutor went all the way to London to get the extradition order, but didn’t consider the idea of asking the questions they wanted to ask when Assange and the Prosecutor were together in England. There is the Witness Request Protocol that I've mentioned, which makes it fairly simple for Sweden to bounce him over to America. If he is in fact extradited to Sweden he will remain in custody so that condition of the Witness Surrender Protocol is satisfied.

The US government in the meantime is threatening to prosecute him for terrorism offences or espionage or maybe they’ll just throw him in a cell for a couple of years the way they have with Bradley Manning, and keep him naked for his own protection as they did with Bradley Manning, restricting his access to lawyers as they did with Bradley Manning – presumably that’s for his own protection as well, and the Australian government in the meantime, is refusing to do anything constructive to help him, and refusing even to admit that they know anything about America’s plans for him. Furthermore they will not even admit whether or not they’ve asked America about its plans for Assange.

It seems to me, when you put all of those facts together, Assange has very good reason to think that this is not about a broken condom. The millions of dollars that have been spent chasing him, the level of hostility in the United States about him, the fact that he’s embarrassed them by revealing amongst other things, the Iraq Collateral Murder tape, all of those things suggest that there are larger issues at play. And the larger issue at play of course is that they want to destroy him, physically, economically so that he can no longer engage in embarrassing them publicly.

It seems to me that Australian citizens have got very good reason to think that Assange’s concerns are well-founded. When Assange went to the Ecuadorian Embassy, like a number of other people, I wondered about the strategy. The point of it of course is this. If once he was taken to Sweden, then bouncing him over to America was something that he could scarcely avoid. He would be held in custody. He would not be able to seek asylum in any embassy in Sweden. So he went to the Ecuadorian Embassy and he applied for asylum, and I think it is significant that having set out to them all of the facts which found his concern about the treatment he will receive, they considered it, and they considered it pretty carefully, they were doing it when I was over with him last June, and they eventually decided that he has a well-founded fear of being persecuted if he is sent to Sweden.

We should entertain that same concern on his behalf. What we have, right now in Australia, is another example of the Australian government abandoning one of its citizens because of the interests of our great and powerful ally, the United States of America. We abandoned David Hicks, we abandoned Mamdouh Habib, and now we are abandoning Julian Assange. We really should do better. If we sacrifice him, we will help the USA destroy WikiLeaks, and if the USA can destroy WikiLeaks, then it seems to me that the freedom of the press will only exist hereafter for those who are friends of the United States government. Thank you.

**Mary Kostakidis**

Julian, thank you for that perspective on Julian Assange’s plight, and why we should all be concerned about him.

As you know, the WikiLeaks Party is well on the way to being registered and it is going to run a Senate campaign for the 2013 Federal Election in Australia. The WikiLeaks Party’s Campaign Director, barrister and former political insider, Greg Barns, was unfortunately unable to be with us tonight, but our thanks to Sam Castro, who has stepped in to tell us about the party’s aspirations and policies and challenges.

Sam Castro is the co-founder of the WikiLeaks Australian Citizens’ Alliance. She is a WikiLeaks Party National Council Member and its Victorian spokesperson. Sam is also a Campaign Manager on the WikiLeaks Party Senate Campaign for the 2013 Federal Election. She is a mother of three and a longtime campaigner for social and environmental justice. She holds a Masters in Communication on Global Media and the War on Terror. Sam.

**Sam Costa**

Hello everybody. I'm sorry that Greg couldn’t be here tonight. He sends his apologies. So I want to talk tonight about the new WikiLeaks Party.

The WikiLeaks Party is the new force on the political block. From nothing to over one thousand members, and many more supporters, in a few short months. Our members and supporters come from across the political spectrum and some of them have never been involved in a political party before, including myself. And the reason that we have such broad support is because of the values that we uphold, because they are the bedrock of democracy. The party is built on the core WikiLeaks values – transparency, accountability, the free flow of information, and the protection for individuals when it comes to the exercise of power by the state. The campaign that we are running is deliberately targeted at the Senate. Why? Because the Senate is the check and balance for the executive, or that’s the theory anyway. The Senate is the house where MPs ought to scrutinise government policy and hold it up to the light for all to see. Too often though, the Senate is a deal-making house, where there are trade-offs so the government of the day can get its way.

