

**The “Constituency Member” in Practice:
Two case studies from Australia and New Zealand**

Royce Koop, *University of Manitoba*
Kelly Blidook, *Memorial University*

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In his groundbreaking study of the roles of backbench Members of Parliament (MPs), Donald Searing identified the “constituency member” as a distinct MP role (1994). The role of constituency member, according to Searing, “immerses backbenchers in the small disputes and difficulties of their constituents” (1994: 121). While some MPs pursue policy goals and others are “ministerial aspirants,” constituency members are principally concerned with local matters, particularly addressing constituents’ problems but also addressing constituency-wide matters. Searing’s insights were drawn from interviews and follow-up surveys with MPs.

In this paper, we pick up and build upon Searing’s insight by describing periods of observation with two MPs while they engaged in service-related activities in their electorates. In 2017, we travelled with and observed two MPs while they were in their electorates: Carmel Sepuloni from New Zealand and Warren Entsch from Australia. The goal of the paper is to explore MPs’ electorate roles in light of this new, detailed knowledge about how they engage in service representation as “constituency members”, and to derive new themes related to service representation from these periods of observation. We do not claim that these MPs necessarily fall into Searing’s “constituency member” category, but simply use his framework to analyze the home activities of these two members.

Our discussions of our two case study MPs are structured by Searing’s own distinction between two types of “constituency members.” While all constituency members prioritize the interests of their constituents, Searing found that some MPs tended to prioritize the needs of individual constituents while others focused on the interests of the community as a whole. The former constituency member was referred to as *welfare officers*, who engage in ombudsman-style casework to assist their constituents with their problems. The latter constituency members are referred to as *local promoters*, boosters who concern themselves with the needs of the entire community.

While Searing was interested in the development of archetypes, we recognize that MPs may in practice focus on one type of service activity or, to some extent, both. Our case studies illustrate variation in how MPs approach the task of service representation. Searing himself noted this, claiming that while most MPs fell into the roles of either welfare officers (74 percent) or local promoters (13 percent), a small group (9%) could be considered “mixed” and adopted some combination of both roles.

We begin by briefly reviewing the relevant literature on service representation before describing the observational research method we employ here. We then present two case studies of MPs in their constituencies. We end by speculating on themes that derive from these case studies.

Service Representation and the Constituency Member

The crucial starting point in the contemporary study of representation is the distinction made by Pitkin (1967) between what she terms descriptive and substantive representation. *Descriptive* representation concerns the extent to which elected officials resemble those they seek to represent. In contrast, *substantive* representation is concerned with the behaviours representatives engage in in order to represent their constituents.

Eulau and Karps (1977) argue that the key to substantive representation is responsiveness: representatives must be responsive to the needs and wishes of their constituents in the sense that they must regularly learn about and act upon those needs and wishes. Eulau and Karps (241-242) distinguish between four distinctive types of representational responsiveness: *policy* responsiveness, in which representatives advocate for the policy interests of their constituents; *service* responsiveness, in which representatives secure benefits for individual or groups of constituents and assist them in solving problems; *allocative* responsiveness, in which benefits—or pork-barrel projects—are secured for the electorate; and, *symbolic* responsiveness, where the representative establishes a sense of trust and connection with constituents.

Eulau and Karps’ definition of service responsiveness includes a number of activities: listening and responding to constituents’ concerns and problems, including in town halls or public meetings; “case work,” which they view as efforts by representatives to intervene between constituents and the civil service; and, advocating for their constituents to the civil service and government. In his exploration of backbench roles, Searing (1994) identified four major categories, one of which was *constituency members*, who prioritized protecting the needs and interests of constituents.

Service representation has historical antecedents but is of a relatively recent vintage: Norton and Wood (1993, 40), for example, note that the tasks associated

with service representation were very minimal even in the 1950s but that the role became more and more important in the post-war period. MPs have seen a very significant increase in constituency attention and communication over the past 50 years (Norton 2005). Docherty (1997) points to similar dynamics in recent years with the service role now occupying a substantial amount of individual representatives' energy and time (171. See also Anagnoson 1983; Mcleay and Vowles 2007).

