

CORPORATE CITIZENSHIP- IT IS HARD WHERE THE RUBBER HITS THE ROAD

Chris Gillman

Corporate Citizenship appears on everyone's agenda. The prompts abound; corporate collapse and malfeasance, the build up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, CEO's defending against activists attacks on specific issues and academics shaping thinking in the area to note a few.

However, there is a sense that momentum is waning. At the very least corporate aspirational rhetoric is yet to be operationalised in the core activities of businesses. Indeed, in some quarters the whole concept attracts overt criticism. Last May at the Australian Institute of Company Directors annual conference the combined debating team of Professor David Henderson and Henry Bosch were judged by the attendees to have defeated Greg Bourne and Mike Waller who were putting the case that "Corporate Social Responsibility is a force for good".

In his address Chris Gillman will argue that although the concepts of Corporate Citizenship have been well rehearsed, continuing poor behaviour by some corporations and continual changes in stakeholder expectations is creating a legitimacy gap. The difficulty of delivery and measurement of results further slows momentum even when corporations have good corporate citizenship aspirations in place.

Chris will outline some of the complicating factors including globalisation, stakeholder cynicism, tensions within corporations from mixed signals from the leadership and the general lack of corporate legitimacy. Importantly, he will also share some insights to help grapple with the philosophical debate and practical tools that can be employed to deliver change.