WikiLeaks Party Senators would actually do their job differently. When it comes to policy, all information should be on the table. There should be no hiding behind national security or commercial in-confidence, so that policy discussions are hamstrung by lack of important information and materials. We, the people, have the right to know what our elected representatives do and say, and we have a right to participate in a meaningful way in policy discussions that ultimately impact us all.

The party’s Senate campaign in currently taking shape in three states – Victoria, where Julian Assange is proposing to run, New South Wales, and Western Australia. We as a party intend to stand at least two candidates in each of these states.

On the all-important issue of preferences, which I know many people have questions about, the party is yet to make decisions, which is fairly typical of an election campaign. However, what we can say is those political forces and individuals whose values align with the best of the WikiLeaks Party values, will naturally be higher up the list in terms of our preferences.

The campaign is obviously a little bit different to every other party’s campaign, because our lead candidate is in London. Greg Barns, our Campaign Director, is flying out tomorrow to go to London to be with Julian, to discuss the campaign and the schedule for the upcoming Federal Election. And there’ll be more information coming out soon around how we’re going to operate in presenting Julian to the Australian people.

What I'd like to deal with briefly tonight, is some of the critiques of the WikiLeaks Party already floating around in the media and among other political parties.

Firstly, and I'm sure you’ve all heard this one, Julian’s just running for the Senate to get out of jail for free. This is a ridiculous concept and certainly very time-consuming for many, many people that are working furiously behind the scenes. If this was Julian’s intent, he could simply run as an Independent, and not go to the bother of formulating people power and a whole party behind him.

Secondly, Julian’s legal and diplomatic situation relies in our view, on the Australian government doing what it has not done to date, which Julian also referred to – exercising some political and diplomatic capital with its colleagues in London, Stockholm, and Washington, to ensure that Julian Assange is able to return to Australia, and does not face the same sort of outrageous punishment that has been meted out to Bradley Manning.

Thirdly, the idea that the WikiLeaks Party is a one-issue party. If by this, people mean the overriding commitment to transparency and accountability is all we do, then yes, in some respects I guess you could say we are a one-issue party. But in terms of policies and positions on issues, I can assure you that this is not the case. Over June and July the party will be releasing a number of position statements on a range of issues as diverse as whistleblowers’ protection, to youth employment.

We have of course already announced our position on shield laws, which the mainstream media strangely ignored. And we made a commitment to introducing legislation which will properly protect journalists and their sources.

This Federal Election is one in which it seems the House of Representatives vote is kind of locked in. It looks like Coalition victory seems likely. But the Senate is far from decided, and there is in the community a hunger for fresh alternatives to existing players and business as usual.

Ultimately, it’s up to the people of Australia to decide whether we will continue to have a democracy that is overtly and covertly influenced by rich and powerful voices that appear to have the ear of successive governments in this country, or if we will choose a bold new direction and open up our political system to begin the journey of reclaiming our democracy for the people. It is a long journey and it won’t be easy, but we have to start somewhere.

Will we choose to return the Senate to a house of oversight and review and elect those who cannot be swayed, even by some of the most powerful voices on this planet? I hope we choose a future in which the powerful are held to account and the people’s voice and liberties are respected. We stand at a crossroads, both locally, nationally and globally, and it is a crossroad that will determine the future for all of us here tonight and for the generations to come, and to me, this is what makes the 2013 Federal Election exciting, not only for the WikiLeaks Party but for all of us here in this room. We have an opportunity to actually vote for an alternative. And whatever you do at the Federal Election on September 14th, as Julian referred to, we as the Australian citizenry, the compatriots of Julian Assange, have an obligation to protect, defend and support him, because whatever they do to Julian Assange, ultimately, they could do to all of you, and to me. So thank you for coming tonight.

**Mary Kostakidis**

Thank you, Sam. Well, we’re now going to move into a panel discussion and I would like to give you the opportunity a little later to also ask questions, so please be considering what you might like to ask, and if I could ask you when you do, to please bear in mind not to make long statements because that simply means that we won’t be able to have many questions.

