

# **Exploring the Genealogy of 'Governance' within Australian Political Discourse**

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The ascendancy of a neo-liberal economic paradigm and its associated politics wrought significant changes to Australian political culture. Despite various challenges to these changes (eg Carroll & Manne 1992; Considine & Painter 1997; Frankel 1992; Pusey 1991; Walter 1996), the language of neo-liberalism appears entrenched within both political and everyday discourse. A key term within the now dominant language of political discourse is that of 'governance'. In many instances, at least within the more general language of everyday discourse, 'governance' is often used as a synonym for 'government', and in some discussions in political science appears to be becoming preferred over the latter (eg Weller 2000, 4). In any society the language of political discourse is the vehicle enabling political actors to express their intentions, to justify their actions, and to mobilise and sustain public support; it is at one and the same time "a social force and ... a kind of political behaviour" (Corcoran 1979, xi). It creates and sustains the meanings of particular ideas that in turn shape our perceptions of political rule and in consequence, political behaviour and institutions. How particular terms come to dominate, or at least occupy a central place within, that language is therefore a vital political issue. While it is certainly true that language is dynamic and that the use and meanings of words shift over time, it is equally true that some terms have an exceptionally high degree of political currency, even if their meanings are also contested and hence never quite settled. Abstruse terms may well originate with a specialist meaning derived from specific technical contexts qualified by particular rules and caveats, but nevertheless they end up becoming widely used in contexts far removed from their point of origin. Such is the case with the term 'governance'.

Until the 1980s, 'governance' did not enjoy widespread currency, either in Australia or elsewhere. However, by the early 1990s it was deemed to have "arrived" (Hill & Hupe 2002, 13). Its use is now so widespread within Australian politics that it occasions no critical comment whatsoever. From political science to sociology to business studies the term 'governance' is firmly entrenched. A recent collection of essays (Davis & Keating 2000) discussing the future of governance eschewed debating the meaning and significance of the concept to focus on the operational dimensions of governance, "the capacity for governance" as Weller (2000, 4) described it. This is in keeping with the tenor of discussions of 'governance' in the international literature where the emphasis is predominantly on its uses. The why of 'governance' is often addressed only cursorily, if at all.

This paper is a work-in-progress report on a research project<sup>1</sup> that aims to trace the genealogy of 'governance', ie its rise and incorporation within contemporary political discourse in Australia. Eventually the research project aims to explain when and why politicians, policy-makers, administrators, journalists and others in Australia took up this term. This will lay the foundations to explore in other papers the implications that this shift in the language of political discourse might have for Australian democracy. Exploring these implications is not the focus of this paper. For present purposes, it suffices to note that what follows is guided by view that the growing preference to substitute 'governance' for 'government', whether as synonym or

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<sup>1</sup> This research was made possible by funds provided jointly by the University of Newcastle's University Project Grant Scheme and the Faculty of Business and Law. Dr Tod Moore provided much appreciated research assistance that enabled the project to proceed more rapidly than would otherwise have been the case.

something else again, indicates something more serious than mere terminological fashion. The guiding hypothesis for the research project as a whole is that this shift in terminology represents a significant loosening (if not a complete breaking open) of Australian democracy's Westminster clasp. That is, beneath the shift in terminology is there a concomitant shift in political understanding of (and perhaps commitment to) contemporary Australian democracy and the institutions, practices and behaviours that constitute it?

The paper is structured as follows. The first section outlines the occurrences of 'governance' within the journal literature of contemporary Australian political discourse. In Section II, some discussion is offered concerning the early occurrences of 'governance' within this political science literature in Australia between 1987 and 1992. This provides the counterpoint for a brief exploration in Section III of the deployment of 'governance' in the international literature. It will be seen that it tends to cluster in several broad fields: public administration, international development (both political and economic), and international relations. This section also notes briefly some of the explanations put forward to explain why there has been this shift towards using 'governance' as a key conceptual term. Section IV concludes the paper.

## I

As a term within scholarly discourse 'governance' is neither new nor unusual. It has a venerable history dating back to at least the fourteenth century (De Alcántara 1998, 105; Edwards 2002; Weller 2000). In this respect an appeal to the *Oxford English Dictionary* is useful as it not only attests this longevity, it provides some guidance as to how the term has been understood during this time. There are four core of meanings associated with 'governance':

- (1) "the action or manner of governing" that might involve:
  - "controlling, directing, or regulating influence; control, sway, mastery" , or
  - being under "a person's governance" in the sense of being subject to that person's control, or
  - "the state of being governed; good order".
- (2) "the office, or function, or power of governing; authority or permission to govern; the command" over others.
- (3) "the manner in which something is governed or regulated; the method of management, system of regulations"
- (4) "conduct of life or business, mode of living; behaviour, demeanour" that might also involve "discreet or virtuous behaviour; wise self-command". (OED VI, 1989, 710).

