

A chance to spin the spinners

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University of NSW lecturer **Brigid Costello** has created an interactive device that gives people the chance to regain some control over frustrating political jargon.

The device, titled *Just a Bit of Spin*, was designed by Ms Costello for her PhD and is an expression of the dismay she feels at the lack of real debate in modern political discourse.

Looking like a cross between a poker machine and a juke box, when spun the device plays soundbites from political speeches and generates animated images of fruit which move to represent the political spin of the bite.

"When the spin talks about going forward a pear grows and when talking about going backwards a cut-up piece of fruit re-forms," she explained.

"The machine is based on the fact that politicians spin their words to give the impression they are hard working, or they are doing something or they are moving forward. The repetition of the words makes the politi-

cal spin quite obvious and somewhat comedic," Ms Costello said.

"In the era of the soundbite, the blog post and the YouTube grab, we have more access than ever to the present and past words of our politicians," she said.

"But, paradoxically, as more and more of these words are recorded and recalled there seems to be less and less value in what is being said."

When designing the device, Ms Costello had originally used images of politicians but she said feedback she received led her to realise that people were "quite sick of seeing politicians".

"Instead I used images of fruit because I like the fruit on poker machines and I think the connection to poker machines has a link to the political spin in that something is being promised that you're never going to get."

Ms Costello's *Just a Bit of Spin* device is on display at the Powerhouse Museum, 500 Harris Street, Ultimo, in the Beta Space of the Cyberworlds Gallery until mid-December.



Brigid Costello's *Just a Bit of Spin* throws light on the 'weasel words' that constitute much of modern political discourse. Photo: Erin Byrne