Service representation is viewed as a method by which representatives may be able to accrue a local "personal vote" that can assist them in re-election campaigns apart from the fortunes of their parties (e.g. Cain et al. 1987). This may help to explain the seemingly counterintuitive notion that representatives spend significant time on service despite not often resulting in immediately discernible career benefits. Similarly, Docherty (1997: 123) finds that MPs enjoy the service aspects of their positions and commit time to it for this reason. Koop et al. (2018) identify several Canadian MPs who adopt a service-intensive local representational style when interacting with their constituents and trace the development of this style to MPs' personal goals, electorate contexts, and processes of experiential learning.

Methodology and Case Selection

This research depends primarily upon ethnographic observation, in which we – the researchers – recruit research participants who then allow us to spend a number of days with them. Our means of observation was mainly that of 'moderate participants' (DeWalt et al., 1998: 262), or what Spradley (1980) refers to as *passive observational research*. We were present in the everyday lives of those we researched, and we participated as necessary.

This research is heavily based upon the representational research conducted by Fenno, who states that the best way to "...learn about politicians [is] by talking to them, watching them and following them around" (Fenno, 1990: 2).¹ Observing and recording occurred by being present with the MP as much as possible, and writing notes whenever there was opportunity to do so. Fenno claims that "all connections count" (2000: 4) in understanding the interactions of representatives, and we went about our observations with very open approaches. This allowed us to avoid imposing meaning at the time of observation, and instead assess our records afterward in order to more effectively make sense of behaviours and patterns. Nevertheless, we would also have the opportunity to speak with participants to ask questions, get clarifications and insights, and take information not only from the observation itself but from the participant's sense of what they had done and why.

¹ We outline in greater detail our methodological approach and justifications for it in Koop et al. 2018. We provide a more educational approach to the method and what we have learned from it in Blidook & Koop (forthcoming).

Our method also includes semi-structured interviews of participants once that all observation of cases is complete. These interviews have not yet occurred for the current study.

Case selection for the current study has been part of an ongoing process to conduct observations in four countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom). We are conducting very few observations in each country, and do not claim that our observations comprise a representative sample in each country, nor of MPs across these countries as a group. What they provide, however, are in-depth cases that provide meaningful insights into the nature of representational behaviours. We aim to capture variation on relevant factors in our case selection, including gender, party, region, and ethnicity, though we also recognize that in some cases it is informative to compare very similar cases to understand specific differences (and we can do this to some extent with our current data). We are also somewhat constrained by who accepts our invitations to participate. We do not have enough cases to claim to have captured the full range of representatives or representative styles.

In 2017, we conducted observations with Australian MPs Linda Burney (Labour) and Warren Entsch (Liberal National), as well as with New Zealand MPs Clare Curran and Carmel Sepuloni (both Labour). Each observation period was approximately 4 days and consisted of time in the electorate and electorate office.

In order to explore the nature of service connections specifically, we outline the nature of these connections for 1 MP from each country, Sepuloni and Entsch. We then draw insights and conclusions from each, and in comparison to each other.

Carmel Sepuloni

Carmel Sepuloni was elected to represent Kelston, a new electorate in west Auckland, New Zealand, in 2014. She did so with a relatively strong margin of about 18 percent of the vote over the next closest competitor. She had previously lost her bid to represent the electorate of Waitakere in 2011 on a judicial recount despite having initially won when official results were announced. This followed 3 years serving as a list MP since 2008 (under New Zealand's Mixed-Member Proportional system).

Kelston, which in part replaced Waitakere, is ethnically diverse with about 24% of residents identifying as Pacific Peoples, and about 22% identifying as Asian (parliament.nz). Income in the electorate is slightly above the national average, though, as pointed out in conversation with Sepuloni, income is below average for the Auckland area. Due to the extremely high costs of housing in the area, this makes affordability in the electorate difficult for many and so the electorate should be seen as one of lower income within the region. It is also the electorate with the highest number of single mothers, of which Sepuloni is one.

A former teacher whose father was Samoan and mother was a Caucasian New Zealander, Sepuloni sees herself as someone who can foster connections with the significant portion of her electorate that identify as Pacific. She noted at one point that being female, relatively young, and portraying some of the ethnic diversity of the region, had made her an attractive candidate to the Labour party.

Over a four-day observation period, Sepuloni's time commitments were a relatively busy mix between meetings in her office – a store-front style office that is shared with 2 Maori MPs (though owing to electorate sizes, neither were present during the times I was there) – and meetings and events around the region. One of the days I (Blidook) was present was Anzac Day (similar to Remembrance Day in Canada), which included various events and appearances including a sunrise ceremony.