In varying degrees, each of these meanings finds expression in the contemporary political science literature, though as will be demonstrated, the third core sense (ie "the manner in which something is governed or regulated" or managed) appears to be exercising a strong degree of conceptual hegemony. Whichever of these meanings one considers, it is reasonably clear that neither 'governance' nor 'government' are taken as synonymous, even if there might be some fuzziness of meaning at the margins.

Despite its long history, the use of 'governance' within the political science literature in Australia has been comparatively rare. It appears to be a development of the late twentieth century as is confirmed by the following search of the literature. This is not to deny that further research might confound this claim. It is merely to state a claim that thus far can be supported by the available evidence.

To identify when and where the term 'governance' emerges to prominence within Australian political discourse, two electronic databases were used – the Australian Public Affairs Full Text (APAFT) and the Factiva newspaper and magazine databases. Factiva provided the means to identify the use of 'governance' within less specialised forms of discourse. Using both databases enhanced the possibility of identifying the various crossover points between the two modes of discourse, the possible moments when 'governance' shifts from the scholarly to the popular. While it is reasonable to suggest that APAFT covers the more specialised discourse of scholarship and Factiva the less specialised discourse of the popular media the separation between the two is not rigid. For example there were numerous instances within APAFT of newspaper and magazine citations of 'governance'. Both databases were searched to identify any article or book review that had used 'governance' in its title, or in its abstract, or within its text. As far as can be determined from these electronic searches, there were no occurrences of the word 'governance' in political science type journals before 1987.<sup>2</sup>

Once the broad APAFT results for the period 1987-2003 were collated, two journals, the *Australian Journal of Political Science* and the *Australian Journal of Public Administration* were searched manually for the period 1987-1992 in case there were any instances that might have been missed by the electronic search.

These results were then added to the first set of results and collated as per Table 1 and Figure 1. The Factiva results are presented in Table 2 and Figure 2.

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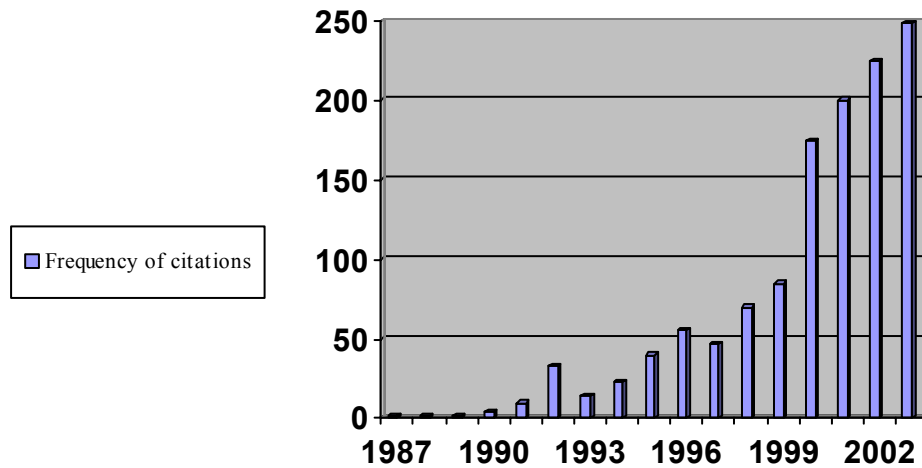
<sup>2</sup> This does not mean that a systematic manual search of the hard copies prior to 1987 will not turn up occasional uses of the word. What is being asserted is that these occurrences are likely to be so infrequent as to not affect the above claims.