I thought perhaps we should start with what we ended with, which is talk of the political party and you’ll be running candidates in ... well, a candidate, your absentee candidate in Victoria, and a candidate in New South Wales, and a candidate possibly in Western Australia. And your chances of getting someone up in the New South Wales and Victoria are quite good. What happens if Julian is elected to the Senate? Has the party formulated a course of action?

**Sam Costa**

Yes, we’ve had long discussions about the potentiality of all sorts of things that could occur and I'm sure as Rob and Julian would know, if Julian Assange is elected by the people of Victoria, undoubtedly somebody will challenge that experience and we will have to deal with that. So there are two possibilities I guess – one is that Julian is able to take the seat and somehow through the will of the people makes his way back here to take that seat, otherwise the party would nominate the running mate or another nominee to take up the seat.

**Mary Kostakidis**

And will the party be making it known who the other person that would be standing in for Julian is before the poll?

**Sam Costa**

Yes, we’ll be looking to have a running mate for Julian in Victoria, so we’re in the final sort of negotiations for that, so I can’t obviously say who. But we’d certainly be looking to have a running mate here. And if everything, you know, the Senate obviously doesn’t take up a seat until next year, so if everything is still in play, that would be the person who would ...

**Mary Kostakidis**

Just thinking of the people who are going to be a bit wary, or indeed some of them very wary of voting for the WikiLeaks Party, because they believe that there are things are legitimately kept confidential at the time they’re happening. In your talk you talked about the importance of always having everything out on the table. Do you not consider that there are times when there are private conversations about public matters that should be conducted in a way that they are ... that bears in mind that they will be made public one day, but that it’s legitimate for them to be conducted privately at the time.

**Sam Costa**

I certainly do, and I think everybody in the WikiLeaks Party both within the National Council and the membership would understand that there are some things that are private conversations, that are necessity to move forward particular outcomes for policy. However when we withhold large chunks of information and negotiations from the public, under the guise of, you know, national security or parliamentary privilege, or whatever we put to it, I think that we do a disservice to the people of the country and to democracy and you know, we’re all quite capable of making up our own minds, so you know, there is the accountability and the transparency for those that are in positions of power, and that are dealing with issues that are in the public interest, and then there is privacy for the individual and those two things are not mutually exclusive.

**Mary Kostakidis**

What’s your view Robert, because you obviously have a very high opinion of Julian Assange. Do you have confidence that he would behave appropriately and in the best interests of the Australian people?

**Robert Manne**

Oh, yeah, I mean, I don’t know whether there is one way of acting in the best interests of the Australian people. I actually have a high regard for him. I think he’s a person of high intelligence and I think he’s a person of extraordinary courage. I don’t actually agree with many of the things that he ... I outlined his views but I don’t agree with all of them. For example, I think that his initial position, which is that leaks will expose corruption, and indeed in the end, corrupt corporations and corrupt governments will be exposed in a kind of struggle against those corporations and governments that aren’t corrupt, if leaks occur, because as it were, good governments and good corporations will not be threatened by leaks, and bad ones will. I think that’s a very plausible view. I think when it comes to the other way of looking at it, which is should there be total transparency in public life, I have found him sometimes to be rather ... his thoughts not properly worked out. I mean, the extreme example for me was once he was asked whether he thinks if the secrets of D-Day were known to someone, they should have been leaked, and made transparent before the Americans and the English arrived on Europe, he said probably, he thought probably they should, or at least he was uncertain, whereas I'm absolutely certain that there are things that should be kept secret. So I actually am very sympathetic to his view of leaks as a way of exposing the corrupt. I'm not convinced that his ideas to do with total transparency, or not only not convinced, I don’t believe in total transparency and never have. But I do think that he’s someone of highest intelligence, of great integrity, who has come under ... and courage ... and I think he has come under a pressure that almost none of us could imagine, and he’s handled that with real grace. And so, if he were to take his place in the Senate, which I doubt he will, but if he were, I think he would be an incredible addition to Australian public life. I wouldn’t have to agree with lots of things he argued, but he would be amongst the parliamentarians, one of the truly outstanding figures if he got there.