Sepuloni's focus upon service in the electorate is probably necessarily greater than she would prefer it to be. This is not to suggest that Sepuloni has an aversion or distaste for service work, but she doesn't give the impression that she is primarily a service-oriented MP. When out in the electorate, her manner of engagement doesn't suggest she is seeking out service connections (as we've seen previously with Canadian MPs Nikki Ashton and Tony Clement, for example). However, the scope and nature of housing issues in the electorate mean that she is regularly dealing with constituents who need help and her office staff are very heavily focused on this issue. While the office engages in outreach activities, it appeared that both of Sepuloni's fulltime staff members were spending the vast majority of time on resolving problems for constituents. Service issues constantly arrive on Carmel's doorstep and the vast majority are centrally about housing (there are additional issues related to this – drug problems, health & mental illness, poverty). Nevertheless, the issue of housing plays well within the Labour party's key messages about the governing Liberal party, and so the process of dealing with these issues is related to promotion of messages and building support.

With a homeless rate of almost 1% of the population, New Zealand has the highest homelessness in the OECD and is double or greater the rate of any other OECD country with the exception of the Czech Republic (Chamie 2017). From the moment I began spending time with Sepuloni, this topic would be a prevalent part of her story.

On my first morning with Sepuloni, she and an assistant attended a weekly garbage pick-up in a park, organized by a local police officer. The event was an initial exposure for me to the problems of drug use and homelessness in the area, and the officer explained a range of the cases that he had seen. The weekly event is meant to involve those recovering from drug-use and help connect them to the community, while a local business provides lunch when the clean-up is finished. One man who attended that day told us about his past drug use and time in prison. While chatting on a covered platform that attaches to a building, he explained that he, along with others, would normally spend nights sleeping on this platform. He then showed us

the hatch in the floor where they would store sleeping bags, pillows and pads (law enforcement had recently removed the bedding from the hatch). He estimated approximately 20-30 people would sleep on the approximately 5m X 8m platform.

In the process of picking up garbage in the park, we interacted with those who are close to this community and use this park, and gained a better understanding of the challenges faced. In one corner of the park there were old foam mattresses and a high chair, which we left alone because those who know the community well told us that these belong to people who continue to use them.

We attended only the early portion of the clean-up event, then returned to the office where Sepuloni and an assistant held a case meeting with a married couple regarding a problem of boarding houses in their region. These were not Carmel's constituents, however. They had brought their problem to the neighbouring MP – and former Labour leader – David Cunliffe, but he had recently decided to leave politics and the case had not progressed. Cunliffe did visit one of the houses while MP, but otherwise no substantive action to deal with problem had occurred.

The man's story began: "We have been through 18 months of hell ...". The couple went on to describe a residential house next to theirs that had been made into 10-12 single (approx. 2m by 3m) rooms by erecting wooden boards. Each room was rented to a single renter, and the manner of constructing the rooms likely violated municipal codes. The house they described did not have appropriate facilities for so many renters, who also tended to be drug users and/or mentally ill. Because rooms inside the house were little more than places to sleep, renters would spend a lot of time out in the yard (which would often also be used as a restroom) or on the street. Noise and crime were a common issue, and the couple noted having had their own house broken into. The couple were clearly distraught and exhausted from trying to have the problem addressed.

As the local council had not addressed the problem, Sepuloni suggested before leaving the meeting that letters to council and to the mayor (a former Labour MP), might help to have regulations enforced. The broader problem is that the house's owner has multiple such properties and, given housing shortages, there is constant demand for the types of rooms being provided. Sepuloni noted afterward that the problem is much more widespread than the single case identified in the meeting.

Sepuloni met for an immigration case shortly afterward with an employer and employee who, despite specialized skills, was to be deported and not have his visa renewed. In this, as with the last case, Sepuloni's assistant considers whether there is potential for media coverage that might aid the desired outcome.

Sepuloni says afterward that she would not normally sit in on each of these meetings, but as she is available for the full week in the electorate, she is participating more than usual. She is also interested in having a role in what is often referred to as the "housing crisis", which is indirectly connected to her portfolio of

Social Development. However, another neighbouring MP is the Labour spokesperson for Housing, so she cannot be involved in speaking to the issue beyond her electorate. She expressed that she needs to find a balance in addressing her constituent's needs, and gaining helpful media exposure, while avoiding overstepping portfolio boundaries.