**Table 1: APAFT Citation Frequency of 'Governance' 1987-2003**

Year	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Citation Frequency	3	2	2	4	10	33	14	23	40
Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	
Citation Frequency	56	47	70	85	174	200	224	248	

(Source: APAFT including APAIS using Informit)

**Figure 1: Citation Frequency of 'Governance' 1987-2003**



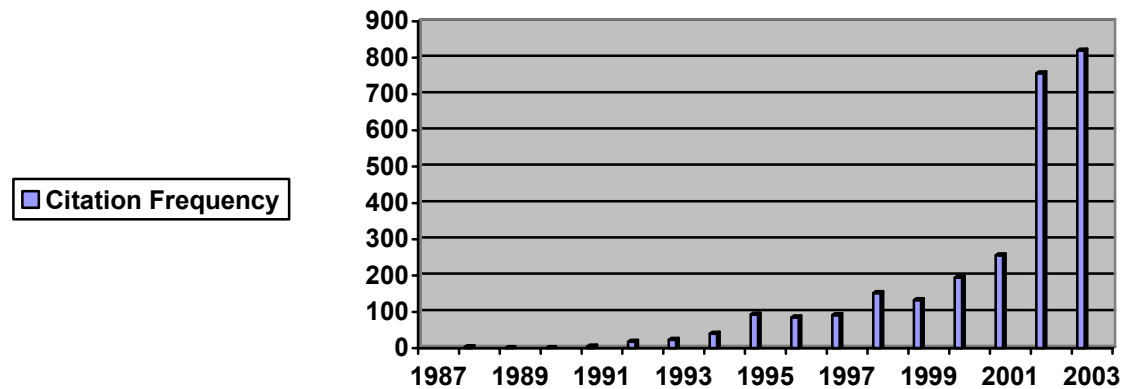
(Source: APAFT + including APAIS using Informit)

**Table2: Factiva Citation Frequency of 'Governance' 1987-2003**

Year	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Citation Frequency	0	3	0	0	4	18	23	40	93
Year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	
Citation Frequency	85	91	152	132	194	256	757	820	

(Source: Factiva using Informit).

**Figure 2: Factiva Citation Frequency of 'Governance' 1987-2003**



(Source: Factiva using Informit)

It is clear from Tables 1 & 2 and Figures 1 & 2 that the use of 'governance' within political discourse in Australia is almost exclusively a phenomenon of the 1990s. Before 1991 its use is sporadic at best.

To gain a clearer picture of the early occurrences of 'governance' the period 1987-1995 was further explored in terms of the journals and the broad fields within which they might be grouped: Political Science, Public Policy and Public Administration, Law, Business, Development Issues, Education, and Other. These sub-divisions are somewhat arbitrary given that some of the occurrences could have been categorised in one or more fields. The category of 'Other' covers all occurrences that did not fit elsewhere and includes articles that are published as part of a larger monograph.

**Table 3: Citations of 'Governance' in Journals 1987-1995.**

Year	Freq	Journals						
		Political Science	Pub. Policy & Pub Admin	Law	Business	Development	Education	Other
1987	3	0	AJPA (1)	0	0	0	2	0
1988	2	0	AJPA (2)	0	0	0	0	0
1989	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
1990	4	Gov (2)	0	0	0	0	2	0
1991	10	Gov (1)	AJPA (1)	2	3	0	3	0
1992	33	AJPS (2)	AJPA (6); CBPA (1)	1	2	1; CBPA (16)	3	1
1993	14	AR (1)	0	2	8	0	0	3
1994	23	0	AJPA (1); CBPA (1)	10	8	DB (1)	0	2
1995	40	AJPS (1); AQ (1) CAB (1) CC (1)	AJPA (1)	8	7	DB (6)	5	9

(Source: APAFT including APAIS using Informit) Journals: AJPA = Australian Journal of Public Administration; AJPS = Australian Journal of Political Science; AQ = Australian Quarterly; AR = Australian

*Rationalist*; CAB = *Current Affairs Bulletin*; CBPA = *Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration*<sup>3</sup>; CC = *Constitutional Centenary*; DB = *Development Bulletin*; G = *Governance*.

It is clear that at least within the journal literature, it is not until 1992 that 'governance' begins to recur on a frequent basis. With the exception of a slight dip in 1993 in the APAFT results both searches (ie APAFT and Factiva) reveal that there is an increasing use of 'governance' within the literature. In what follows, for purposes of discussion, literature within the category public policy/public administration is subsumed within the category of political science literature.