**Julian Burnside**

Can I just chime in on that? This thing about transparency. I agree with you, I don’t think the D-Day secrets should be revealed in advance and I dare say that on further reflection, that would be his view. But you know, one of the things that was first thrown after him, after the leaks in 2010, was that people would be put at risk. Well, three years later, there’s no suggestion of anyone having been harmed as a result of what he leaked, and it was not an indiscriminate leak, so I think you can fairly say that his assessment of what can be safely leaked is fairly good. Secondly, it’s also the case that the mainstream media re-published a lot of that stuff, gave it much greater currency than it would otherwise done, and no-one is criticising them for that. So you know, this whole idea of transparency being taken too far, has to be assessed against the response of the mainstream media and the facts as we know them, now the dust has settled. I think the big lesson out of this, apart from corruption, is that as I said, he has embarrassed the American government, and frankly I think that the best answer to that is, if governments don’t want to be embarrassed, they should stop behaving embarrassingly.

**Sam Costa**

Or they should stop committing war crimes and human rights abuses.

**Mary Kostakidis**

So the real problem is not necessarily that conversations are held privately at the time when they need to be held privately, but that they don’t ... that governments don’t want us to know, long after the reason for the confidentiality has passed, which leads us to wonder why, if they’re making decisions in our name. Robert, you said that you believed that he is courageous and ethical as an individual and he’s a moral revolutionary. And some people have a very, very different view. He’s been called a narcissist and there is a view among some young women particularly, a belief that he is a rapist. So how do you respond to that, because that is damaging to his plight, because it’s depriving him of extensive support in the community, and it’s also going to be damaging electorally for the party.

**Robert Manne**

Well, I mean, I actually saw last night the premier of the new film by an important leading documentary maker, Alex Gibney, and in the end it puts the case against Julian Assange as Julian believes about it, and there the sexual questions were raised. And Julian Burnside summarised I think completely accurately what the worst that could be said, which was, when a condom broke, he continued with sex and so on. And it seems to me that that’s not the kind of thing on which a person’s reputation should be destroyed at all, even if the behaviour wasn’t ideal or whatever. As to the narcissism, it seems to me extraordinary that such emphasis, even in Alex Gibney’s film, is based on criticisms of a character, when I think his character has shown to be fine. I don’t know him at all, but in observing him and seeing how he’s behaved. And I also think the kinds of things he stands for, which is to do with trying to make the world a better place, and to do so through moral action rather than violence, are things that are much more important than whether or not one thinks that he’s got a big head, or whatever. I think that he’s one of those ... I actually got interested in him and didn’t know when I started researching, I didn’t know what I thought about how I'd in the end come to a judgment about him, but I was more and more impressed, and particularly impressed by his idealism. And I actually think young people are particularly attracted to him, because they sense that he knows that there are many things deeply wrong with the world we’re in and they see in him someone who genuinely has made a difference to things, which I think many young people know that that needs to be done.

So I came away ... I started researching, uncertain as to what I would think, and as I said, dubious about the idea of absolute transparency, as I still am, but I came away with a very strong view of him as a very fine human being. And an interesting, imaginative, highly intelligent human being.

**Julian Burnside**

Can I add something to that? I agree with Rob’s assessment, and in fact I was interested to meet him in London, and I add thought maybe he was a narcissist until I met him, and having spent a couple of days with him I thought, that’s all a bit overblown. And so you start to wonder, why is it that this business about narcissism and the business about rape is doing the rounds? And the answer I think is fairly easy. Governments everywhere know that if you want to destroy someone, first of all you have to diminish them. You have to deprive them of the possibility of public support. And the best way of doing that is to put tags on them which will be unpopular. And that’s exactly what’s happening at the moment. To say he’s facing rape charges is so far from the truth as to be ludicrous. And to say he’s a narcissist seems to me, even if it were true, which I think it isn’t, even if it were true, what the hell? Who cares? I mean, he’s got a lot to be proud of actually. But I don’t think he’s a narcissist.