In the Monday morning office meeting that followed, 2 topics were highlighted that would become dominant themes over the 4 observation days. The first is the importance of media coverage. One of Sepuloni's assistants is a former journalist and pushes the notion that finding ways to increase exposure is very important. (It is noteworthy that this isn't framed as election-focused, but rather as personal promotion. The other MP I observed while in NZ - Clare Curran - was focusing heavily on election preparedness, with the upcoming election being about 4 months away).

The second is the upcoming meeting about homelessness on Wednesday. This will involve representatives of various community organizations. On the whole, service connections related to housing were the most dominant theme, while using the cases that arose to generate coverage that might occasionally include the MP was often a connected theme with this service work.

Later that afternoon we visited a woman with her 3 children who had been put into a motel as part of the New Zealand's "emergency housing strategy". In the car, Sepuloni's assistant told us about a news release issued by Labour's Housing spokesperson stating that the strategy has been costing \$100,000/day for hotel costs (Lynch 2017). This, according to the release, amounted to more than 4 times the estimated cost by government. It's an example of the attention being paid to this issue by the Labour party, but also a reminder of the constraints on Sepuloni in speaking to this issue directly.

The family we visit (while the father is away at work) had paid \$375/week in their previous home. According to the mother, they had lived in the house 10 years but were evicted following 2 missed payments. In such cases, government covers accommodation for the short term while aiding to find other long-term rentals (which can occasionally be government subsidized housing). The cost for this family to stay in a motel was \$1500 per 2 weeks, for what was expected to be a maximum of 4 weeks.

This family had contacted Sepuloni previously and, while there, the mother stated that a government agency was now aiding them in finding new housing. Sepuloni offers that they should contact her office if any additional help is needed. Sepuloni's assistant takes pictures of the rooms and motel grounds (unkept grass, green water in swimming pool) to aid in publicizing the issue.

On a following morning, a separate, though important, element of service connection is evident in a meeting where Sepuloni and 2 other area MPs, along with

a Labour candidate, met with representatives of various service-based organizations one morning. The range of topics covered was large, given that some organizations focused upon arts/culture, while others addressed homelessness and social support services. The meeting allowed groups to express challenges they face (common was the issue of unpredictable funding and varying degree of gov't relationship with organizations). Tempering expectations but still showing support, Sepuloni noted that she would have a research team look into how a more predictable funding formula might be implemented. She also noted that she has little power over these topics while not in government, and that changes won't be immediate should a Labour government form after the upcoming election.

Later that day, as part of trying to facilitate a broader solution to the problem of homelessness, Sepuloni held a large meeting of various organizations in her electorate office. Sepuloni chaired the meeting, which was partly to address concerns of a local jockey club where homeless people had been using stables as shelter (both for sleeping and drug use). The chairman of the club's board is here. There are also 2 police officers (one being the officer that led the clean up we attended earlier in the week) and about 14 other representatives of groups that deal with homelessness (and related) issues. About half the attendees are Maori.

While the meeting doesn't reach any immediate solutions, the jockey club chairman says he is interested in finding means to more effectively use space. He says he is concerned about the danger of people using the club for shelter as they have been doing², but that he's open to utilizing the club's space to work with organizations and facilitate some form of shelter.

Not all representatives spoke directly to the issue of the jockey club. Some spoke to how they could contribute with other groups that were in attendance, while others made pitches for why their own program should receive more support. The various expressions were nevertheless informative on the nature of homelessness and drug use, even if not all seemed to be pursuing similar goals. Some representatives, while speaking about personal experiences, told about the extent of drug problems and production of new drugs that aim to keep ahead of regulatory and policing efforts. One man talked about watching his own brother shoot himself. A woman told about how her addiction had led to her giving up her children.

Sepuloni often had a difficult time containing topics and keeping flow in this meeting. Some people spoke for long periods, and tended to dominate. It was clear upon the conclusion that some groups had effectively networked with each other in the setting, while others seemed frustrated with how the meeting had gone. Sepuloni thanked attendees, saying that some progress had been made, and that

² He notes, for example, that the stables are made of wood and have straw in them. The biggest danger appears to be that homeless people use flame during drug use and are often high while in these facilities.

future meetings would be held. Afterward she expressed her own frustration with trying to keep to an agenda given the range of interests being pursued.