## II

The Factiva search revealed a sporadic use of 'governance' within the newspapers. In most instances between 1987 and 1992 'governance' was often used as a synonym for 'government', with the exception of an article in the *Australian Financial Review* that discussed a Reserve Bank commissioned history of "the lives of the men who have helped shape the national economy through their role in finance or its governance" (Cavalier 1988, 6). Of the forty-five newspaper articles published between 1991 and 1993 in which the word 'governance' is used, thirty-nine were concerned with business and corporate accountability, and one with local government. Of the other five, the 'governance' was in contexts where the relations of power between the various arms of government, including the bureaucracy, were in question. Two dealt with the relations between the High Court and the parliament, two with relations between the Senate and the House of Representatives, and one with the perennial issue of relations between parliament and the bureaucracy. To give a flavour of these discussions the two dealing with the High court will be discussed briefly below.

In October 1992, Davidson noted that a recent decision of the High Court meant that "an unelected and unrepresentative judiciary" was asserting its power "over areas of governance" that he regarded as the proper "responsibility of the legislature" (Davidson 1992, 13). This was a practice that he considered one of the High court's characteristics over the twentieth century in which the High court often handed down judgements that "circumscribe[d] the authority of parliament and ignore[d] the plain words of the Constitution" (Davidson 1992, 13). Davidson's use of 'governance' here was in keeping with a growing sense of the term that was beginning to be articulated in the journal literature (see below) in which the power of the elected politicians should be given priority and precedence over non-elected servants of the Crown such as bureaucrats and members of the High Court.

A similar view from a different political perspective was offered a year later by Ludeke (1993) who rejected the idea that the High Court should be described as "a leading institution of governance". Ludeke was citing from an (un-named) article by Brian Galligan that asserted, according to Ludeke, that "the court is now ... developing the Constitution to suit the needs of the Australian people in modern

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<sup>3</sup> The hard copy versions of the *Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration* have not yet been manually searched to pick up any missed occurrences. Experience with the *AJPA* and *AJPS* searches, both electronic and hard copy, suggest that electronic searches do not necessarily capture all occurrences.

times (cited in Ludeke 1993, 19). Ludeke argued that the power to change the constitution is invested in the people, not the High Court; and not the people's parliamentary representatives. There are two interesting aspects to not with Ludeke's article. First, he clearly accepted the aspect of governance discourse that featured in Davidson's discussion concerning the relations of power between elected and unelected political actors. Second, and perhaps more significantly, he explicitly drew attention to the word 'governance'. That is, he expressed his initial indignation in the following way: "[r]ecently the High Court of Australia was described as "a leading institution of governance". Governance? This will come as a surprise to many" (Ludeke 1993, 19). While it is difficult to be certain as to what Ludeke intended as the precise subject of the last quoted sentence, it is reasonable to suggest that it was twofold. On the one hand people would be surprised about the claim of High Court precedence in changing the Constitution, and second, that the very idea 'governance' might be surprising in itself.

Clearly, there is a growing use of the term within the popular press. Most of it emerges from the business world. This is not surprising as the question of corporate collapses and who should be held responsible, let alone accountable, was a very prominent issue. It is in this context the issues of corporate governance come to be debated. The word, at least, was becoming more familiar, if not yet popularised, within contemporary discussions. Equally clearly, by 1993, there was starting to be some cross-over between the journal literature and the newspapers indicating that the use of 'governance' was moving beyond the more specialised discourses of academia.

Turning to the surveyed journal literature for the period between 1987 and 1992 there were fifty-four journal articles or reviews in which the word 'governance' appeared, either in the title of the article (or the journal), the abstract or text. From the results presented in Table 3, sixteen of these could be classified under the rubric of political science discourse. Of the five occurrences for 1987 and 1988, two occur in the field of educational administration. As for the three that might be of immediate relevance for political science discourse, two of the articles mention the word once only with no further discussion. In both cases the sense of 'governance' is understood to mean "good government broadly understood" (Uhr 1987, 378), sound judgement as to "the art of the possible" with respect to implementing policy principles (Jackson 1988, 245); in short "good government". The third instance is a book review that likewise uses 'governance' in the context of overseeing issues of "high politics" (Matthews 1988, 157).

For the years 1990-1991, only four of the fourteen occurrences could be said to fall within the political science literature. Only one of these appears in an Australian journal (ie Aberbach, Merzger & Rockman 1991), the other three were published in the then recently established British journal *Governance: An International Journal of Policy and Administration*. However, there are two reasons for including these three articles in considerations concerning the rise of 'governance' within political science discourse in Australia. First they were written by scholars resident in Australia and New Zealand who saw fit to make their work known in a new journal called *Governance*, thereby indicating some awareness that what they were writing

contributed to a new understanding of the subject matter, even if they themselves were not concerned with debating the conceptual terms of governance discourse. Second, each of these papers explored aspects of radical reforms to the civil services of Australia and New Zealand, in particular the implications that these reforms suggested for the relations between bureaucrats and politicians and the nature of modern government, subject matter that is grist to the mill in the twenty-first century for contemporary writers on governance. Interestingly enough, Keating and Holmes (1990) did not mention the word 'governance' at all. Gregory only used it twice as part of the phrase 'democratic governance' and took the latter's meaning as straightforward and unproblematic, contrasting it with an idea (also undefined) of "a new managerialist ethos" (1991, 298, 328).