**Sam Costa**

And I think it’s one of those techniques that have been seen through history to be used over and over again, where you invoke something that is so controversial, such as the word rape, which as Julian has just pointed out, is incredibly inaccurate. But it has this dual effect of dividing the gender support and you know, the men can’t talk about it, the women can’t talk about it because you’re a rape apologist – it creates this sort of circular dialogue that prevents people for speaking out for him because they’re too scared to be criticised and I think young women in this country are hopefully smart enough to know that it’s okay to not support every claim of sexual misconduct, not everything is founded, you know, and in some ways these women I think, are being manipulated by the state and manipulated by the media and the media has done a very good job at doing what Julian was just talking about, which is, you know, creating inaccuracy to diminish him.

**Julian Burnside**

Just picking up on what you just said, it’s also diverting the debate, into the merits of the allegations, rather than the problem of his circumstances.

**Mary Kostakidis**

Well, let’s look at his circumstances. Do you think Julian, that the changes that have occurred recently, the new prosecutor, the new Swedish prosecutor, one of the women sacking her lawyer, do you see that as indicating that a change in strategy by Sweden?

**Julian Burnside**

Possibly. There has to be a circuit breaker of some sort. Stefan Lindskog suggested that perhaps the prosecutor will eventually go across the England and ask him questions at the embassy. I think that might be the right circuit breaker. Of course, how long it takes for this to happen depends very substantially on whether Australia decides to get interested in the fate of one of its citizens. So far we seem to be totally unconcerned about him. In fact it’s interesting that the very day that Bob Carr said last year, Bob Carr said, as far as he was concerned, the Americans have no interest in Julian Assange at all. The very same day, the Chair of the House Security Committee called for him to be charged with terrorism. Maybe Bob Carr needs to watch a bit of TV.

**Sam Costa**

Bob Carr obviously hasn’t seen the documents that have been released under Freedom of Information ... Well, I was going to say that a whole narcissistic comment could apply to a whole heap of people in public life, couldn’t it?

**Mary Kostakidis**

But realistically, an Australian government of either persuasion, is unlikely to stand up for one of its citizens against the United States.

**Julian Burnside**

But they should. Let me tell you, I'm sorry, I know you were trying to get Rob back into ...

**Mary Kostakidis**

No ...

**Julian Burnside**

He went more than fifteen minutes. I'm building up. What is not well understood, but was made clear in the trial of Lord Haw-Haw immediately after the Second World War was this, that treason is the counterpart of the state’s obligation to protect its citizens. The state owes us a duty of protection, and in exchange, we owe it a duty of loyalty. Now, any holder of an Australian passport is obliged to be loyal to Australia, but Australia is obliged to protect any holder of an Australian passport. And they are singularly hopeless at that, when the Americans have different views about the thing.

**Robert Manne**

It’s not at all clear that if the Prime Minister of Australia or Foreign Minister, were to say that we’re very deeply disturbed at the story of the Grand Jury indictment and we don’t understand under what law he could possibly be charged in the United States and so on. It’s not clear that the United States would care and it would change their course of action, but I do think given that it’s very unclear what law he’s meant to have broken, and if he’s broken a law, why has not the Editor of the *New York Times* broken the law and so on. It seems to me that it’s a particularly sad and humiliating matter that the Australian government and the Australian Foreign Minister have not even asked questions about what’s happened to an Australian citizen. And it was terrible ... I'm not at all hostile to Julia Gillard, but it was a terrible moment in the life of her Prime Ministership when she accused him of being a law-breaker and then had to retract quickly. So I don’t know what effect Australian intervention would have, but if it was a self-respecting government, it would ask the question, what in the hell is going on? We would want to know whether there has been a Grand Jury, we want to know under what law you think he might have committed a crime. And those questions have not even been asked, let alone protests put.

**Sam Costa**

Can I just say on that point, I'm not sure that Julia Gillard ever did retract that statement. In fact, I'm pretty sure the Senate passed a motion calling on her to retract those statements.

**Robert Manne**

It was her Attorney General that sort of did but ...