The co-ordinating/networking role of service connections was nevertheless on display in the challenging setting of the homelessness meeting, and was again on display immediately afterward on a smaller scale. Sepuloni went straight into a separate room following the homelessness meeting to address the case of a disabled woman who was having problems both with housing as well as facilitating a medical procedure. The woman, who was confined to a wheelchair and awaiting surgery to have metal plates replaced in her back, had previously used a van as shelter for herself, partner and child (Perera 2017). Miscommunication between her social worker and various government agencies had first failed to provide housing, then had provided non-accessible housing while at the same time accessible housing had been given to a non-disabled tenant. Sepuloni's assistant had aided in getting media exposure during the ordeal, and the meeting on this day was to coordinate how her children would be cared for while she had an extended hospital stay. The meeting lasted about 2 hours, and appeared to result in better understanding from the various agencies involved as to what responsibilities each has and what programs need to be accessed to cover the necessary bases. It was a meeting that seemed an MP's office should not be necessary for, but the advocacy of Sepuloni's office facilitated awareness and, to that point, the solutions that would not have occurred in absence of advocacy.

Warren Entsch

Entsch is a veteran MP, having sat as the MP for the electorate of Leichhardt from 1996 to 2007 and again since the 2010 federal election. Entsch ran as a candidate for the Liberal Party of Australia prior to 2008 when the Liberal National Party of Queensland (LNP) was formed; he has since run under the LNP banner but continues to caucus in Canberra with the Liberals. While never a cabinet minister, Entsch served as a parliamentary secretary prior to his brief departure from politics in the 2007 federal election and as chief opposition whip under leader Tony Abbott from 2010 to 2013. Outside of Leichhardt, Entsch is known as an ardent supporter of same-sex marriage and other LGBT causes, causes he took up early in his career beginning in 2004 and which culminated his campaigning on the "Yes" side in the 2017 Australian Marriage Law Postal Survey, which saw a decisive "Yes" result.

Entsch worked at various occupations in north Queensland prior to entering politics: he was a farmer; a crocodile and wild bull hunter; a welder; real estate agent; and, a handyman. Crucially, Entsch served in the Royal Australian Air Force, and references this often. While out of office between 2007 and 2010 he was the director of the Australian Rainforest Foundation, reflecting a long interest in the environment and wilderness issues. He was born in and spent his entire life in Queensland, and lived most of it within the boundaries of Leichhardt; his life experiences in the electorate and his vast knowledge of the local geography and

communities (including local Indigenous communities) often factored into Entsch's discussions with constituents.

Leichhardt is in the far north of Queensland, a rural division that is largely uninhabited besides Indigenous communities throughout and the urban and agricultural centre of Cairns in the southeast of the seat. Agriculture—including sugar cane, banana and mango plantations—is an important source of economic activity, as increasingly is tourism.

While Leichhardt was traditionally a safe Labour seat, it became a marginal seat in the 1980s and acted as a bellwether. Since 1996, Entsch has won the electorate with respectable but not crushing margins; in the 2016, for example, Entsch won with a margin of 7.9 percent in the two-party-preferred result. Entsch is well known locally and his staff attribute his success to a personal rather than a party vote. This argument is buoyed by the results of the 2007 federal election: without Entsch running, Leichhardt returned to Labour. However, with Entsch back as a candidate in 2010, the seat returned to the coalition. "I think [Leichhardt] is safe because of him," argued one of Entsch's staff members. "When he didn't run, it went straight back to Labour. It's not a party seat, it's Warren's seat." Indeed, in 2010, Entsch was the first MP in decades to hold the seat while in opposition. Much of Entsch's time in Leichhardt was spent on activities that could be understood as efforts towards the maintenance of a personal vote; unlike the other MP I (Koop) observed (Linda Burney, Labour MP for Barton), Entsch never mentioned his party while engaged in electorate work.

I observed Entsch for four days while he was in Leichhardt. This included both sitting in on meetings in Entsch's electorate office and attending events and meetings out in the community. Entsch's electorate office is a storefront on a busy Cairns thoroughfare. While Entsch held meetings in his office, it was not particularly busy, and there were few walk-in visitors. Four full-time and 1 part-time employee worked in the office. Entsch made up for the laidback pace of his office by travelling between events and meetings, and his time in Cairns was packed full of meetings.

