

## Stephen Loosely AM August 2025

### USA and Global Politics with President Trump

#### Russia's Expansionism

Following Geoff McWilliam's welcome, Stephen opened his remarks by commenting that since Russia's attempted invasion of Georgia in 2008 we have been living through the second Cold War with President Putin aiming to establish a modern version of Czarist Russia. The West became more conscious of his ambition with the invasion of Crimea in 2014 and is now supporting Ukraine. Russia's perceived military capability is built on lies. Its situation in Ukraine has deteriorated with very heavy losses, and it now faces further NATO countries including Finland and Sweden. Russia has made some territorial gains, but they are not strategic. China is assisting Russia but for how long? Neither trusts the other! Ukraine has changed the nature of the war through the use of drones!

#### The World, Australia and Trump

At the core of the second Cold War is the battle between the autocracies and the Western order established in 1945 and led by the US. President Trump does not see the Western Order as sacrosanct, raising the question in Australia of do we still have the US at our back? It means we need to continue our focus on strengthening relationships, not just with the President, but with members of Congress of both parties, and on the development of more bipartisan approaches to major issues of state including our approach to the US. We also need to strengthen our relationships with other countries like Japan, India, Indonesia and Europe. On the issue of a possible war between China and Taiwan, Stephen commented that he had no doubt, that in the event one occurred, America would intervene and that Australia would be involved. He added that espionage would grow with AUKUS and with the new frigates and missiles programs, though as a result of these and other defence projects, we will be better able to defend our continent.

#### Questions and Answers

- Re AUKUS and Paul Keating's criticism of it, Stephen commented humorously "It is a very painful experience to have an argument with Paul!" Stephen added that he had originally supported the French submarine option and the AUKUS announcement had surprised him. However, he acknowledged that the Virginia Class is a very lethal submarine and to have three in the Indo-Pacific will be a serious deterrent!
- Re Taiwan, we need to do everything possible to avoid a conflict across the Taiwan Strait, including by careful choice of language in dealing with China and by supporting the development of Taiwan's democracy.
- On the issue of defence spending, Stephen commented that defending our country was not just a matter of kit, but also of encouraging the resilience of our population including through their being knowledgeable of the risks we face from terrorism and espionage. It also requires a well-trained army and having strong relationships with our partners and neighbours, as well as with the US.
- Dealing with the Trump administration during the remainder of his term will be "like going to the dentist every single day!" The Republicans could get "hammered" in the mid-terms if the tariffs cause significant cost of living pressures or they don't have the desired effect of increasing the sales of American manufactured or homegrown products. (Americans may still prefer some overseas produced products despite the tariffs!)
- Selling Darwin Port to the Chinese was a mistake and it should now be owned

and operated by the private sector

- At any one time, the PM and Treasurer may not like each other, but their working effectively together is critical with the PM responsible for electoral success and the Treasurer focused on policy success.
  - Re a concern about India's close relationship with Russia, Stephen commented that it has been thus for 75 years and that India had developed good relations with several countries including Britain and Australia.
  - Ukraine has demonstrated that a "50 dollar drone can destroy a billion dollar battleship"
  - Australia's immigration policies have been outstandingly successful; in the US the Democrats' losing control of their southern border contributed to the Republicans' recent electoral success.
- In thanking Stephen, Paul Cheever commended him for the broad and detailed knowledge he had displayed for the benefit of our members.

Alan Locke and Alec Brennan