**Sam Costa**

Yeah, but she still hasn’t fulfilled that Senate motion that was passed last year, so it’s quite extraordinary. I think that it requires the Australian people to understand that if we don’t stand up and we don’t make noise about this, then next time somebody dissents against America, or even the Australian government, we could find ourselves in very serious trouble, and it constantly astounds me that people aren’t just jumping up and down about this.

**Mary Kostakidis**

That was my next question. Why aren’t we jumping up and down about it? Why do you think there is ... I mean, there are some people who are engaged with the issues and recognise them in all their seriousness, and the implications of the issues. But in general, we seem to be quite happy to sit back and have mainstream politicians give us tax handouts, make all the important foreign affairs decisions, you know, without really any consultation, there’s no consultation about taking the nation to war for example. It’s a unilateral decision. So we’re used to that kind of relationship with our politicians. So it’s a little bit condescending but we’re happy to be in that role. And not terribly concerned about human rights and the philosophical issues and implications of what is happening to an individual, and what that represents, and we saw it, as you mentioned, in the case of David Hicks and we’re seeing it again. What can be done to engage the community more broadly?

**Robert Manne**

Well, I didn’t ... I wouldn’t have thought twenty years ago that it would be possible for Australia to support a war on the basis of false ... you know, phony intelligence. And for there to be no real public outrage at the government that did that. I think there has been over the last twenty years a shallowing of public involvement and I think a lot of people feel either only concerned about private matters and family and their wellbeing, or at least they feel that their voices mean nothing in regard to government actions. And I think you see with Julian Assange, I think with the Habib case you saw the same, a strange sense of lethargy or indifference, or powerlessness in the citizenry. It would take forever to get to the bottom of that but I do think that that is a fact of life, that somehow people’s concerns with economic wellbeing is swamping a really active citizenry. I mean, I'm old enough to remember the attitude to the Vietnam war and compare it to the Iraq war and it is quite a change, I think, in the liveliness of the citizenry.

**Julian Burnside**

I think part of the problem is that the discussion about him has been deflected by the ... you know, by focusing attention on the sexual allegation and blowing that up out of proportion and diminishing him as a person by saying he’s a narcissist and so on. So all of that has deflected attention from him. In addition I hate to say it, but I think the Australian public, by and large, have got a fairly short attention span. You know, a new footy season comes around, and all of a sudden you’ve forgotten what was going on before. But let’s not forget, let’s not forget, the power that we can have if we decide to make a fuss. David Hicks was largely ignored for five years. His father did a terrific job maintaining it, bubbling along, it wasn’t going anywhere. But then, what? Six months before the 2007 election, *The Age* started running a campaign, the public picked up on it again. I suspect a lot of people thought, oh well, you know, he’s probably a ratbag but he’s done his five years and that’s about what he’s worth, so bring him home. And all of a sudden the pressure was on Howard and Howard acted. Howard got him out of Guantanamo Bay, albeit on rather shabby terms, but got him out of Guantanamo Bay, having sat on his hands for five years. It seems to me that the government might respond if they realise that the public at large are actually concerned about the fact that the government has abandoned yet another one of its citizens. We have to get active.

**Mary Kostakidis**

Do you think the WikiLeaks Party will help bring that about? That activism in the community focusing on issues of accountability and transparency and human rights and social justice. How much faith do you have that there is that capacity to engage the Australian public and the WikiLeaks Party is the party to do it, because of their values and principles?

**Robert Manne**

The thing that isn’t discussed is that our newspapers are dominated by Rupert Murdoch and I think it’s very hard to get a progressive public discourse on any issue at the moment. The fact is that about ten or twelve per cent of professionals living in the inner city in particular, vote for the Greens Party and that the Murdoch press does nothing but rubbish that party. If WikiLeaks looks like becoming a serious contender, I imagine that will happen as well. To be honest, that’s one of the reasons I wanted to hold the forum today, because I think for progressive or radical politics, there is now a declining public space. It happens on the internet, and it happens within small groups, but I do think ... I don’t think that it’s likely that we’re going to have a decent discussion about the principles that the WikiLeaks Party bring forward, as we haven’t had over the various things that the Greens Party has done over the past few years. So I think that’s the fight ... the fight has to be to try and re-open the public space.