Mascarehnas (1990, 86) only used the term twice but offered some brief elaboration. Drawing on a paper by McGregor Jr (1983), Mascarehnas endorsed the latter's characterisation of the relationship between politics and administration as a tripartite arrangement between "governance, policy, and administration" where he defined 'governance' as the "partisan exercise of power", a form of "steerage" that "needs advocacy and support of coalitions of to govern" (1990, 86). The problem as understood by both the Australian and New Zealand governments was that there was a "breakdown in the balance or relationship between politicians and civil servants in what is seen as the steering or governance role" and this drove the public service reforms; the aim was to "enhance the governance role of the ministers" (Mascarehnas 1990, 86). It is clear from Mascarehnas's use of 'governance' that it was intended to serve as a concept that mapped a particular force field that would define the nature of the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats. This was not necessarily a development that Mascarehnas seemed to endorse as he noted that there is no necessary reason why "good government" should be understood as "incompatible with politics" (1990, 88).

Yet it was precisely this alleged incompatibility that Aberbach, Merzger & Rockman (1991) identified as crucial. They examined research data covering the 1970s and the 1980s that explored how politicians and bureaucrats understood the pressures on each other and the nature of their respective roles in policy-making. They noted "two contrasting perspectives of society and public affairs among elites"; one was a bottom up perspective loosely termed "politics" that "emphasise[d] the legitimacy of demands being made on the governors" within a "pluralistic conception of the public interest", and the other was "a top-down perspective" to which they applied the term "governance" (Aberbach, Merzger & Rockman 1991, 211). They also noted that "[g]overnance incorporates a monistic conception of the public interest and focuses on order and management", and by implication shies away from a political process in which conflicting values and interests compete for policy ascendancy (Aberbach, Merzger & Rockman 1991, 211). In comparing Australian and United States' approaches they acknowledged Mascarehnas's (1990) view that Australia modelled its 1980s reforms on US developments of the late 1970s. They also noted that there was an emerging convergence between the two polities in terms of attempts "to enhance [the] political responsiveness [of bureaucrats] to the executive and also to achieve a higher degree of program efficiency" (Aberbach, Merzger & Rockman 1991, 214). The latter issue was noted by Keating and Holmes (1990, 168-9; 180), Gregory

(1991, 296), and Mascarehns (1990, 76; 83-4). The conclusion of Aberbach, Merzger & Rockman (1991) was that these developments were creating a situation in which the policy-making roles for senior civil servants would tend to become more constrained within (increasingly) narrower political parameters adopted by successive executives. Clearly, from the views presented by Aberbach, Merzger & Rockman (1991) and Mascarehns (1990) the rise of 'governance' as a commonly accepted political term connects with a concern with the efficient and economic management of government. And while Gregory (1991) also accepts this connection, by linking it with 'democratic' to talk of 'democratic governance', he played down the potentially negative dimensions implied in the other accounts.

Taking note of the papers published in 1992, with at least nine in the political science literature and a further twenty-four others making a total of thirty-three for the year, it would certainly appear 'governance' had "arrived". Before turning to the ten papers grouped under the heading of political science it is necessary to explain that this spike was due largely to the publication in that year in the *Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration* of sixteen papers that originated from a conference, "The Fourth International Workshop on Sustainable Economic Growth: Implications for Governance in the Asia-Pacific Region" held in Canberra in December 1991. Some comments about these papers will be made later regarding their significance for tracking the pathways of 'governance'.

