



## Connecting with constant change to thrive and survive

**“If you want to survive, if you want to thrive in a world that is unpredictable, that’s always going to be unstable, then get connected and stay connected.** That seems to me to be excellent advice to the older generation from the younger.” Says Social Researcher

Hugh Mackay.

Mackay describes Australia’s changing landscape:

People have never experienced such a surge of economic growth sustained over so many years. Nor have they experienced such a wide spread epidemic of depression. Australian’s consumption of anti-depressants has tripled over the last 10 years.

This is a society showing signs of strain of 25-30 years of four revolutions at once:

**The greatest of these is the gender revolution.** The role of women is a very recent change and no aspect of Australian life has been left untouched by the women’s movement and a lot of people have been bruised in the process: a lot of women and men have suffered because they have had to realise that this revolution is about power-sharing – about finding a much more equal basis for men and women to relate to each other, whether in marriage, in parenting, in the neighbourhood or in the workplace.

**The Australian economy** has also been undergoing a radical restructure.

In spite of our contemporary prosperity we’ve moved from being a society in which people think generally of work as a source of security to a position today where in most organisations people live with a sense of job insecurity.

There’s now a massive problem of underemployment amongst people who have been moved from permanent to casual work or from full-time to part-time work and who are now working much less than they’d like to work.

This dramatic re-distribution of work over the last 25 years means you also re-distribute wealth and this increases the gap between the top and bottom. The top 20% of households have a combined annual income of about \$180,000 while the bottom has an average income of \$12,000.

**The IT revolution** has changed the way we live and work, are informed, entertained and communicate. We’re in danger of falling for the trap of thinking that if you’ve sent someone an email, you’ve communicated. The reality is that if you want to really communicate with someone you have to have a face-to face relationship with them. That has emotional consequences for us, because many of us are not closely in touch with the people we work with or otherwise relate to as we once were, because we’re spending so much of our time operating through a medium rather than operating face-to-face.

**The fourth revolution relates to our sense of who we are, what it means to be an Australian,** what Australia’s place is in the region and the world. Ethnically, religiously, economically generationally, we are a more diverse society than we’ve ever been. People who want to talk about “mainstream Australia” haven’t been paying attention : its very hard to identify what mainstream Australia is at a period like this.

About 45% of marriages will end in divorce. That’s a huge upheaval. It’s tough on people who separate, their families, their friendship circles and its particularly tough on their kids. Marriage is also changing – it is out of fashion. Within the next 15-20 years about a third will never marry, a third will marry once and about a third will marry two or more times.

Mackay believes that these changes in our society are shaping Australians aged 30 and under to be more resilient. If you were born in the last 30 years you’ve never known anything except the revolutionary period which is described above. This is just the air young Australians breathe – constant change, constant

choice. They know that whatever’s happening now is unlikely to keep happening. It teaches them a very powerful lesson: don’t get too committed, keep your options open, hang loose, wait and see, whatever’s happening now might be wonderful but there’s plenty of other possibilities so let’s explore them before we get too settled.

Typically they’re saying “this is fine but what else is there?” If you want to understand them as employees, as clients or as members of your own families, remember this is the question that drives them: “What else is there? Keep your options open. Wait and see.”

Mackay says that the under 30’s is the generation that is likely to reshape our workplace and our communities in ways that follow their edict.

If you want to communicate, work with and live with this group then you need to get connected and stay connected. We can help provide some of the insight and guide you through strategies to connect. Talk to us today.

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**Reference:** We would like to thank the **Insurance & Risk Professional magazine** for allowing us to use this material and Australia's best known Social researcher Hugh Mackay for his insights and consent also. **Hugh's latest book is: *Advance Australia ... Where?*** [www.hughmackay.com.au](http://www.hughmackay.com.au)

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