Entsch permitted me full access to him, and I was permitted to attend every meeting and function he attended while I was in Cairns. There were also substantial opportunities for travel talk as Entsch and I drove between functions. He did not, however, leave the Cairns region of Leichhardt for the entire time I was with him, which speaks to the composition of the electorate and how Entsch focuses his time as a representative. I also had many opportunities to speak with all of Entsch's staff members.

The following three summaries of time I spent with Entsch illustrate the three values that inform his service work on behalf of his constituents.

The Junction

Shortly after arriving at Entsch's office, he and I drove to The Junction Clubhouse, a clubhouse for people with mental illnesses to socialize and integrate with the community. Entsch is a long-time supporter of The Junction (the clubhouse's promotional materials state, "The Junction is an initiative...that has come come about through the personal commitment of the Honourable Warren Entsch, member for Leichhardt..." and he had recently secured funding to purchase kitchen equipment to allow members to improve their cooking skills. The director invited Entsch to a luncheon to celebrate this, as well as another successful funding source Entsch had assisted her with.

There were about 20 Clubhouse members in attendance at the lunch, as well as the director. Entsch was at ease with the members of the Clubhouse and he immediately began shaking hands and kissing cheeks upon arriving. "Good day, mate, how are you? Look at all this food," he remarked upon entering the kitchen. "This looks like a 5 star restaurant!" The director recognized Entsch's contribution securing funding prior to the meal in a speech to the room. "As you know, Warren secured funding for us for another year. And he said, 'I don't want any fanfare, I just want to come by for a cup of tea'. So there's no cameras, there's just us. And we're so grateful." Entsch responded,

People realize just how far you've come. So when I rung the minister, he had the funding for us. ... The only reason we've gotten this is because you guys are showing it works. You guys come, you need it, the camaraderie. So every one of you, that's the reason we have the funding. So give yourselves a round of applause. Every one of you should be proud of yourselves for making this work. I'm just the guy, when [the director] needed money, she came running down the road shouting 'Warren, Warren!' ... There's some things I have to do because it's my job. Other things I do because I love it, I believe in it. And I believe in you."

After the lunch, Entsch stayed to talk with the Clubhouse members on an individual basis.

The same day, Entsch attended the re-opening of a local hotel that had been renovated. Here, the people present were decidedly more upper-class, but Entsch effortlessly mingled with them, discussing the community and the history of the hotel. Entsch was at home with local business leaders. The evening was a formal affair and the attendees were dressed accordingly, but Entsch wore his western boots and a rumpled half-untucked shirt.

In his speech, Entsch emphasized the history of the hotel. "This used to be an Indian restaurant..." before falling derelict. "This is bloody amazing. I remember when there were trees growing out of the walls. What a difference a day makes." He also promoted the community and the importance of investments such as this.

“Yesterday, we were opening a 6-lane highway. Today, it’s a gorgeous hotel...” To the developers: “

The restaurant you have here, the food is divine. For you to see the potential for this investment in Cairns, all I can say is: thank you. Thank you for having the confidence to invest up here... When you do this investment, you do it for our future.

Rainforest Foundation

In one meeting, Entsch counseled the director of the Australia Rainforest Foundation, who had a range of ideas on how to strengthen the Foundation, particularly by expanding the preservation land under its purview. Entsch had a special interest in the Rainforest Foundation given the time he had spent as its director. Almost the entirety of the meeting was taken up by Entsch providing advice, usually unprompted.

This took three forms. First, Entsch provided advice on who to connect with in local government and in local communities. “Talk to the people on Douglas Shire Council,” Entsch advised. “They’ll be 100% behind it.” Entsch also encouraged the director to consult with local Indigenous community leaders on the Foundation’s activities, especially its efforts to expand its protected areas. “These are culturally significant areas, not just ecologically significant,” he reminded the director. “Say ‘We’re not just about acquisition, we’re about preservation’.” Entsch instructed his staff to send the phone numbers of local and Indigenous leaders to the director.

Second, Entsch provided advice on potential funding to assist the Rainforest Foundation’s work.