The two papers in the *Australian Journal of Political Science* were a review of an edited collection of essays dealing with public bureaucracy (Uhr 1992) and an article (Dow 1992), both of which only mentioned 'governance' once. Dow pointed to what he saw as "structural weaknesses in the state itself" that he attributed (in the main) to the economic policies being pursued by successive Labor governments, in particular those that weakened the state's regulatory frameworks and hence their inability to pursue achievable economic diversity. In this context the problem was neither "regulatory weakness" nor "ungovernability due to overload", but rather "the national abrogation of governance and public possibilities" (Dow 1992, 261). On the one hand, Dow's use of 'governance' here echoed Gregory's (1991), but at the same time it also bought into the more directive sense that both Mascarenhas (1990) and Aberbach *et al* (1991) noted was in the ascendancy. Uhr's review noted that one of the essays tried to redefine "public service professionalism as one of the basic protections of responsible governance against irresponsible politicians" (Uhr 1992, 554). The sense of 'governance' here would appear to be as an overarching political architecture framing the activities of politicians and bureaucrats but, in contradistinction to the senses noted by Mascarenhas (1990) and Aberbach *et al* (1991) above, with the effect of constraining the power of politicians.

Of the six papers published in *Australian Journal of Public Administration* in 1992, four (Daddah; Mascarehns; Hundloe; and Noon) used 'governance' only once, and two (Power; and May & Handmer) mentioned 'governance' more than once. Of these latter papers, one was a book review by Power (1992) in which the idea of school governance featured prominently. The other, by May & Handmer (1992, 44, 46), used 'governance' in the context of the idea of the "shared governance dilemma", an idea developed by May some six years earlier (see May & Williams 1986). In a context of

regulatory policy design an inevitable dilemma arises because many issues require the cooperation and input of different levels of government authorities yet at the same time the "requisite intergovernmental partnerships are often unstable and impossible to consummate" (May & Handmer 1992, 44). The idea of "shared governance" appeared to capture something like partnerships or coalitions, rather than to mark out demarcations between politicians and bureaucrats.

In her discussion of the activities of the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS), Daddah linked "'governance' and the modernisation of public administration" when she noted that this was one of several areas of research sponsored by the IIAS that impacted "on national administrations" (Daddah 1992, 522). That she chose to place 'governance' inside inverted commas suggests that she was somewhat uncertain about its status within the discourse of public administration. Mascareñas (1992, 385), on the other hand, drew a distinction between 'government' and 'governance' by pointing out that a government performed the "role of governance". In this context government established a regime that enabled orderly and efficient market behaviour to be achieved, in effect, 'governance' named that regime. Hundloe (1992, 478) spoke of the "governance of society" and noted that it split into two distinctive perspectives: one that promoted economic efficiency and one that promoted "distributional and other social goals" on the other. Finally, Noon's use of 'governance' occurred in the abstract to his paper (1992, 27) where he sketched his argument defending performance evaluation, in particular Program Performance Statements, by arguing that they were based on a "model of governance that seeks to establish a definitive demarcation between policy and administration". This is a process that Noon argued conformed to "traditional notions of ministerial accountability" (Noon 1992, 27). Without going into Noon's view of traditional "ministerial accountability" it is nevertheless clear that by this he meant that bureaucrats had to be made subject to the dictates of an elected parliament. Parliament had "to be supreme" and, via its administrative reforms such as Program Performance Statements, impose "greater accountability upon the bureaucracy" and thereby to counter the "dangers of an unconstrained bureaucracy" (Noon 1992, 34). Though perhaps a less sophisticated model than the one posed by Mascareñas (1990), it nevertheless echoed the problem of defining the relations of power that should exist between politicians and bureaucrats.

Turning to the seventeen papers published in the Canberra Bulletin of Public Administration the one grouped in the category of political science (Marsh 1992) used 'governance' in its title and once in the text where it referred to an impending study on "the obstacles to effective governance" by a private sector think-tank, the Committee for Economic Development in Australia (CEDA) (Marsh 1992, 36). Despite representing itself as an analysis of think tanks and their "contribution to governance", there was no discussion of what 'governance' might mean. This was simply taken as given. The other sixteen papers were published versions of those presented at "The Fourth International Workshop on Sustainable Economic Growth: Implications for Governance in the Asia-Pacific Region" held in Canberra in December 1991. While none of the participants discussed in any detail what 'governance' was understood to mean, this conference signalled an increasing presence of the use of 'governance'. More importantly for the purposes of the current

study these papers it gives evidence of one of the key lines of transmission and dissemination of the idea of 'governance', the international development literature.