**Julian Burnside**

I was just going to add, I don’t think you have to be progressive and radical to be concerned about the fact that this country is ignoring Assange’s problems. You’re not radical. You are progressive. I'm not radical, I'm quite conservative. I'm not as progressive as you are, but I think we need to be concerned because exactly as you said, you know, if they can do it to him, who’s got a much more powerful voice than any of us, if they can do it to him, they can do it to any one of us.

**Mary Kostakidis**

And the other thing a party needs of course, is money. Now, WikiLeaks itself is cash-strapped. How are you going to make the party work?

**Sam Costa**

Well, it’s interesting at the moment. I just want to touch back, sorry, my brain is going back to the conversation we’ve just had. You know, ten years since the Iraq war, and I'm sure some of you are maybe too young to have been out on the streets ten years ago, and some of you definitely would have been. Hundreds of thousands of Australians came out and we marched, and we protested, and we wrote letters and we did everything we could across this country to let the government know we did not want to participate in this war. And the government ignored us, and basically said, we know best. And I think that that deflated the citizenry in a way that I have not seen, and I've been involved in campaigning and activism for twenty years and I've never seen so many people deflated as they were over that and the refugee issues, that have been ongoing in that timeframe as well. So just in terms of active citizenry and how you mobilise discourse, there are two ways to do it, and that is to either bypass the mainstream media and go and find out for yourself, and engage with other people, and not rely on the Murdoch newspapers to deliver you information and to critically think about what’s going on. And I think the revelation for many people was actually how embedded we are with US foreign policy and the militarisation of this country that is going on that seems to just be sneaking in the back door and nobody’s talking about it. So I think that active citizenry is key to any social justice platform, to any independence of our democracy.

And the same goes for the party in terms of fundraising. We don’t have massive organisations backing us. We obviously have a lead candidate who has an organisation that is also reliant on the people and perhaps that’s the future of newspapers, that they will be not for profit and they will be funded by the people. But for our party, many of the people that have already been working for months behind the scenes are volunteering their time, and they’re all ages. They’re not one particular ... they’re not just uni students that have free time. There are people like me, there are people older than me, there are people younger than me, and so far we’re doing okay, in terms of getting everything into place, but it’s up to the people to decide where they want to put their money and how they want to support political development in this country.

**Julian Burnside**

And I guess they are mostly people who recognise the truth in the adage, that a country of sheep will soon have a government of wolves.

**Mary Kostakidis**

We’re running out of time and I do want to take a couple of questions from the floor. So yes ...

**Questioner**

Thank you very much to La Trobe and the guests for the presentation tonight. Look, just on the video at the start, I think Julia Gillard might well call the thing just a bit of theatrical hyperbole. I mean, how much more ridiculous could it be with Joe Biden frothing at the mouth? There are also lots of times in all of our lives when a leak is the most wonderful thing we can imagine. And I commend that to you. The only Swedish person that I've had a chance to talk to about Assange’s case was Stieg Larsson’s widow, Eva Gabrielsson. I asked Eva, given her knowledge of the Swedish legal system, whether she felt that Julian was justified in resisting extradition, and she said, no way. He should go back, we’re a civilised country. He should go back and face the music. Now I'd be interested in your comments about that. You’ve spoken with some Swedish judicial people. I don’t have great faith in a lot of legal people, but I had some degree of faith in Eva Gabrielsson, so I'd be interested in your comments about that.

**Julian Burnside**

For the reasons I tried to articulate earlier, I think it is almost inevitable that if he is sent to Sweden, he will end up in America, sooner rather than later.

**Questioner**

... the Brits could send him there now.

**Julian Burnside**

No they can’t because he’s in Ecuador. That’s the point. He’s in the Ecuadorian Embassy, so that the English can’t get their hands on him.

**Questioner**

Some advice for Julian. Next time you see Bob Carr or any politician, keep a copy of the video on your mobile phone and show it to them and report back by the media what they say. And Robert Manne, I have a question. What do you think Julian has contributed to the change in the discourse and how the change may evolve in the future?

