

Are we really 'Fair Go?'

'Fair go.' It is a phrase synonymous with quondam Australia. We embraced this phrase when first introduced in the nineteenth century, even reflecting it in the national anthem. It used to be a regular theme in conversations, but now we seldom mention it, those overseas questioning if it was fabricated. Two centuries later, does the 'fair go' still exist, or was it all a fairytale made to make politics look prudent?

Although being absent in regular discussion, 'fair go' is still brought up in political speeches and debates, reflecting the quixotic view of the government. Julia Gillard, in 2011, stated that "we are the people who hold onto mateship and the fair go."¹ Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull stated that "We have...a culture of fair go."² Although politicians may support that Australia is a fair country, this has led to much controversy among the citizens. 'The truth is that the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer.'³ What matters to me is we close this gap. Kevin Rudd even acknowledges the absence of the fair go in Australians with his quote " I was elected by the Australian people to bring back a fair go for all Australians" ⁴

A 'fair go' means that the country has an egalitarian perspective, that everyone has an equitable chance at opportunities and a comfortable life. However, the reality is no revelation. This year, we see 1 in 6 children living in poverty; that's 761,000 living off under 50-60% of the median Australian income, an approximate \$304-489/week. We can use the Gini Coefficient to determine the income inequality of Australia. The 'fair go' nation has a Gini Coefficient of 0.336 (0 being perfect equality out of 1).⁵ This places us 104th on the globe. Isn't it wrong to advertise us as 'fair go' when our equality is inferior to that of half of the world.

¹ Julia Gilard, December 2011, "COMMENT: In Australia, Land Of The 'Fair Go', Not Everyone Gets An Equal Slice Of The Pie". 2023. *N/TV*.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/comment-in-australia-land-of-the-fair-go-not-everyone-gets-a-n-equal-slice-of-the-pie/nlt6ba6ut>.

² Malcolm Turnbull, University, La. 2023. "The Idea Of 'Fair Go' Can Vary". *Latrobe.Edu.Au*.

<https://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles/2017/opinion/the-idea-of-fair-go-can-vary#:~:text=Given%20the%20term%20is>

³ Phil Peak, Dubbo "No Longer The Lucky Country: Inequality Has Made A 'Fair Go' Impossible". 2023. *Smh.Com.Au*.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/nsw/no-longer-the-lucky-country-inequality-has-made-a-fair-go-impossible-20230414-p5d0m4.html>.

⁴ "Kevin Rudd Quote: "I Was Elected By The Australian People To Bring Back A Fair Go For All Australians. I Have Given My Absolute Best To Do ..."". 2023. *Quotefancy.Com*.

<https://quotefancy.com/quote/1394203/Kevin-Rudd-I-was-elected-by-the-Australian-people-to-bring-back-a-fair-go-for-all#:~:text=%E2%80%9C%20was%20elected%20by%20the%20Australian%20people%20to,absolute%20best%20to%20do%20that.%E2%80%9D%20%E2%80%94%20Kevin%20Rudd>.

⁵ "Extent Of Inequality And Disadvantage In Australia". 2023. *Aph.Gov.Au*.

https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Pa

The issue that resides in Australia's system is that your opportunities are not defined by you, but rather the conditions you are born in. Based on the Principles on Equality, created by experts in the equal rights trust, they state that all human beings deserve equality (to be equal in dignity, opportunities and services; to also receive appropriate treatment).⁶ Those born with an Indigenous background, disabilities, or with a sole parent, are at extremely high chances of poverty. Women are also disadvantaged when it comes to receiving a high income and promotions to positions of power. A 'fair go' should mean that no specific community is more likely to live in poverty than another.

Furthermore, a 'fair go' would mean that two people, who put in the same amount of effort, would get to the same place. Donald Horne, the author of 'The Lucky country' states that a 'fair go' means to implement equality, and to do so by making sure "triers" should not suffer because of their inadequacies',⁷ A diary from Tristan Williams, who had limitations from his family background (having gone through tough times and been supported by The Smith Family), stated that "[he] believed...That my good grades, hard work and exceptional achievements would somehow lead me to a comfortable life." This is a prime example of a 'trier' who puts in the same amount of effort, if not more, and receives less than a citizen that is not disadvantaged. After his hard work, he still lives uneasily, concluding that "The rich are getting exemptions and concessions while the poor are being vilified and overworked."⁸ This reflects the fact that Australia is not egalitarian and is the opposite of what a true 'fair go' country should look like.

The idea of Australia being a Meritocracy is ideal, but false. We see everyday the advantages which are given to those with wealthy family backgrounds compared to those with restraints. What matters to me is that the quality of education, resources and opportunities given should be fair for everyone. That Australians, despite their background, should be placed on an even playing field, impartial to: race, gender, religion and disabilities. What matters to me is equality. What matters is that everyone should have a 'fair go'.

⁶ Declaration of principles on equality, 2023. *Equalrightstrust.Org*.
<https://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocume>

⁷ Horne, Donald. 1964. *The Lucky Country: Australia in the Sixties*. Ringwood: Penguin

⁸ "Growing Up, I Heard About Australia's Fictitious Fair Go. Now I Know It's Not The Case | Tristan Williams". 2021. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/jan/14/growing-up-i-heard-about-australias-fictitious-fair-go-now-i-know-its-not-the-case>.