However, one of those presenting papers at the this workshop was senior Labor politician John Kerin, who until the day before the conference had been the Federal Treasurer and who later that month became Minister for Trade and Overseas Development. There is no suggestion here that he picked up the idea of 'governance' from this conference and took it back to government circles, only that he was a senior government official speaking at a conference in which 'governance' was a commonly used term. In this respect one could perhaps make a stronger case for Keating (1990) and Noon (1992), both of whom were then part of the government bureaucracy; Keating at that time was Secretary of the Department of Finance and in 1991 became Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and Noon in 1992 was an official within Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. It will also be recalled that although Noon never discussed what he meant by 'governance' he nevertheless used a particular model of governance to buttress his defence of performance evaluation. Clearly, 'governance' had some currency within the upper echelons of government; though just how widespread this currency might have been cannot at this stage be deduced from the available evidence. Thus far, all that can be deduced from the above discussion of this albeit limited sample of political science type journal literature in Australia is that between 1987 and 1992 the term 'governance' begins to find increasing favour.

### III

Of course, the political science journal literature was not being produced in a vacuum. The international scholarly literature being produced in a number of fields also provided lines of transmission along which the idea of 'governance' seeped into Australian debates. As has been noted above, the 1991 Workshop on Sustainable Economic Development and Growth provided one such occasion resulting in a comparatively sharp increase in the number of papers published in Australia in 1992 mentioning 'governance'. This workshop was the fourth in a series of conferences that originated in 1987 under the auspices of the Canadian Institute for Research on Public Policy, and from the beginning promoted the idea of governance as its core theme (Jerome-Forget & O'Neil 1992). At the same time as the first of these workshops were being promoted the idea of 'governance' was also emerging in a number of inter-related disciplines/discourses: international political economy, international relations, aid and development debates, and public administration. In each of these areas the literature on governance is diverse and growing.<sup>4</sup>

At the risk of over-generalising it would appear that the core issues circulate around the eruption of crises involving perceptions of problems with governability and problems of sustaining economic development and economic growth. These crises generate a host of inter-related questions such as: who governs?, how do they govern?, what is entailed by that mode of governing?, and what is the nature of the

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<sup>4</sup> For reasons of space, the citations of relevant international literature across these three fields/disciplines have been kept to a minimum.

relationship between governing/government and society (especially the market)? The plethora of literature on governance in international scholarship has arisen in large part to answer these questions and in that context 'governance' is seen as something of a missing link that enables these questions to be answered in apparently novel ways. As Jessop has suggested, for many scholars "'governance' is seen as a missing 'third term' which both critiques and complements" a number of seemingly unresolvable dichotomies such as "market vs hierarchy in economics; market vs plan in policy studies; private vs public in politics; and anarchy vs sovereignty in international relations" (Jessop 1998, 31). In this sense, suggested Jessop, 'governance' offered itself as a means to enhance the capacity of social scientists "to describe and explain the 'real world'" (Jessop 1998, 31). Some early work in this direction had already been done by Wittrock (1983), Thapar (1983), van Steenberg (1983) and Dror (1983).

Echoing Jessop, Pierre & Peters (2000) suggested similar reasons for the emergence of 'governance' as an idea whose time had come. They pointed to eight sets of explanations: (1) the financial crisis of the state; (2) the ideological shift away from the state and to the market; (3) the rise of globalisation; (4) the failure of the state; (5) emergence of New Public Management, (6) the increasing complexities of social change; (7) the importance of regional and international sources of governance; and (8) the legacy of traditional political accountability (Pierre & Peters 2000 52-66). Each of these sets of explanations has generated a range of discourses built around various ideas of 'governance'. The explanations are not mutually exclusive and often involve considerable overlap both between and within competing discourses. Like Jessop, Pierre and Peters see these explanations as attempts to theorise and grapple with sometimes old, but certainly recurring, problems in rapidly changing contexts. The common denominator underlying these trends they suggest is the recognition that "the state no longer has a monopoly over the expertise nor over the economic or institutional resources necessary to govern", but at the same time "the state remains the key vehicle for the pursuit of the collective interest in society" (Pierre & Peters 2000, 68). Hence the new governance, however it might be defined, represents something distinctive in the sense that it provides a way of describing and explaining the adaptation of the old forms of the state into something that is better suited to its current environment (Pierre & Peters 2000, 68).