There’s always opportunities through the Reef Fund. This could fit the criteria. I think there’s an argument. If you have a benefactor, we could go 50-50. And there’s a billion dollars in that. ... You should build your profile. Start talking about saving the reef. Then we could be talking about serious government funding.”

Third, Entsch provided advice on how to raise the Foundation’s profile and better engage with the community

If you did a couple fundraisers a year..., that would be excellent. Have a couple gala events, bring out your key stakeholders. Have a rainforest gala dinner. And talk about yourself. It helps to sell yourself. ... One of the things you can do help is be a pillar of the local community. Help them to thrive and prosper. ... If you want to start doing that, I’m more than happy to have a regular engagement with you.”

Immigration Assistance and Local Nepalese Community

Entsch deals with a range of ombudsman-type issues in his electorate office, including social assistance and poverty issues. While most service results from calls placed to his office, Entsch is an activist representative, and his staff relayed that it was not uncommon for him to discover instances of poverty while out in the electorate and subsequently instruct his staff to connect those involved with the necessary services. While I was in Cairns, Entsch heard on a radio call-in show of a 90-year-old woman whose phone service had been cut off by Telstra. He instructed one of his staff members, Sam, to inquire on her behalf at Telstra.

Entsch: "Get someone on it. This is bullshit! It's been going on since July. We're not going to direct her, she's 90-years-old. We're going to do it on her behalf."

Sam: "As you can see, I wrote in the email that Warren is red hot over this."

Entsch: "You're a very good letter writer, Samuel."

The area in which Entsch's office receives the most requests for service assistant is with respect to immigration. He employs a full-time specialist who works only on immigration-related casework, and has substantial confidence in her expertise in this area. In referring a visa-related matter, Entsch outlined his overall approach to immigration-service casework:

This is Rosie. She does great work with Visas so there's no point talking to me. Talk with Rosie after the meeting and she'll take care of the issues. ...Rosie can help you get through the process. That's what we're good for, we're good at it. But I'll only get involved if you're out of options, then I'll intervene with the minister.

On another occasion, Entsch bragged about Rosie and her record of success over the phone: "If you can send something to Rosie, do that. Bounce this off her. We have a history of mopping up messes made by immigration agents and lawyers. We can do it and it doesn't cost you a cracker."

Entsch leaves the complex, specialized area of immigration to his staff member wherever possible. "Understand that immigration is black and white," he barked over the phone at a constituent grappling with an immigration issue related to a family member before turning the case over to Rosie. "There is no grey area... This is complex. It has to be done by someone who knows what he's doing."

Entsch is often the point of first contact on immigration matters, and he relishes the opportunity to follow up when his staff member is able to successfully assist constituents. He does, however, get involved in these files when traditional avenues are exhausted. In these cases, Entsch emphasizes the importance of trusting those

seeking help, and they are often called into his office to be questioned by Entsch. In one case where Entsch convinced the minister to give permanent citizenship to a constituent, he emphasized the importance of trust in doing so. “We do lots of immigration cases. I get involved but I need to believe in them,” he explained. “I heard about [this case]. I did my research and I was convinced they were good people. ... I got the minister to agree to give him permanent citizenship.”

Entsch also met with members of the local Nepalese community in Cairns, who sought his advice on how to acquire land to build a Hindu temple. Entsch was unsure why the community members wanted to meet but, once he discovered their goal, he dispensed an enormous amount of advice. He advised community members to consult with local councillors who might be able to provide land to build the temple: “Talk to your councillor. ...I’ll get you the names of some proactive councillors. Best way to get this done is to hunt as a pack. Do it as a group, not as individuals.” He told them to consider mentioning that they would be building a community centre, not a temple: “There are no grants for building temples. The communities, they do this themselves. There *are* opportunities to acquire land. We could help with extensions, but not the original building.” And he provided advice on how to lobby local elected officials for the land: “Go with the authority of your group. Say, ‘We want to build a community centre, what land is available? We need a centre to celebrate events.’”

As was the case with those seeking his personal assistance on immigration matters, Entsch sought to know these community members on a personal basis to build trust. He did so in part by discussing his previous efforts to assist local Sikhs in building a gurdwara. “I said to him [a member of the local Sikh community] at the time, ‘I don’t know anything about you. If I’m going to advocate for you, I want to understand you,’” Entsch recounted. “And so we would drive around and I’d ask questions. And he gave me a very good education of the Sikh religion and culture.” Entsch wanted to build a similar relationship with the local Nepalese community, and saw this meeting as a first step towards that.

