



**CATHERINE DE FONTENAY**  
Comissioner of the Productivity Commission

# JOIN US FOR THE **HG BRENNAN**

**LECTURE IN ECONOMICS & THEOLOGY**

## “ECONOMICS AND SELFISHNESS”

There are great limitations to economists modelling individuals as selfish and focused only on the material world. Geoff Brennan’s work explored many of these limitations, to our great benefit. But even in the most conventional economic models, predicating self-interested and amoral agents, there is one individual in the model whose behaviour is unselfish: the social planner. One can argue that economists identify with the social planner rather than the individual agents in the model. (As such, our besetting sin is arrogance rather than selfishness.) The lecture reviews some of the luminaries of economic thought, to highlight their focus on the welfare of all. And it reviews the landscape of academic and other economists and their work, to conclude with some discussion of the Productivity Commission’s work, particularly its work on mobility and poverty.

Catherine is a Commissioner of the Productivity Commission. Among other projects, she has led research on Inequality and Mobility, Wealth Transfers and Inequality, Young Peoples’ Incomes, Unpaid Leave for Carers, Aged Care Employment, and Expenditure on Child and Family Services in the Northern Territory (with Michael Brennan). Before joining the Commission in 2019, she was an Associate Professor of Economics at Melbourne Business School. She is a member of St Jude’s Anglican Church Carlton and has been involved in their ministry on the Carlton Housing Estates since 2002.

**THURSDAY**  
6 February, 2025



**START AT**  
6:00 PM TO 7:30 PM



**CHAMBERS PAVILION**  
ACC&C, 15 Blackall Street, Barton



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