**Robert Manne**

I think the big change is establishing through cryptography the capacity for leaks from major institutions, so not ... I don’t think he’s changed the discourse so much as created a mechanism whereby corrupt behaviour can be located. What went wrong with the Bradley Manning question was that Bradley Manning didn’t keep it to himself. Julian Assange and WikiLeaks has done everything in its power to allow whistleblowing to be anonymous. And I think if that happened, I think that there is a chance of the improvement of both corporate and government behaviour, if there is a fear of ... so that would be, to say one thing, I think that’s the most important political change that might take place as a result of WikiLeaks. And I think it is beginning to take place in other institutions as well, even *The New Yorker* is using a dropbox in the last few days to get people to tell their stories.

**Mary Kostakidis**

Thank you. The gentleman up the back.

**Questioner**

Yeah, it seems to me an immediate question for the WikiLeaks Party would be the claims made probably most prominently by Daniel Berg that WikiLeaks as an organisation has not done a very good job as being transparent as its ideals are. What does the WikiLeaks Party have to say regarding that potential claim. It seems like that’s an immediate question. You listed a bunch of questions that would come at you. That seems to me an immediate one that you’d need to deal with.

**Julian Burnside**

Do you know, I'm going to jump in and say, Sam needs to answer that question, but I'd just observe that if I was under attack the way WikiLeaks is under attack, I probably wouldn’t be revealing myself too much either.

**Sam Costa**

And I'm sorry. Are you referring to the person that used to work for them and took materials and interfered with systems.

**Questioner**

No, no. Daniel Berg. Domschiet-Berg.

**Sam Costa**

Okay. We’re talking about the same person, yeah. So the WikiLeaks organisation has good reason to protect itself because of the pursuit of Julian Assange and what is going on. The WikiLeaks Party is an Australian party. It’s participating in the Australian landscape and we don’t have the same concerns on that level, so those kinds of issues are not going to be an issue for us.

**Mary Kostakidis**

I think you’d be surprised ...  
**Robert Manne**

I think that the idea of WikiLeaks is leaks from powerful corporations and powerful states. I don’t’ believe ... I think Julian Assange hasn’t been entirely clear about this but I don’t think it’s a philosophy of total transparency particularly. He’s never said private life should be transparent. But I also think that if the American state is out to get you, as seen by the video that began this, the idea that Julian Assange can ask from people around him, trust, confidence and non-transparency, in the battle he’s fighting against the most powerful state in the history of the world, I think he has every right to demand trust, loyalty and non-transparency in that battle. And he may need to work out the ideas a bit more clearly, but he wants corrupt, large, powerful institutions to be vulnerable because of inside leaking. And transparency itself should not apply either to private life or to individuals fighting battles against powerful corporations or states, in my view.

**Sam Costa**

Julian made that quite clear. It’s transparency for the powerful and privacy for the individual.

**Mary Kostakidis**

Despite all the battles the organisation is fighting, they are in the process of producing their first annual report, I understand, so you’ll have to try and get hold of a copy. Another question there ...

**Julian Burnside**

It should also be pointed out that Mr Domschiet-Berg is hardly an independent observer in the situation. He does have some bones to pick with the WikiLeaks organisation, so I don’t think you can take that terribly seriously.

**Questioner**

I was just wondering how you think his situation is likely to be resolved? Mr Burnside.

**Julian Burnside**

I wish I could answer that but I suspect that the likely resolution will be the Prosecutor goes to the Ecuadorian Embassy behind Harrods and speaks to him there. And I think that will end it all. Then he’ll have other battles to fight, but not nearly as serious as the one he’s trying to avoid at the moment.

**Mary Kostakidis**

I'm sorry. We have run out of time. So I'm going to have to wind it up and thank you all for coming, and perhaps the message we need to take away from tonight, certainly the message I feel taking on tonight, is this is an organisation that’s gone into battle for us, to empower us, and we are also being called upon to go into battle to defend it, and its founder. Thanks for joining us.