Themes and Discussion

Both Sepuloni and Entsch engaged in substantial service representation while in their electorates. There were similarities in how they approached their roles, but there were also crucial differences. Close observation of the nuance of their roles allows us to discuss some themes in the ways that MPs engage in service representation, which can be further addressed through further observation of MPs in their constituencies.

First, MPs differ in the extent of the emphasis they place on service. Searing acknowledges this in his recognition of other roles MPs assume. This is not evident in our analysis since we selected two MPs who did engage in “constituency member” activities. However, the other members we observed spent less time on service

matters than the two cases we've highlighted here. Linda Burney (Labour MP for Barton) spent relatively little of her time on service matters in her electorate, and the time that was expended was done so in a grudging manner ("When you're an MP, this is your bread and butter," she sighed at one point while returning a call).

But even in the cases of Entsch and Sepuloni, differences are discernible. Whereas Sepuloni was almost entirely committed to matters of service while in her electorate, Entsch split his time between service and work on policy matters he cared deeply about. In particular, Entsch was concerned with the referendum campaign that was taking place at the time, and he often squeezed phone calls and time to reading briefings and new clips in between service work in the electorate. We suspect that this has something to do with Sepuloni's and Entsch's relative experience and security. Entsch was a veteran who was comfortable in his role as a service representative; he was clearly in what Fenno (1978) refers to as the "protectionist" stage of his career, and his constituency role came easily and appeared effortless. In contrast, Sepuloni is a relatively new electorate MP who had experienced electoral failure in the recent past. She was still in the "expansionist" stage of her career, and so was more fully focused on her electorate when provided with the opportunity to be at home. Despite having won handily in 2014, Sepuloni may also be more concerned with the development of a local personal vote than is Entsch, who is well known in his electorate.

Ironically given this, Sepuloni and Entsch contrasted in their enthusiasm for the service role. Sepuloni was fully engaged in ombudsman work, but betrayed little enthusiasm for these tasks throughout our visit. We have seen a range of attitudes toward service work, and Sepuloni appears to be in the mid-range, being neither driven toward service, nor grudgingly carrying it out. Lower on the scale is the attitude displayed by Burney, and we have seen a similar aversion to service before: former Canadian MP Ted Hsu reluctantly engaged in service and symbolic representational activities to assist in his re-election efforts but resented the time it took away from his policy interests (Koop et al. 2018). In contrast, Entsch enthusiastically embraced his service responsibilities, especially his boosterism of the local community. This may simply be a difference in styles and personalities, but we suspect that Sepuloni sees service more so as a necessity of the job and of aiding re-election.

This raises the question of how service fits with other representational priorities. As we observed previously, MPs may combine a service orientation with other representational priorities. That was clearly the case for Entsch, as his service was mixed with policy advocacy. Sepuloni found the heavy focus upon housing somewhat challenging to incorporate in a broader policy focus because she had to avoid being seen as imposing on another spokesperson's portfolio. In that sense, service work for Sepuloni appeared driven by constituent needs, but not as clearly connected with representational goals.

Finally, we return to Searing's simple distinction between welfare officers and local promoters. Searing grouped all the MPs studied into one group or the other, but also placed a small number into a "mixed" group which seemed to fulfill the requirements of both roles. Our observations here confirm that MPs differ in their constituency roles. Sepuloni clearly seemed to fall into the "welfare officer" role, as her time was devoted to individual ombudsman work and she did not spend much time on the activities we generally associate with local promoters. In contrast, Entsch spent more of his time acting as a local promoter, assisting organizations and dealing with community-wide issues. Nevertheless, he did engage in individual service work. While he tended toward local boosterism, he would seem to fall into Searing's "mixed category".

We believe that Searing's categories may be better conceptualized as a continuum, with all constituency members engaged in constituency service, but some prioritizing individual concerns (welfare officer) and others prioritizing collective or group concerns (local promoters). Such a conceptualization would recognize that some MPs, like Sepuloni, clearly fall at either end of the continuum, but that others will embrace both roles to differing extents. Observation of additional MPs will likely reveal more nuance in how MPs engage in service representation in their constituencies.

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