



Songs of Protest

Songs of Protest are inevitably about social justice, conflict, inequality, politics and power. They cover a range of genres from hip hop to hymns. To my mind they must sing to the heart and soul but not preach. That's not an easy brief. Songs of Protest never go out of fashion however it seems to me that the Sixties in particular was a period where they were at the forefront of popular music. These songs attempt to channel that zeitgeist whilst exploring universal and contemporary themes. These songs have been crafted with a chorus of voices in mind.

This Land

This is a first people song. A song that one of these days we will understand this land – like our first people do and have done for the past sixty thousand years.

People People

Technology has changed our lives completely in so many amazing ways. However increasingly it is being used for the convenience of business and not the customer. Sick of that press one, press two - robot, bingo answering service, the long hold, the disingenuous “We really value your call”. The B.S. Mission statement? This is the song for you.

The Heads of Department

Men continue to occupy the dominant positions in politics and business. At the same time there is a tendency in our country to co-opt Christian values in much the same way Churches have done to keep women in their place. This is a satirical take on men's divine right to rule and was utilised by Zali Steggall's team to boost their morale in successfully campaigning against Tony Abbott in the last federal election.

Second Skin

This is a refugee song. We know in our hearts that people are suffering in refugee camps with their only sin being that they have escaped persecution in their own countries. Just like America is no longer great – we too have lost a bit of our 'fair go' shine.

F.I.F.O.

Mining accounts for 1.9 percent of our national workforce - a level that has decreased by 10% in the past decade. FIFO (Fly in fly out) workers whilst well paid are subjected to higher than average levels of stress and suicide rates. On the west coast of Tassie, where I grew up, Rosebery is the only town with an ongoing fully operational mine. Yet the other West Coast towns, forced to look elsewhere for sustenance, appear far more vibrant. Twelve hour shifts and four and seven day rosters have devastated the community and rendered week nights and the weekend all but irrelevant for social and sporting interaction.

Heaven's an Eight Hour Day

Riffing on the same theme. The Labour movement in this country was founded on the premise of the eight hour day. This a fun song with a serious underlying message. Porky the underground miner who hates afternoon shift discovers that an eight hour day really is, well – Heaven.

Mabo Day

The Queen does not have a real birthday in June. The Mabo decision was handed down in June. This is a cry for a new long weekend. A Mabo Day that replaces the Queen's birthday and celebrates our first people. Why not?

Requiem for Robbo

Loneliness in old age has become embedded in our culture. This is not the same for Greek, Indian, Chinese and other Asian cultures. Eric Bogle's haunting "A Reason for it All" is the stand out song for me when it comes to reflecting on this subject within Australian society. Robbo – not his real name was nonetheless, like Clare Campbell in Eric's song, a real person.

All Quiet Now

I was at the Lake School in Koroit at the height of the bushfires. I was attempting to write a song and the book title All Quiet on the Western Front was masquerading as the song title: All Quiet on the Fire Front. It was subsequently abbreviated and it has tended to hold true – the fires have been extinguished but there are many people still suffering from the far too long quiet around having their voices heard and their needs addressed – and above all else the ongoing quiet around the underlying climate change conditions that hold our country to ransom every, ever extending, summer .

Give Me Grace

The dignity of work is something that I have held on to for all my life. We need to work. We need to feel included and useful. These are fundamental human needs. This song was picked up by the Newcastle People's Chorus in 2015. It is still part of their repertoire.