One could certainly take issue with Pierre and Peters' claim that the state enjoyed the monopoly status that they attribute to it. It is doubtful that it ever had a monopoly over the various "economic or institutional resources to govern". There is also a sense in which their metaphor of adaptation breaks down insofar as neither the state nor its associated society are static; both are dynamic and respond to and often initiate each other's changes. Pierre and Peters want to retain the state's goal setting role but at the same time they also want to emphasise that the state is no longer crucial as "an implementing structure" because there are many other ways in which the goals that it sets might be realised (Pierre & Peters 2000, 68). But again one might point out that this idea of different (or non-state) ways to implement state defined goals is not new. Pierre and Peters (2000, 69) argue that "society is slowly developing towards a system which can only be governed through these emerging forms of steering, coordination and goal-setting which we call the new governance". It may be

that this "new governance" is "new" in terms of the different possibilities available for defining and combining "steering, coordination and goal setting" (Pierre & Peters 2000, 69). What is not new is the self-serving definition that appeals to inevitability, that this is the only way in which contemporary society can be governed.

However, Pierre and Peters are not alone in putting forward definitions that prove to be elusive or unsatisfactory. This seems to be symptomatic of definitions of 'governance' in the literature. Most tend focus on or emphasise its uses. Various scholars treat its meaning(s) as simply given by its uses (Edwards 2002, 51-2; Weller 2000; Kooiman 1999). Other definitions of 'governance' include treating it as "the way in which collective impacts are produced in a social system" (Hill & Hupe 2002, 13), or as "regimes of laws, administrative rules, judicial rulings, and practices that constrain, prescribe, and enable government activity" (Lynn *et al* 2000, 235), or as the authority underpinning "choosing, prioritizing, directing, and steering" (Wamsley 1990, 114), or as a designation of "the application of power and authority in a way that commits relevant political actors to managerial decisions" (McGregor 1993, 182). Central to these discussions is the understanding that the relationship between state and markets is being redefined, and that the concept 'governance' best encapsulates that redefinition. Thus the state is seen as having a "steering" role rather than some other more involved one such as "rowing" (De Alcántara 1998, 106; McGregor 1993; Wamsley 1990). For some scholars this means that governance may well imply (and for some does imply) the idea of the "hollowing out of the state" (Davis 1997; Milward & Provan 2000; Peters & Pierre 1998; Rhodes 1994). For others it suggests the idea of "governance without government" (Rosenau & Czempiel 1992; Rhodes 1996). Almost invariably, the emphasis (sometimes explicit) is on redefining the role of government in ways that seem to favour actors who operate outside of the domain of formal politics, even when on the surface the measures appear to enhance the power of the elected representatives.

#### IV

This paper has provided a work-in-progress of research into the emergence of 'governance' within political discourse in Australia. The key focus has been to identify and explore the various lines of transmission and dissemination, in particular how the concept moves in and out of various discourses such that it becomes part of the common sense of the age. What has been presented above does not establish these lines in a definitive sense. It has only just scratched the surface in terms of tracking the various sources and lines of transmission. Much literature remains to be examined. A range of Australian based journals require close scrutiny for papers using the term. The magazines/journals and working papers produced by Australian think-tanks and conference proceedings also require attention. There has been almost no discussion in the current paper of books and monographs that might have been instrumental in promoting the idea of 'governance'. Literature searches and analysis of documents emanating from official government institutions such as the Australian parliament and its library, and international institutions such as the World Bank, the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and so on have yet to be undertaken in any depth. Speeches, media

releases, and other publications by politicians also need to be examined. A number of theoretical and methodological issues remain to be worked through in more detail.

The above has had little to say about how one actually determines the specific sequences of the transmission of ideas. For example, does the fact of attendance at a conference in which a particular concept is bandied around mean that it will therefore be adopted by one or more of those attending? How does one determine that one source of a concept rather than another source was decisive? While it is relatively easy to track ideas between published papers when scholars cite each other's work, it is not so simple when trying to track a concept's incorporation into a discourse that is not simply contained between hard covers.

Another aspect that has not been mentioned above is the possible influence of Foucault's idea of "governmentality", at least in the sense in which some contemporary scholars have developed an idea of 'governance' that resonates with his sense of comportment or maintaining one's self (eg see Kooiman 2003; Kooiman 2000; Mayntz 1993; Malpas & Wickham 1995). In addition, for Hunt and Wickham (1994) Foucault's notion of governmentality and some of his related essays form the basis for their development of a conception of 'governance' in terms of understanding contemporary modes of self-discipline. This is another theoretical issue to explore, namely the way or ways in which radical and mainstream scholars alike end up deploying a specific concept; though how and why needs to be explained. This is part of a wider problem with respect to the transmission and circulation of key concepts like 'governance'. As already noted, the research has barely scratched the surface.

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